

# The Book of Daniel - Number Forty-Three

## *Unveiling the Symbolism of the Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Prophecy*

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Paul's identification of pagan Rome as the power that restrained the papacy from rising to power in the year 538, became the witness that William Miller recognized that established "the daily," in the book of Daniel as representing paganism. William Miller's framework was based upon the two desolating powers of paganism followed by papalism. Miller's most important discovery in support of that framework was Paul's testimony in 2 Thessalonians, chapter two, where Paul identifies that the restraint upon the papacy, produced by pagan Rome, would be taken away, in order for the "man of sin" to be placed in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

In the book of Daniel, the symbol of "the daily" representing paganism is always followed by a symbol of the papacy, whether it be represented as the transgression of desolation or the abomination of desolation. Yet in Christ's warning to the Christians concerning the siege and destruction of Jerusalem that took place during the three-and-a-half years from 66 to 70 AD, Christ referred to "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet" as the sign for the Christians that were in Jerusalem to immediately flee. History identifies that the sign was not the symbol of papal Rome, but of pagan Rome. The sign was to be recognized by the faithful, if they were to avoid the siege and destruction. Is "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," a symbol of pagan Rome, or papal Rome?

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Matthew 24:15–22.

Sister White comments on how this warning was fulfilled in the history of the destruction of Jerusalem from 66 through 70 AD, and she identifies that the flag, or the standard of the Roman army, was the sign for the Christians still in Jerusalem to flee. So, was the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," pagan Rome, or was it papal Rome, as Miller based his framework upon?

William Miller was led to understand both manifestations of Rome (pagan followed by papal), but he was forced by the history in which he lived, to treat both kingdoms as one kingdom. And of course, they are one kingdom, but they also represent two successive kingdoms. Forced by the

prophetic history of 1798, Miller had to address Rome as primarily one kingdom. In 1798, Miller believed Christ's Second Coming was approximately twenty-five years in the future. He knew full well that papal Rome had received a deadly wound in 1798. For Miller, there were no other earthly kingdoms to follow papal Rome, for Christ was about to return.

In the history where Miller was located, he understood the statue of chapter two of Daniel, represented four earthly kingdoms, for that was what Daniel testified to.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. Daniel 2:40, 41.

Miller understood that there were only four kingdoms, and the fourth and final kingdom was Rome, which he knew from history was pagan Rome followed by papal Rome. The fourth kingdom for Miller, in agreement with Daniel's word, was "divided," but for Miller the division only represented a distinction between the literal and spiritual aspects of the kingdom of Rome. He was correct, but his understanding was limited.

Miller did not see that the division of pagan and papal Rome, was based upon the division that Paul was raised up to identify. Paul (and John the Baptist), identified that at the time period of the cross literal was to transition into spiritual. Without that understanding Miller was forced to accept that Rome was essentially one kingdom that had two phases. And of course, he was correct (but limited). He could not see that spiritual Rome was represented by literal Babylon, for spiritual Rome (the papacy) is also spiritual Babylon.

Literal Babylon, as the first of four kingdoms in Daniel two, would typify the fourth kingdom, for the first always typifies the last. Pagan Rome had been typified by Babylon, but both pagan Rome and Babylon typified spiritual Rome (the papacy). The papacy therefore was the fifth kingdom, and it was represented by Babylon. This is a basic reason why Sister White compares the captivity of literal Israel in Babylon for seventy years, with the captivity of spiritual Israel in spiritual Babylon for twelve hundred and sixty years.

"God's church on earth was as verily in captivity during this long period of relentless persecution as were the children of Israel held captive in Babylon during the period of the exile." Prophets and Kings, 714.

Miller therefore had no problem interchanging prophetic fulfillments that more specifically identified pagan Rome, with papal Rome. We will provide examples of this as we continue, but if we understand that Miller viewed pagan and papal Rome as one kingdom, we can understand why Miller would have no problem with Jesus referencing the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," as a fulfillment of pagan Rome, while still understanding the expression of the "abomination of desolation," in the book of Daniel as a symbol of papal Rome. Miller could not see the three desolating powers, and for this reason his prophetic framework was limited, though

accurate.

But how are we to understand the discrepancy of the historical fulfillment of 66 AD, when pagan Rome placed its standards in the sacred precincts of the temple in fulfillment of Christ's prediction? Is "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet," a symbol of pagan or papal Rome? The answer to that dilemma is fairly simple when you recognize three desolating powers, instead of two. We should begin with Sister White's commentary on the fulfillment of Christ's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem.

"In the Jews' crucifixion of Christ was involved the destruction of Jerusalem. The blood shed upon Calvary was the weight that sank them to ruin for this world and for the world to come. So it will be in the great final day, when judgment shall fall upon the rejecters of God's grace. Christ, their rock of offense, will then appear to them as an avenging mountain. The glory of His countenance, which to the righteous is life, will be to the wicked a consuming fire. Because of love rejected, grace despised, the sinner will be destroyed.

"By many illustrations and repeated warnings, Jesus showed what would be the result to the Jews of rejecting the Son of God. In these words He was addressing all in every age who refuse to receive Him as their Redeemer. Every warning is for them. The desecrated temple, the disobedient son, the false husbandmen, the contemptuous builders, have their counterpart in the experience of every sinner. Unless he repent, the doom which they foreshadowed will be his." *The Desire of Ages*, 600.

When Paul identified the transition from literal to spiritual, he identifies that it occurred during the time period of the cross, and it should be noted that the destruction of Jerusalem is directly associated with the cross. The destruction of literal Jerusalem which was first accomplished by literal Babylon was accomplished a last time by literal Rome, for Jesus always represents the end with the beginning. The trampling down of the sanctuary and the host that began with the pagan power of Babylon, ended with the pagan power of Rome.

The spiritual trampling down of spiritual Jerusalem was accomplished by papal Rome and both of those periods of trampling down (literal and spiritual) typify the trampling down of God's people by the third desolating power, which in terms of Rome is called modern Rome.

There are three desolating powers that each persecute God's people. The dragon of paganism, followed by the sea beast of Catholicism, that is followed by the earth beast of the United States (the false prophet). Paganism was represented by various pagan powers that trampled down literal Israel. Papalism then trampled down spiritual Israel for twelve hundred and sixty years from 538 to 1798. The three-fold union of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet is modern Rome and it also tramples down God's people during the "hour" of the Sunday law crisis. The three desolating powers of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet are also represented as pagan Rome, papal Rome and modern Rome.

In terms of Revelation seventeen paganism is the first four kings, the fifth king is the papacy and the sixth, seventh and eighth kings is the three-fold union of modern Rome.

And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. Revelation 17:10, 11.

In terms of Daniel chapter two, paganism is all four kingdoms from literal Babylon to literal Rome. Spiritual Babylon is the papacy (the head of gold), and the three-fold union of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (modern Rome), is represented by the three-fold union of spiritual Medo-Persia, spiritual Greece, and spiritual Rome (whose deadly wound is healed).

When Jesus referred to the “abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” he was identifying a specific “sign” that Christians must recognize in each of the three Rome’s. Pagan Rome, papal Rome and modern Rome all persecute God’s people. That persecution is represented prophetically as trampling down the sanctuary and host. Jesus provided a warning of the approach of that persecution for each of the three periods of persecutions. When the “sign” of Rome’s authority was placed within the sanctuary, the time to flee Jerusalem had arrived. Jesus was not using Daniel’s expression of the “abomination of desolation,” as a symbol of an earthly power, but as a symbol of the sign that Christians needed to recognize.

“Jesus declared to the listening disciples the judgments that were to fall upon apostate Israel, and especially the retributive vengeance that would come upon them for their rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah. Unmistakable signs would precede the awful climax. The dreaded hour would come suddenly and swiftly. And the Saviour warned His followers: ‘When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.’ Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20, 21. When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed. He who chanced to be upon the housetop must not go down into his house, even to save his most valued treasures. Those who were working in the fields or vineyards must not take time to return for the outer garment laid aside while they should be toiling in the heat of the day. They must not hesitate a moment, lest they be involved in the general destruction.” The Great Controversy, 25.

In the passage Sister White identifies the “abomination of desolation,” as an “unmistakable sign,” that was represented by the “idolatrous standards of the Romans,” which they set “up in the holy ground” of the sanctuary. Jesus was not using the “abomination of desolation” to represent either power of pagan or papal Rome, but as a “sign.” When the “sign” was placed in the holy ground of the temple, the Christians were to flee from Jerusalem “lest they be involved in the general destruction.” Sister White goes further later on in the same passage and identifies that the prophecy of Christ that identified the destruction had more than one fulfillment.

“The Saviour’s prophecy concerning the visitation of judgments upon Jerusalem is to have another fulfillment, of which that terrible desolation was but a faint shadow. In the fate of the chosen city we may behold the doom of a world that has rejected God’s mercy and trampled

upon His law. Dark are the records of human misery that earth has witnessed during its long centuries of crime. The heart sickens, and the mind grows faint in contemplation. Terrible have been the results of rejecting the authority of Heaven. But a scene yet darker is presented in the revelations of the future. The records of the past,—the long procession of tumults, conflicts, and revolutions, the ‘battle of the warrior . . . with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood’ (Isaiah 9:5),—what are these, in contrast with the terrors of that day when the restraining Spirit of God shall be wholly withdrawn from the wicked, no longer to hold in check the outburst of human passion and satanic wrath! The world will then behold, as never before, the results of Satan’s rule.

“But in that day, as in the time of Jerusalem’s destruction, God’s people will be delivered, everyone that shall be found written among the living. Isaiah 4:3. Christ has declared that He will come the second time to gather His faithful ones to Himself: ‘Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ Matthew 24:30, 31. Then shall they that obey not the gospel be consumed with the spirit of His mouth and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Like Israel of old the wicked destroy themselves; they fall by their iniquity. By a life of sin, they have placed themselves so out of harmony with God, their natures have become so debased with evil, that the manifestation of His glory is to them a consuming fire.

“Let men beware lest they neglect the lesson conveyed to them in the words of Christ. As He warned His disciples of Jerusalem’s destruction, giving them a sign of the approaching ruin, that they might make their escape; so He has warned the world of the day of final destruction and has given them tokens of its approach, that all who will may flee from the wrath to come. Jesus declares: ‘There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations.’ Luke 21:25; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24–26; Revelation 6:12–17. Those who behold these harbingers of His coming are to ‘know that it is near, even at the doors.’ Matthew 24:33. ‘Watch ye therefore,’ are His words of admonition. Mark 13:35. They that heed the warning shall not be left in darkness, that that day should overtake them unawares. But to them that will not watch, ‘the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.’ 1 Thessalonians 5:2–5.” The Great Controversy, 36, 37.

When Sister White wrote these words there was still to be a future fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem. The retributive judgment that is carried out against modern Rome (the dragon, the beast and the false prophet), at the end of the world represents the final fall of spiritual Babylon, but spiritual Babylon (the papacy) already fell once in 1798. The destruction of Jerusalem represents God’s retributive judgment upon an apostate church.

The destruction of Jerusalem in the three and a half years from 66 AD to 70 AD typifies the destruction of God’s retributive judgment at the end of the world that is brought upon modern Rome (the dragon, the beast and the false prophet). The siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which was accomplished by paganism from 66 AD unto 70 AD, lasted exactly three and a half years.

The siege and destruction of spiritual Jerusalem which was accomplished by papalism lasted three and a half prophetic years, from 538 unto 1798. Those two illustrations typify the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in the “hour” of the Sunday law crisis that is brought about by modern Rome. The last of the three destructions of Jerusalem is reversed, as represented in the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel begins with Babylon conquering and destroying Jerusalem and it ends with Babylon’s destruction and Jerusalem’s victory. In each of the three battles, there was a sign given to Christians that informed them to flee from the coming warfare. In AD 66, it was when the armies of pagan Rome placed their standards (their battle flags) in the sacred ground of the sanctuary. In the year 538, it was when the “man of sin” was revealed, sitting in the temple of God (the Christian church), showing himself that he was God, when he passed a Sunday law at the Council of Orleans in that year. Sunday enforcement is what the papacy identifies as the proof of their authority over the Christian world, for they argue (correctly) that there is no support for Sunday worship in God’s Word, and the fact that they instituted Sunday as the day of worship in Christianity is proof that the authority of their pagan traditions and customs are above the Bible.

In the year 538, Christians were to separate from the Roman church, not simply because it was not truly a Christian church, but also because the sign of papal authority had been placed in the sacred grounds of God’s church. Sister White identifies the separation process of that history that began the period when God’s church fled into the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty years.

“But there is no union between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness, and there can be no union between their followers. When Christians consented to unite with those who were but half converted from paganism, they entered upon a path which led further and further from the truth. Satan exulted that he had succeeded in deceiving so large a number of the followers of Christ. He then brought his power to bear more fully upon these, and inspired them to persecute those who remained true to God. None understood so well how to oppose the true Christian faith as did those who had once been its defenders; and these apostate Christians, uniting with their half-pagan companions, directed their warfare against the most essential features of the doctrines of Christ.

“It required a desperate struggle for those who would be faithful to stand firm against the deceptions and abominations which were disguised in sacerdotal garments and introduced into the church. The Bible was not accepted as the standard of faith. The doctrine of religious freedom was termed heresy, and its upholders were hated and proscribed.

“After a long and severe conflict, the faithful few decided to dissolve all union with the apostate church if she still refused to free herself from falsehood and idolatry. They saw that separation was an absolute necessity if they would obey the word of God. They dared not tolerate errors fatal to their own souls, and set an example which would imperil the faith of their children and children’s children. To secure peace and unity they were ready to make any concession consistent with fidelity to God; but they felt that even peace would be too dearly purchased at the sacrifice of principle. If unity could be secured only by the compromise of truth and righteousness, then let there be difference, and even war.” The Great Controversy,

45.

We will continue these thoughts in the next article.

“Eternity stretches before us. The curtain is about to be lifted. We who occupy this solemn, responsible position, what are we doing, what are we thinking about, that we cling to our selfish love of ease, while souls are perishing around us? Have our hearts become utterly callous? Cannot we feel or understand that we have a work to do for the salvation of others? Brethren, are you of the class who having eyes see not, and having ears hear not? Is it in vain that God has given you a knowledge of His will? Is it in vain that He has sent you warning after warning? Do you believe the declarations of eternal truth concerning what is about to come upon the earth, do you believe that God’s judgments are hanging over the people, and can you still sit at ease, indolent, careless, pleasure loving?”

“It is no time now for God’s people to be fixing their affections or laying up their treasure in the world. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains. And now, instead of seeking expensive dwellings here, we should be preparing to move to a better country, even a heavenly. Instead of spending our means in self-gratification, we should be studying to economize. Every talent lent of God should be used to His glory in giving the warning to the world. God has a work for His colaborers to do in the cities. Our missions must be sustained; new missions must be opened. To carry forward this work successfully will require no small outlay. Houses of worship are needed, where the people may be invited to hear the truths for this time. For this very purpose, God has entrusted a capital to His stewards. Let not your property be tied up in worldly enterprises, so that this work shall be hindered. Get your means where you can handle it for the benefit of the cause of God. Send your treasures before you into heaven.” Testimonies, volume 5, 464.