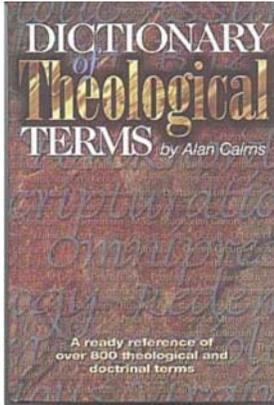




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The ABC of Christian Doctrine



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ABBA

A Palestinian Aramaic word that is found in three places in the NT to refer to God. It means "father." It is the address of a child as distinct from a slave and denotes family intimacy. In Mark 14:36 Christ uses abba to address God in His prayer in Gethsemane. In Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6 Christians use the same form of address to God. It is used in such a way that it both emphasizes our nearness to God and inculcates respect. Each time it is used it appears with the word pater, giving us the title Abba Father for God. Christians must never confuse intimacy with God their Father with familiarity and triteness. There is no basis in the NT use of abba to support the almost blasphemous references some make to God as "Dad" or "Daddy." It is surely significant that the Aramaic abba is not translated into Greek as papa but is merely transliterated.

Abomination of Desolation

In His Olivet discourse the Lord Jesus Christ said, "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" (Matt. 24:15, 16; see also Mark 13:14). Thus the key to understanding the term abomination of desolation is to be found in the prophecy of Daniel where there are three, or possibly four, references to it: Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; and possibly 8:13. The various Hebrew and Greek terms rendered abomination and abominable carry the idea of something abhorrent, detestable, disgusting, foul, horrible, and impure, and therefore repugnant and unlawful on that account.

While abomination may describe a merely human prejudice or convention (Gen. 43:32; 46:34), it usually refers to something deeply offensive and repugnant to the Lord. Hence the Bible labels sodomy, bestiality, sacrilege, and idolatry "abominations" (Exod. 8:26; Deut. 17:1; 7:25, 26). One of the Hebrew words translated "abomination," shiqquts, is most frequently used as a description of heathen gods. For example in 2 Chron. 15:8 it is translated "abominable idols," while in 2 Kings 23:13 it describes Ashtoreth "the abomination of the Zidonians," and Chemosh, "the abomination of the Moabites." Since shiqquts is the term Daniel uses in 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11, the strong inference is that the abomination of desolation is an idol placed in the temple in Jerusalem.

Desolation (the word is plural in the Greek of Matt 24:15 and Mark 13:14) signifies a laying waste. Abomination always causes desolation, disaster, and judgment. The presence of an



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abomination, an idol or anything else the Lord has denounced as repugnant to Him, renders a place unfit for the presence and service of the Lord. Though the expression of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matt. 24 and Mark 13 is eschatological we must not overlook the timeless principle He teaches. Nowadays it is becoming increasingly prevalent in churches to accept what God has rejected as abominable. In the name of justice and love many churches have opened not only their membership but even their ministry to sodomites. The acceptance of the abomination of sodomy guarantees both the loss of the Lord's presence and the certainty of His wrath. The same may be said of those interfaith services which are so often hailed as progressive and enlightened attempts to unite a divided world. Joint worship with what God has called abominable inevitably brings dire consequences.

The entire phrase the abomination of desolation, then, obviously refers to an idol, or false god, and its worship, placed in the temple of God and causing desolation. Two of the four references noted in Daniel (8:13 and 11:31) are generally taken to refer to the pollution of the Temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. Antiochus, with the help of some apostate Jews, set up a statue in the Temple, raised an altar to Jupiter Olympus on the altar of burnt offering, and sacrificed swine's flesh. He dedicated the Temple to his idol and rescinded the Mosaic laws. Thus was the Holy Place desolated but not destroyed. Daniel's other two references (9:27; 12:11) clearly cannot be to Antiochus. Some commentators argue that the case of Antiochus gives us a clue to the proper understanding of Matt. 24:15. As the Speakers Commentary puts it, "We should naturally understand [Matt. 24:15] as implying some pollution of the Temple by the Jews, to be punished by its destruction at the hands of the Romans." Those who see "the abomination of desolation" fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans appeal to Luke 21:20. They hold that the wording "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh" explains the desolation of Matt. 24:15.

However, this argument misses the mark. Luke 21 does not record the same discourse as Matt. 24. It precedes the Matthew account. It was given in the temple (Luke 21:1), whereas Matt. 24 was given after He "went out, and departed from the Temple" (v. 1) "as He sat upon the mount of Olives" (v. 3). The discourse in Luke 21 coincides with Matt. 24 as far as v. 11. That is, Luke 21:7-11 corresponds with Matt 24: 3-8. Then the two portions diverge. Luke 21:12 specifically states that the rest of the discourse is a retrospect--that the Lord goes back to what happens before all the things He has been speaking about. Matthew 24:9 clearly indicates that in His second discourse He continues His prophecy of future events, without any retrospect.

This yields two important conclusions.

First, in view of this, it is impossible to equate the Roman armies compassing Jerusalem to destroy it with "the abomination of desolation."

Second, the prophecy of "the abomination of desolation" remained to be fulfilled after the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans. Some interpreters seek the prophecy's fulfilment in the rise of the papacy. Clearly the idolatry of the papal system has caused untold havoc in the visible church and is abominable, but it cannot be the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy. The local and geographical data in Matt 24:16f. forbid any interpretation that fails to place "the abomination of desolation" in the Temple in Jerusalem.



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We are left, then, with a prophecy of the placing of an idol in the Temple in Jerusalem after the destruction of the city by the Romans in A.D. 70. That means the prophecy yet awaits fulfilment, for there has never been a temple in Jerusalem from then until now. The action of Antiochus foreshadowed the final abomination of which Daniel and Christ spoke. That final abomination is described by Daniel in 9:26, 27 as caused by "the prince that shall come," a man who will confirm a covenant with the Jews and then break it. This is the "little horn" of Dan. 7:8, 24-26; 8:9-12, 23-25. He is the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition (Dan. 11:36 with 2 Thess. 2:4). The abomination of desolation, therefore, is the final and greatest eruption of idolatry, as the Antichrist sets up his abominable worship in the Temple in Jerusalem and proclaims himself to be God. As in the case of Antiochus, the Antichrist will be welcomed by some foolish Jews into their city. They will think they are opening their doors to a saviour. In fact, he whom they welcome will be a desolator, pursuing a course of persecution, terror, and deception that will be terminated only by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.