

**N**O. YOU MUST NOT confuse the term with words that may come rushing into mind associated with more earthy matters. Our title is not related to haberdashery, sports or ballet. It is an expression used freely by technical engineers such as Stan Bisel (who as a member of the GNU team keeps me up to the task of producing the daily radio broadcast).

Kickers are those brief interest-routers used at the commencement of each new broadcast. They hint at what is to come and are an endeavor to keep the listener tuned in. Living as we do in an age when bored folk are continually changing channels in the hope of dissipating ennui, kickers

are vital for broadcasters.

The author of Holy Scripture knew the weaknesses of the human mind and he also has used kickers—lots of them. Thus, as the book of Revelation begins, we read, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear

the words of this prophecy and keep the things that are written therein for the time is at hand” (Rev 1:3). Later in the book, others appear. For example: “Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast,” and, “And here is the mind which hath wisdom” (Rev 13:18; 17:9).

On my lap as I type is a tiny white kitten. Occasionally she raises a paw to get my attention. A kicker is just like that. Despise them not, for even the Lord Jesus used them. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” That’s another one, and Jesus often used it.

#### **An Interesting Kicker**

But the most interesting kicker in the Bible is attached to the most difficult verse in the entire Scripture. Observe it well. (You see, I just can’t resist using kickers

myself as I write.)

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 . . . flee. . . . (Mt 24:15,16)

“Let him that readeth understand.” It’s a parallel, as you probably have noticed, to the verses in Revelation previously quoted. Remember, there is nothing in Revelation, in principle, which is not already to be found in the Olivet discourse.

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If you read this verse in some translations, you will get the idea that these words of admonition do not come from Jesus at all, but from the Gospel writer—a bit like the unexpected sign which suddenly appeared on this manuscript, when the kitten put its paw on one of the letters of the typewriter keyboard. Many have thought that Jesus himself did not say these words, but that the reporting apostle wished to interpose a special call to attention.

We think that view is incorrect. As indicated above, the Apocalypse has

*by Desmond Ford*

similar interruptions, somewhat like grace notes in music which are a type of ornamentation rather than something strictly necessary.

Secondly, there is no other example in the Gospels of the disciples interrupting their Lord to put in their own words (which is not to deny the inspired verbal artistry with which the apostles edited their sources to make theological truth stand out). When we consider the parallel passage of Mark 13:14, if we know Greek, we recognize that Jesus, according to Mark, has already used the same word (*anaginoskon*) or its Aramaic equivalent three times before (see 12:10; 12:26; 2:25). Christ was in the habit of admonishing his readers (e.g., Mk 4:23). That was not the case of the Gospel writers. There is certainly no similar instance in Mark, Matthew or Luke, the three Gospels which give us the Advent sermon. On the other hand, it is certainly significant to discover that equivalent words for “understand” occur in the very prophecy our Lord was quoting from Daniel. In fact, such equivalents occur more than twenty times in the Old Testament Apocalypse (e.g., 9:2,22,23; 10:1; 12:9-12; and 8:27). The last four-and-a-half chapters of Daniel are avowedly given so that the reader might understand the prophecy about the wicked power which was to ravage the sanctuary (the emblem of the kingdom of God and its people).

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So here in Matthew 24:15 is a “kicker” given by Christ himself. Those inquiring about the last days are told to be sure to understand his prophetic allusion to the coming abomination of desolation that had been foretold by Daniel. And how much that admonition was needed has been proved by the succeeding centuries. This enigmatic prophecy has been considered by scholars to be the most difficult of all Scripture and

when the present writer spent two years in its study at Manchester University, he could not find a single book in English, German, French, or Dutch or any other language wholly given to its examination. The libraries of Manchester, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Washington, D.C., etc., were ransacked in vain as well as current theological indexes. I began my own book (a doctoral thesis) on the topic with these words: “The abomination of desolation phrase is the enigmatic heart of the most puzzling chapter in the primary book of the New Testament.”

Do you like puzzles—crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles? Christ has sent us one of much greater import. Not only does he challenge us to understand, he *commands* us so to do—“him that readeth let him understand.” Christians are required by their most holy faith to understand the prophecies of Daniel about the abomination, and our Lord’s elucidation of them. Let’s try to understand.

**Some Clues**

Here is our first clue. All the “kickers” we have quoted have to do with the theme of Antichrist. That even applies to Revelation 1:3. The word there translated “time” is *kairos* and means a time of crisis. In other words, even Revelation 1:3 is pointing to the crisis described in Revelation 13 when the whole world must decide for or against Antichrist. Many scholars have pointed out that Mark uses a grammatical abnormality in 13:14. He connects a personal participle and a neuter noun, thus making a deliberate reference to somebody special. 2 Thessalonians 2:6ff is similar, and Antichrist is meant!

Clue number two. The expression “abomination of desolation” enshrines two motifs—one relating to worship and one relating to aggressive civil power. To the Jew, the word abomination suggested idolatry—evil worship. Notice, for example:

For Solomon went after

Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. (1 Ki 11:5-7)

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The Hebrew word translated “desolation” can also mean to be stunned or appalled as many translations show. But the evidence for the more literal meaning is abundant in several Old Testament chapters which link with abominable worship the judgment of desolation (e.g., Jer 4,7,44; Eze 5-7, Dan 8,9,11,12). Apocalyptic scholar, S. B. Frost, has told us that “desolate” rather than “appall” was the current interpretation before Christ and that it should be respected. When Daniel 9:17 and 9:27 are compared and seen within the context of the whole book, it becomes clear that “desolation” has to do with the ravaging of idolatrous nations upon the people who know the true God. In this light it becomes evident why Christ, after alluding to the coming abomination of desolation, foretells the worst persecution of God’s people the world has ever witnessed (see Mt 24:21ff and Mk 13:19ff). Similarly, as Revelation 13 is recognized as an enlargement of Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, it will be seen that the idol or image there spoken of parallels the abomination of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. We must note too that the death threat of 13:13-18 corresponds to the desolation (the “great tribulation”) in the predictions of Daniel and Christ.

Clue number three. Tradition has it that the Jews sometimes called Daniel

the book of the abomination of desolation. No doubt the reason was that the primary prophecies of Daniel all have to do with this mystical power. Daniel contrasts throughout his book the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. The word "kingdom" occurs more often in Daniel than in all the other prophets combined. The abomination of desolation is worldly power personified and endeavors to copy the divine kingdom. This counterfeiting is made most clear in Daniel 9:24-27 where two princes are brought to view—Messiah the prince, and the prince who is also called the abomination of desolation. Both are powers who lay claim to the hearts and bodies of mankind. Messiah the prince means a priest-prince, that is, someone like Melchizedek, the ancient priest-king of Salem, the early Jerusalem. But the rival prince (leader of an idolatrous religion) attacks the city and the sanctuary, and the desolations continue until the end. Why does he thus besiege and destroy? Because the people of God refuse to bow down to him. It is a repeat of Daniel, chapters 1,3,6, where the worshippers of Yahweh felt the storm of persecution from pagan overlords. Thus "deliver" which is a key word both in the histories and prophecies of Daniel, is a promise to the faithful.

We should note too, as Dr. John Bright has pointed out in his *The Kingdom of God* (p. 183), the theme of loyalty to the law characterizes the stories of Daniel, a loyalty that precipitates persecution from worldly kingdoms.

With this background, we can understand Christ's mysterious warning. He is saying that the kingdom and people of God will again be challenged at the end-time by Antichrist—not a person, but a worldly kingdom uniting political and religious elements and demanding conformity. This power will be an abomination, that is, it will be idolatrous. Its worship is anathema to God. It is a desolating power, for it will sentence to death all who refuse to bow before it, all who persist in worshipping the true God who

created heaven and earth and all things therein, all who love and obey the gospel of God rather than the religious laws and traditions of the creature which enshrine a blatant legalism.

Clue number four. The future but recapitulates for the Church of God the experience of its head. As Christ was sentenced to death by the united efforts of apostate Jews and the worldly Romans, so Scripture foretells a disastrous union of church and state in the latter days. Revelation 13, by referring to a lamb-like power that speaks as a dragon, is alluding to the voracious cries of the Jews who demanded the crucifixion of the Messiah in the days of Pontius Pilate. The people of God, the Jews of Jesus' day should have been lamb-like in innocence and gentleness. But their apostasy brought the guilt of his blood upon them (see Mt 27:25). So it is to be again, according to John, the Revelator. The outward Christian church will repeat the history of the Jewish church apostatising from its true Lord and joining itself to worldly government. This is idolatry, substituting state power for the power of the Spirit, and human religion for the gospel.

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***The church is to know its Gethsemane and Calvary, but beyond that is the crystal sea and the song that even angels cannot sing.***

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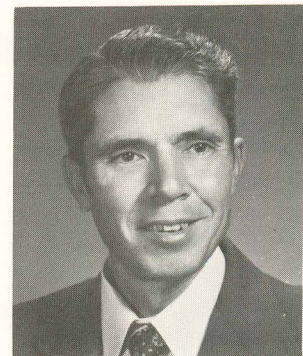
After he made his prophecy elucidating the great theme of Daniel, Christ spoke about the carcass which would be the cause of the gathering of the eagles (see Mt 24:28). He affirms that the world is to become as a polluted, rotting carcass fit only for judgment and destruction which will be executed by the descending angels. While the church visible, in form at least, upholds the Christian gospel and law, it remains as salt in the

world. When the gospel and law are forsaken, the spiritual salt will have lost its savor. It will be replaced by new forms of legalism ultimately submerged by anarchy (antinomianism). Then the end comes.

Immediately before his reference to the abomination, Christ spoke of his gospel (Mt 24:14)—the only hope for a world in chaos. It is also the strength of that remnant which will ultimately be gathered by the Spirit from all countries and all faiths to cluster around the one name—Christ—and the one theme—grace.

And in case you haven't already guessed it—this whole article is a kicker to stir your interest in the coming Congresses. There our emphasis will be not the dirge of Antichrist but the new song of Christ's people as set forth in the Bible's climactic book. As sun and rain together make the rainbow, it is the glory of the gospel which transfigures all the sad scenes of Scripture and life. The church is to know its Gethsemane and Calvary, but beyond that is the crystal sea and the song that even angels cannot sing.

(For more on the themes of this article see the author's three-volume set on Revelation entitled *Crisis!* approximately one thousand pages of inspiration and information. Order from Desmond Ford Publications, 7955 Bullard Drive, Newcastle, CA 95658. \$32.50 includes postage).



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