

# Masterwork of the Messiah

## Expositional Study Of Matthew's Gospel

### *The King And The Kingdom: Part 5*

Matthew 24:15

Written By

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**R**ight now ISIL is attempting to establish a world caliphate through intimidation, invasion, and brutality against anyone who disagrees with them. They have a huge war chest, a seemingly endless supply of arms, and now American jihadists are dying alongside them in their quest to rule the world. The fear is if they are left unchecked they will export their radical version of Islam through the thousands of hardened troops who possess western passports, bringing their fierce, unmerciful brand of terror to western societies, whom they view as the work of Satan.

What are western political leaders doing? Discussing, analyzing data, debating, positioning, and passing time, all while ISIL continues to roll the trucks with machine gun mounts into villages and towns in an ever-widening circle. They offer no terms of peace. They show no mercy. It is their way through Sharia law or no way.

You cannot read the news and not be concerned about this latest terror development, because we all know that if something isn't done about it swiftly and radically, it will spread to our shores, to our stores, to our streets, and any place of strategic importance to maximize terror in the homeland for the sake of a misguided, unfounded religious ideology.

Studying this current sinister scenario causes me to understand the prophetic ability of Jesus concerning the end of time. From what is going on world-wide through this and other Islamic terror movements, we can understand how quickly world events are setting themselves up to fulfill every word of the biblical prophets. At some future time, unknown to us, with bloodthirsty forces closing in on Israel, as they are positioning themselves to do even as we speak, a false Messiah and world ruler will quickly step onto the world stage to bring peace. He won't sit around discussing, analyzing data, debating, positioning and passing time. No, he will act in the most definitive political fashion to bring a Middle Eastern cease fire to end all cease fires, and all sides will shockingly acquiesce to his proposition.

The world will think this quintessential, gifted man is the premier king of the world, but as we see from Christ's teaching in the Olivet Discourse, he is the false, ferocious king who will be finally replaced at the appearance of the true king, Jesus. This false king's utopia will be short-lived as the Old Testament prophets have told us, along with Jesus. In fact, as the world, at this time, will move toward the final Day of the Lord, it will descend into a divinely ordained time of utter economic, moral, and spiritual chaos, social mayhem and disintegration, cosmic disarray, false teaching and false worship, and anti-Semitism and anti-Christian persecution like the world has never seen before. All of this blackness, of course, will merely undergird Christ's promise in the Olivet Discourse that ...

### The Messianic King Will Bring The Kingdom (Matthew 24:1-25:46)

Those saints who happen to be alive at this time will find great solace and comfort in the question the disciples posed of Jesus on the Mount of Olives prior to His crucifixion. To paraphrase ...

### What Are The Signs Of The King's Arrival? (Matthew 24:4-35)

The signs we have studied thus far have given us a sobering (scary, as some say ...) snapshot of what the first three and half years of the seven year tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27) will look like, as God works to bring His messianic Davidic kingdom to earth (Isaiah 2; 9). With each sign, or seal judgment (Revelation 6:1-8:5), man's difficulty is compounded as God judges sin in preparation for the revelation of His Son in glory to establish His throne as foretold (2 Samuel 7; Psalm 2; 89). According to Jesus, who built His entire prophetic utterance off of Daniel's powerful prophecy in 9:24-27, life on earth will descend into greater judgmental darkness at the mid-point of the tribulation with what He calls the ...

- Abomination (Matthew 24:15—25).

<sup>15</sup> Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) ...

To effectively understand Christ's words here at this pivotal juncture and through verse 25, I think it would be helpful to divide this section/pericope into two manageable movements.

- *Its Background* (Matthew 24:15)
- *Its Effects* (Matthew 24:16-25)

Before we sail out into these deep biblical and theological waters, let me make a couple of much needed observations.

One, to fully understand verse 15 one must understand a wide array of intricate and complex prophetic texts from the Old Testament. Since I don't have time to dig into each one of them, I will have to summarize, hoping you will do some digging on your own.

Two, I will approach my conclusions from a dispensational, pre-tribulational, pre-millennial theological viewpoint. If you don't know what all these terms mean, then you might like to purchase Tim LaHaye and Ed Hinkson's helpful book *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy*.

Three, all prophecy is a worthy study, because as we learn in the book of Revelation, Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, meaning He is in it, concerned intimately with it, and it is about Him (Revelation 19:10).

Four, I struggle for the right way to teach you the depth and breadth of these words here in Matthew 24:15ff because they call for you to understand so much prior biblical revelation. In some respects it is like trying to explain the intricacies of algebra in just thirty minutes. Tough task, so please bear with me.

Five, prophecy is practical, meaning even though certain facets may not apply directly to you, there will always be principles which will. So study, search, and pray and God will show you how the words are applicable to you. Remember, as Paul told Timothy, <sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;* <sup>17</sup> *so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Place heavy emphasis upon that word *all ...* all includes prophetic texts.

With all this in mind as we head out into the deeper water, let's now study the abomination Christ speaks about by first considering ...

*Its Background* (Matthew 24:15). Jesus's use of the word abomination references Daniel's prophetic word about this action in his spectacular prophecy about the final world empires before the arrival of the Messiah (Daniel 8:13, 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Literally, the phrase could read, the "abomination that causes desolation," or the "abomination that is the epitome of religious sacrilege." Frequently in the Old Testament, the word is directly associated with idol worship, which was/is abhorrent to God (as used in the LXX: Deuteronomy 7:25, 26; 13:14-15), or with an inferior, unacceptable religious sacrifice (Deuteronomy 17:1-4). Translated, the last thing you would want to do in the Old Testament was bring an idol into the Temple proper, or offer a detestable, improper sacrifice on God's holy altar. To do so would be to shake your fist in the face of the living God, and to court and arouse His holy wrath against your desecration.

History clearly demonstrates there were those evil foes of Israel and God who desecrated His holy temple.

Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the Syrian/Seleucid king/warlord, who ruled Palestine from 175-165 B.C. as an off-shoot of the four-fold break up of Alexander's empire at his death among his four generals (Lysimachus/Asia Minor; Cassander/Greece; Ptolemy/Egypt; Seleucus/Syria), desecrated the Jewish temple on Chislev (November-December in the Jewish calendar) 15, 167 B.C. At this time he established an altar to Zeus, and possibly an statue of his person in the

temple proper. He sacrificed a pig on the holy altar and forced the priests to eat the forbidden, unclean meat. He prohibited expiatory sacrifices according to the law of Leviticus. He also attacked Sabbath and Jewish festival days, along with outlawing circumcision. Josephus details his ruthless activities in *Wars of the Jews*, Book 1, chapter 1. The apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees also supply more sordid details of his insane hatred of everything Jewish.

When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., according to Josephus,<sup>1</sup> they also desecrated the temple and its precincts by burning it to the ground, along with anyone hiding there for protection, and they then, according to Josephus, headed toward the Eastern Gate, through which the Messiah was prophesied to enter, and offered sacrifices to their plethora of gods denoted on their military ensigns.<sup>2</sup>

Though dastardly, devious acts, neither of these completely fulfill what Daniel and Jesus prophesied. The desecration they speak of is done in the middle of the final seven year prophetic week of the world, and it will usher in a time of world-wide woe and judgment unlike mankind has ever seen before. The one who does this action, therefore, hasn't arrived yet. Who is he? He will be the Anti-Christ who will be the most brutal hater of God and His chosen people who has ever walked the planet. Paul, quoting from the content of Daniel 9 in 2 Thessalonians, prophesied that this evil world leader was still to come:

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Wars Of The Jews*, Book VI, 593.

<sup>2</sup> SIGNA MILITARIA (σημεία, σημαίαι), military ensigns or standards. The most ancient standard employed by the Romans is said to have been a handful of straw fixed to the top of a spear or pole. Hence the company of soldiers, belonging to it, was called *Manipulus* [EXERCITUS, p500B.] The bundle of hay or fern was soon succeeded by the figures of animals, of which Pliny (*H. N. X.4, s5*) enumerates five, viz the eagle, the wolf, the minotaur (Festus, s.v. *Minotaur.*), the horse, and the boar. In the second consulship of Marius, B.C. 104, the four quadrupeds were entirely laid aside as standards, the eagle being alone retained. It was made of silver, or bronze, and with expanded wings, but was probably of a small size, since a standard-bearer (*signifer*) under Julius Caesar is said in circumstances of danger to have wrenched the eagle from its staff and concealed it in the folds of his girdle (Flor. IV.12).

Under the later emperors the eagle was carried, as it had been for many centuries, with the legion, a legion being on that account sometimes called *aquila* (Hirt. *Bell. Hisp.* 30),<sup>9</sup> and at the same time each cohort had for its own ensign the serpent or dragon (*draco*, δράκων), which was woven on a square piece of cloth (*textilis anguis*, Sidon. *Apoll. Carm.* V.409), elevated on a gilt staff, to which a cross-bar was adapted for the purpose (Themist. *Orat.* I. pl, XVIII. p267, ed. Dindorf; Claudian, *IV. Cons. Honor.* 546; *VI. Cons. Honor.* 566), and carried by the *draconarius* (Veget. *de Re Mil.* II.13; compare Tac. *Ann.* I.18).

Another figure used in the standards was a ball (*pila*), supposed to have been emblematic of the dominion of Rome over the world (Isid. *Orig.* XVIII.3); and for the same reason a bronze figure p1045 of Victory was sometimes fixed at the top of the staff, as we see it sculptured, together with small statues of Mars, on the Column of Trajan and the Arch of Constantine (see the next woodcut, and Causeus *de Sig.* in *Graevii Thes.* vol. X p2529). Under the eagle or other emblem was often placed a head of the reigning emperor, which was to the army the object of idolatrous adoration (Josephus, *B. J.* II.9 §2; Suet. *Tiber.* 48, *Calig.* 14; Tac. *Ann.* I.39, 41, IV.62). The name of the emperor, or of him who was acknowledged as emperor, was sometimes inscribed in the same situation (Sueton. *Vespas.* 6). The pole, used to carry the eagle, had at its lower extremity an iron point (*cuspis*) to fix it in the ground, and to enable the *aquilifer* in case of need to repel an attack (Suet. *Jul.* 62). [Http://penelope.uchicago.edu](http://penelope.uchicago.edu), Signa Militaria, accessed on August 28, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup>who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

In the middle of the tribulation, the Anti-Christ will, therefore, profane the rebuilt Jewish temple, and immediately set himself up as the one true god.

How he gets to this point is another study altogether.

Daniel chapters 2 and 7 look at the final forms of world power prior to the coming of the Messiah by comparing them to metal and animals. Why these two images? The metals will decrease in worth, from gold to iron, thus demonstrating how world empires will grow weaker and more brutal. The animal imagery demonstrates the savage nature of the final world powers before the coming of Christ's kingdom. The following chart isolates the identification of these empire parts:

Daniel 2	History/Nation	Daniel 7
Head	Babylon	Lion
Breast & Arms	Medo-Persia	Bear
Belly & Thighs	Greece	Leopard
Legs & Feet	Rome 1	Monster
	Rome 2	
The Stone: Messiah	The Kingdom	The Son of Man: The Messiah

The feet of the giant image, or the head of the monster, both contain the number ten: ten toes with iron mixed with clay and ten horns (Daniel 2:40-43; 7:7-28). Since we know that the Roman empire, which is represented by the iron nature of the image, never consisted of ten separate jurisdictions ruling at the same time and because these particular images and this particular kingdom culminates with the appearance of the Messiah as the true King in both passages, it naturally moves us to believe this ten nation confederacy, from which the little horn, or the Anti-Christ will assume power over after he defeats three major allies in some type of sneak attack, is still future. It also illustrates that the final empire from which the Anti-Christ will emerge is from the smoldering ruins of the Roman Empire. No doubt, his rise to power will captivate the geo-politically gridlocked and fearful world.

Now back to Daniel 9.

Daniel informs us that the Anti-Christ will desecrate the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem in the middle of the seven year tribulation. How will this occur? Good question.

He will come to “defend” the Jews from invasion by their enemies. Let’s get back to the framework of Daniel 9:

<sup>27</sup> And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.

According to verse 26, the Anti-Christ is the “prince who is to come,” and it is he who will cut this peace plan with Israel, as he heads up his ten nation confederacy. Somehow he will pull off what no other politician has pulled up: peace between Israel and their radicalized Islamic neighbors. His peace plan will last “a week” or seven years, calculating based on a sabbatical year where six years culminated into a seventh year for a sabbatical rest of the land. This particular time reckoning, in Jewish thinking, was just another way to look at a week (Leviticus 25:3-7).

Since Daniel was studying the seventy year captivity in Daniel 9:2, which represented 490 years wherein the Israelites had failed to observe the sabbatical rest cycle, God now gave him divine insight into another 490 year cycle, which is also classified as weeks. This one concerned the timing of the coming of the Messiah, the death of the Messiah, and the final tribulation week, or seven year period. We also know this is a seven year period because John, in Revelation, counts it as containing 1,260 days, or forty-two months based on a 30 day month cycle (Revelation 12:6, 13:5).

With this said, three and a half years into the tribulation, the Anti-Christ will come to the rescue of Israel, his political ally, when they are attacked by armies from the north and the south. Here is how Daniel describes the militaristic movement:

<sup>40</sup> At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow *them* and pass through. <sup>41</sup> He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many *countries* will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. <sup>42</sup> Then he will stretch out his hand against *other* countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. <sup>43</sup> But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians *will follow* at his heels. <sup>44</sup> But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. <sup>45</sup> He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him (Daniel 11).

Since the “king of the South” in Daniel 11:5-35 denoted Egypt; we are probably safe to conclude this is Egypt as well. Egypt’s ally will be the “king of the North,” which is probably Syria and her military partners in the area. Together they will attack Israel, seeking to wipe her out and seize her wealth. Looking at the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, coupled with the rise of ISIL in Syria and Iraq, we can readily see how this prophecy can, indeed, occur.

When they attack, they will be repelled and decimated by the Anti-Christ and his forces, but he will be pulled off military conquest by fears of militaristic reprisals from the north (Russia, Turkey) and the East (Iran, Ezekiel 38:5 ) as foretold in Ezekiel 38. When God wipes out these armies, the Anti-Christ will seize the moment to dominate Israel and take control of the city the true Messiah is prophesied reign from (Isaiah 2). It is also at this time he will desecrate the rebuilt temple, set himself up as God, and then set out to rid the world of Jews and Christians like no one before him. This is also the time when the archangel, Michael, and his angelic forces will kick Satan and his minions out of heaven, leaving him with no choice but to head to earth to wreak havoc prior to the return of Jesus (Revelation 12:7-9). No wonder the

persecution will be off the charts. The Devil will attempt to leave the Messiah no one to rule and reign over. (As a sidelight, all of this makes you wonder how effective our political/military maneuvers will be to quell the onslaught of ISIL and Islamic radicalism.)

As you can see, world events are getting providentially set up to fulfill exactly what Jesus said they would be prior to His glorious return to earth. Today the world clamors for an exceptional leader who will lead the world out of its historical war footing to peace. They will get him all right, but he will not be empowered by God or goodness, but by the Dragon and godlessness, the Devil himself, and his rule and reign will be more horrific than all of the most evil world leaders/dictators rolled up into one.

This is the background of Christ's words in Matthew 24:15. Hopefully, their precise prophetic nature is rattling your carnal cage if you are not a Christ-follower. Hopefully, you are finally starting to connect the geo-political dots to see what it really going on in our day, a day which is merely a proving ground for the time of God's wrath against the wicked. Hopefully, this new insight of the clash of two kingdoms, God's and Satan's, will move you, by faith, to embrace the Messiah, the true King of Kings.

Now, when the Anti-Christ desecrates the temple in Jerusalem, which the Jews are preparing even now to rebuild,<sup>3</sup> Jesus gives His people insight regarding the effects of this demonic, devilish abominable act in the holy place.

*Its Effects* (Matthew 24:16-25). Let's read the ensuing verses and then offer some salient observations:

<sup>16</sup> then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. <sup>18</sup> Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. <sup>19</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup> But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

For those living at this time, Jesus has told them there comes a time when you have to run for your life as a Jew or a Christian. Since the Devil and the Satanic trinity will know there time is short, they will pull out all the stops to destroy Jews, who gave the world the Messiah, and Gentiles and Jews who worship the coming Messiah. Talk about hatred personified.

First, once the Anti-Christ desecrates the Temple, this is the trigger for Jews and Christians to flee the holy city because the evil world leader will immediately launch his forces to eradicate them without mercy. The so-called friend turn into a fierce, ruthless foe so quickly if you are on a housetop, which was typically flat and connected to other homes in ancient Jewish cities, don't even bother wasting time to retrieve any personal items. And if you are working in a field at the moment, don't bother getting your coat. That little delay will cost your life. Far better to run as fast as you can for cover in the hills of Judea and the Dead Sea. And, you have the Lord's pity if you are pregnant or have a nursing child at this time because that will impede or slow down your flight. He also hopes the abomination doesn't occur in the winter when flight

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<sup>3</sup> [www.templeinstitute.org](http://www.templeinstitute.org). Go here to see what the Jews are building in order to re-institute temple worship in the rebuilt temple. I've been in this building many times near the Western Wall and its vision and artifacts are jaw dropping.

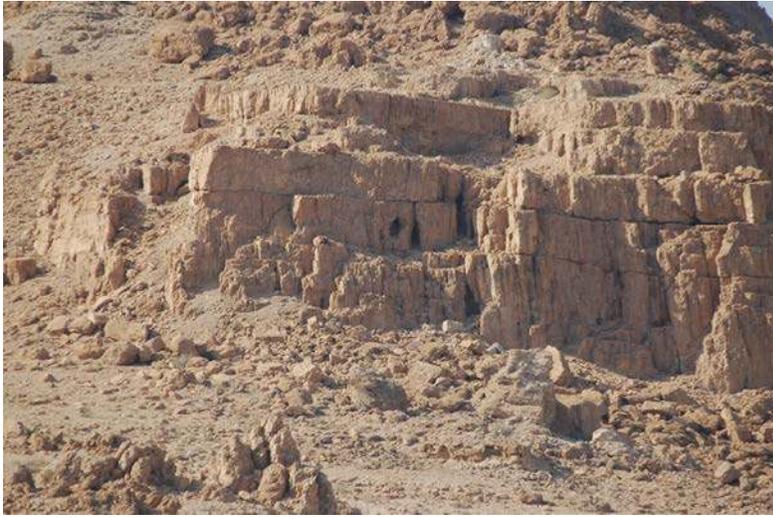
would be harder, or on a Sabbath, when you would face opposition from observant Jews about walking over a prescribed distance acceptable by the law.

The reason to run for your life is given in verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. <sup>22</sup> Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

With the Church out of the way because of the rapture, with the Devil limited to an earthly environment, his hatred for anything and everything godly will be completely unrestrained and unfiltered. Revelation 12 talks about his activity at this time if you would like to read more about his exploits and God's counter-moves.

MacArthur brings up an interesting point about verse 22. He argues that since Jesus didn't use the customary "that day" to speak of the time of eschatological judgment, but He



employed "those days," it is possible that He's alluding to the fact He might use the cover of cosmic darkness to give some Jews and Gentiles the opportunity to flee to safety.<sup>4</sup> This all dovetails nicely with the fourth trumpet judgment and fifth bowl judgment which reveal how God will turn down the astral luminaries to plunge sinners into literal darkness. In any event, it would be just like the Lord to deliver those who would listen to Him, and pragmatically, there are

plenty of caves in the Dead Sea region. Sadly, however, from what Zechariah prophesied, 2/3 of the inhabitants of Israel will not make it, but 1/3 will be spared, protected and refined by God. As we read in Zechariah 13:

<sup>8</sup> 'It will come about in all the land,' declares the LORD, 'That two parts in it will be cut off *and* perish; But the third will be left in it. <sup>9</sup> And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'



<sup>4</sup> John MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989): 45

The result of this time of national holocaust for the Jews will God's final step in driving idolatry from the land and causing them to see their absolute need of Jesus as the one and only Messiah, the true Shepherd. Isn't this just like God to remember mercy amidst wrath? Indeed.

The persecution of these times will be so vast, so pervasive, and so sinister the Anti-Christ will work overtime in seeking to mislead the faithful Gentile and Jewish believers, along with searching and seeking Jews, away from Jesus as the Messiah. He will seek to do this in and through false teachers and prophets:

<sup>23</sup> Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There *He is*,' do not believe *him*. <sup>24</sup> For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup> Behold, I have told you in advance.

Imagine the scenario.

You are running for your life, literally, from the wrath of the Anti-Christ. The whole world worships him and the whole world is in complete disarray, economically, militarily, socially, educationally, financially, and spiritually. Death is everywhere and an uncanny darkness is all around you in the daytime.

As people are fleeing, leaving everything behind they held dear, they will be prone to listen to the voice of an Anti-christ influenced false teacher or prophet telling them, "Follow me. I know where Jesus has just touched down as prophesied. And if you don't believe I am his emissary, just look at the signs and wonders he gave me the ability to perform." Others will exclaim, "I am Jesus, the Messiah. I'm back as prophesied. Come with me." When fleeing folks might look askance at these false Messiahs is when they perform miraculous works in order to cause them to come with them. Interesting enough, the signs and wonders they will perform will have the appearance of deity all about them, since the very word harken back to God's signs and wonders leveled against Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21; 7:3; 11:9-10; 15:1). To listen to these charlatans will be to lose your life. Hence the warning of Christ in advance.

Since we know times of greater deception are coming, and we know that the spirit of the Anti-christ (2 John 1:7) is at work even now inside and outside the Church through deceptive, devious, and dangerous teachers, we should always be on the alert for the infiltration into our lives and church of those who espouse false doctrine. Regardless of how authentic, compelling and convincing some "saint" might be in the days ahead, we must, at all costs cling to sound doctrine, the teaching of the Word of God, and above all else be people of prayer.

And to those who are still straddling the fence, wondering whether they should follow Jesus or continue to reject Him, the day for straddling is over. His wrath against sin and Satan will be evidenced one day in all of its holy fullness, but now He extends a hand of grace out to you. Now, He, the Lord of glory, leans forward on His throne and gently and quietly calls your name. You can hear Him, can't you? He's calling you to become a person of faith in His substitutionary death and glorious resurrection for you.