

Something that isn't very well known, is that in a darkened room, in the United Nations building in New York, stands an altar. A *“six-and-half-ton rectangular block of iron ore, polished on the top and illuminated from above by a single spotlight.”<sup>i</sup>*

And the United Nation's own website, tells us about this altar:

*“But the stone in the middle of the room has more to tell us. We may see it as an altar, empty not because there is no God, not because it is an altar to an unknown god, but because it is dedicated to the God whom man worships under many names and in many forms.”<sup>ii</sup>*

The room is what's called “the meditation room”, and it's a place, where people can go to meditate and to pray, to whichever god they feel like....

We've been working our way through the Gospel of Matthew, and we're now in a little sub-series – “What to expect when you're expecting.” What do we expect to happen, while we're awaiting the return of Jesus Christ?

What we've found so far is:

1. We expect Jesus to be a long time coming, so don't be discouraged that it's already been 2000 years. It

could be any moment of any day. The Sunday roast you've got thawing in your kitchen bench, mightn't make it to the oven. Jesus could come back any moment of any day.

2. Secondly, we expect there to be 'big trouble' – the great tribulation before Jesus returns, and Christians will suffer great persecution.
3. Thirdly, we expect there to be false christs and false prophets

And today's topic, is we expect the **unholy** to desecrate the holy. We expect the world's religions, to enmesh, to form one world religion – something that that iron ore altar, symbolises in the UN.....

The very first week I preached on this passage, I shared with you, that it's hard to tell, what time period Jesus is talking about in this prophecy. Some of the events He described, **could** have been fulfilled in AD 70, when the Romans put down a Jewish uprising, and razed the temple to the ground. Other events, such as described in Verse 15, **the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)**, sounds very much like what happened 167 years before Jesus was even born.

Right at the start of this series, I told you what happened at that time. So, here's a little recap:

- The year is 167BC (Before Christ): And a Greek King, by the name of “Antiochus Epiphanies”, wanted to consolidate his kingdom, and get everyone on the same page (he wanted to build unity in his kingdom), and to do that – he realised that something that kept people apart – was religion. And so he decreed that everybody should worship the one god, and he chose Zeus. And of course, the Jews refused to do that, because YHWH has commanded us to worship YHWH, and YHWH alone.

And so Antiochus Epiphanies, made an effort to break Jewish religion – he outlawed it. He banned its religious practices. And when the Jews rebelled against that, he attacked Jerusalem. In 3 days, 80 000 people were lost – 40 000 were killed. 40 000 were sold into slavery.

And then he marched into the temple. They dedicated the temple of YHWH, to Zeus (set up a statue of Zeus in the temple), and sacrificed pigs and other unclean things on YHWH’s altar, and then, to profane God’s holy temple even further, they turned the place into a brothel....

And those who went through all this, saw what was happening, and they looked back to Daniel, and realised “This has got to be the abomination that

causes desolation” that the prophet Daniel had foretold.....

Now, remember that these events Jesus is telling His disciples about, are like the end.

And so, I suspect, that what Jesus is telling us, is to expect something like what happened with Antiochus Epiphanies.... What happened???? The unholy desecrated what was holy.... In an attempt to unify the Greek empire, worship of the One True God – worship of YHWH – was outlawed, and a new national religion, was set up in its place...

And I believe, Jesus is saying, “Before I return, you will see something like this happen. You will see the worship of the one true God – YHWH – become increasingly difficult. You will see, the holy, desecrated by the unholy. You will see, a new religion set up, with the intent, to unify.... And this unification, will be at the exclusion of Christians who remain true to Christ.

And I reckon, we can see the beginnings of this, even today.

Since the beginning of time, religions **have** divided nations from nations....

Wars have been fought, in the name of religion... Even the Christian church, has a lot of history, that we should be deeply ashamed of – times when sinful leaders, went to war, in the name of God – times when atrocities have been committed in the name of Christ.... I cannot deny, that these things have happened,... but God did not do them – these things were the works of Satan, infiltrating the church....

*Today, of course, Jihad – Islamic holy war – is the well known source of terrorism and atrocities...*

*For the last couple of weeks, we've heard of the 200 school girls, abducted from their Nigerian school classrooms, and being forced to convert to Islam, or being sold as slaves – probably to the depraved.... It's awful...*

The liberals of course, say “that’s not true Islam”, but then the fundamentals (those who actually take the Quran in its literal form), disagree with them, and if Jihad (a holy war) is proclaimed, then to them, it is true Islam... There is no shortage of Muslim clerics proclaiming Jihad....

And so, in the eyes of many, religion is the source of all this hatred and war and terrorism and atrocities... And they say to themselves, “If only we could find just one common, peaceful, world religion, so we can all just get on with each other.... Then we’d have peace...” “If

only we had a religion of tolerance and acceptance – a religion that’s nice and never judgmental...” ....

And so they build for themselves, a **brand new** god... - they create a god in their own image... Their god, is the god of unity – It’s not the god of truth. It’s not the god of justice. It’s not the God who gave Himself for the redemption of the world... It’s not really even the god of love... It is a god of their own construction – the god of unity, tolerance and diversity....

A God who’s commandment can be summed up as “Believe what you like, and live and let live”...

And so they search, to find the ‘common ground’ between the world’s religions... They take what they like, out of each religion, and they say “Look, it’s the same as that one”... The Liberal Muslims, the Liberal Christians, the Liberal Jews, get together, and say “We’re very much alike.”... Rubbish !!!...

There is one true God, and many lies....

Most of you know that, almost 2 years ago now, I believe God said it was time to get out the Uniting Church... I know a bit about its ‘goings-ons’ because I was in it for years... So I’m going to use the U C as an

example, but there's probably plenty of other denominations in the same boat.

The Uniting Church Assembly endorses multi-faith worship. On the U C Web site, it says:

*Multifaith worship assumes a respect for each others faith expression and beliefs and should never be entered into in order to proselytize (that means to convert them to Christianity). It should rather acknowledge our diverse spirituality and common humanity<sup>iii</sup>.*

They also say:

*As inter-faith dialogue becomes part of the everyday life of our Church, we will find some persons who move into the Christian Church from other faiths and who find in Christ the one who provides life with the purpose they seek. When this happens we should give thanks for the work of the Spirit in our midst. We will also see Christians who find in Buddhism or Islam or Indigenous Aboriginal spirituality a way of life that attracts them. In this way, they may deepen their knowledge of God. In this too we must rejoice and give thanks for the bounty of God.<sup>iv</sup>*

The U C says that the purpose of these inter-faith discussions, is to:

*develop wherever possible a commitment to promote respect and tolerance for the integrity of the beliefs of other faiths, cultures and traditions<sup>v</sup>.*

*A respect and tolerance for the integrity of the beliefs of other faiths*

You've got to be kidding me!!! What integrity is there in a lie???

Some people say, "All religions lead to the one God"... Rubbish!!! You **cannot** be a Christian and believe that. God's word is very clear...

Yes, there is only one God... And the only way to truly know God, is through Jesus Christ. All other gods, are a lie of the Devil.

There is only one God, and YHWH is His name. Now, I've told you this before, but I'm going to tell you again: In your bibles, wherever you see "THE LORD" in all capitals, or wherever you see "GOD" in all capitals, the actual Hebrew word in the Scriptures, is God's personal name "YHWH".

There is only one God, and YHWH is His Name.

Let me tell you a little story:

The king of Assyria was the ruler of a super-power. Many nations had fallen before his armies. And when they came to the walls of Jerusalem, the Assyrians mocked God – they mocked YHWH. And they said “All of these other gods, didn’t protect their people, and neither will yours... and this is what happened:

Isaiah 37:

<sup>14</sup> Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of YHWH, and spread it before YHWH. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to YHWH: <sup>16</sup> “O YHWH of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, **you** are the God, **you** alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; **you** have made heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup> Incline your ear, O YHWH, and hear; open your eyes, O YHWH, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God.

<sup>18</sup> Truly, O YHWH, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, <sup>19</sup> and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed.

<sup>20</sup> So now, O YHWH our God, save us from his

hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you **alone** are YHWH." ...

... And God saved them... And the King of Assyria, who mocked God, was stabbed by his own sons, in the temple of his god, that was no god at all...

What integrity, does a lie have???

The Apostle Paul said: 2 Corinthians 6:<sup>14</sup> Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

<sup>15</sup> What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **we** are the temple of the living God; as God said,

"I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch no unclean thing;  
then I will welcome you,

18 and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,  
says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us  
cleanse ourselves from every defilement of  
body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion  
in the fear of God.

Now, it's important you get this:

**2Corinthians 6:16** What agreement has the temple of  
God with idols? **For we are the temple of the  
living God**

Did you know that? Did you know that you are the  
temple of the living God??? By His Holy Spirit, God  
does not live in buildings made glorious by the hands of  
men... God lives in lives, made holy by the blood of  
His son....

Where is God's holy place?

- Is it a building? Maybe.
- Is it a mountain in Israel? Maybe.
- Is it a place in Rome? Maybe.

Where is God's holy place?

- Is it the Christian church? Yes, it is.
- Is it a Christian denomination? Maybe...

All of these places may be known as God's Holy Place.

But I can tell you this one thing for certain:

God has made you, His Holy Place. God took you as you were – sinful; evil; defiled. And in Christ, He has washed you, and made you pure and Holy...

Where is God's holy place? Where He dwells – in the hearts of believers...

*We're in the middle of designing a house, and one of the things that we've had to consider, is "How much room do we need?" One of my boys is about to leave home. The other one will only be a few years later. But we want to have room for, if they leave town, we'll still have enough room for them and their families when they come to visit. We want to make sure we have enough room, so we can open up our home for those who need a place to sleep...*

*How much room do we need?*

Now, more importantly, what about our hearts? How much room do you have, for gods??? How many gods are going to fit in there????

There is only one God. Your heart has room for either one God (YHWH), or for a whole lot of lies...

when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)

I don't know, what holy place we will see this "abomination of desolation"... but I think we've got a pretty fair idea of what it is. (and you'll know it when it happens) It will be some other god, taking YHWH's place.

And I suspect that it's already begun... I gave you a couple of examples from the U C , but that's just because I'm familiar with it... If I was more familiar with other denominations, I could probably have given you examples from those...

The abomination begins.... when other religions and other gods, are placed alongside the One True God... The **un**holy desecrates the Holy, when the worship of the Christian church, is tainted by the inclusion of detestable false gods...

And this abomination is given a foothold, whenever Christians adopt an attitude of passive acceptance, rather than standing up for the truth in the name of Christ.

Revelation 13:4–18 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. <sup>7</sup> Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, <sup>8</sup> and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. <sup>9</sup> If anyone has an ear, let him hear:

<sup>10</sup> If anyone is to be taken captive,

to captivity he goes;

if anyone is to be slain with the sword,

with the sword must he be slain.

Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

That sums it up. Those who hold true to Christ, will not worship the abomination. And many Christians will be killed, rather than bowing to this false god... And therefore, **Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**

The current against the one true God, is getting stronger. Who'd of thought it possible, even a few years ago, that the phrase "Happy holiday" could possibly replace "Merry Christmas"... But the name of Christ, offends other religions...

The current is getting stronger, and when you stand against the current, you will take a battering. You will be labelled as intolerant. You will be accused of being arrogant – that what you believe is the only truth. You will be accused of being exclusivist and narrow-minded....

But never, ever forget, that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the way to life. The Living God, has made His home in your heart. **Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.**

Amen.

# Christmas holiday

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/meditationroom.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/dag/meditationroom.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.assembly.uca.org.au/rof/religious-gatherings/20-so-you-want-to-worship-together>

<sup>iv</sup> SUMMARY OF

## ***LIVING WITH THE NEIGHBOUR WHO IS DIFFERENT: CHRISTIAN FAITH IN A MULTI RELIGIOUS WORLD***

### **Introduction**

The Eighth Assembly in 1997 requested the then Doctrine Commission to prepare a theological statement to guide the Uniting Church as it entered an increasingly diverse society where many faiths are practiced. This statement is our response to that request, and is a summary of a longer resource document available in hard copy.

<sup>v</sup> <http://assembly.uca.org.au/rof/>