



# PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-05

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## What Will It Be Like When We “Flee to the Mountains?”

by Jim Buller

“The wise look ahead to see what is coming.” Proverbs 22:3. So, what’s coming? What is ahead for us? In Matthew chapter 24 “Christ presented before [His disciples] an outline of the prominent events to take place before the close of time.” *The Great Controversy* page 25. So let’s take a quick look at Matthew 24.

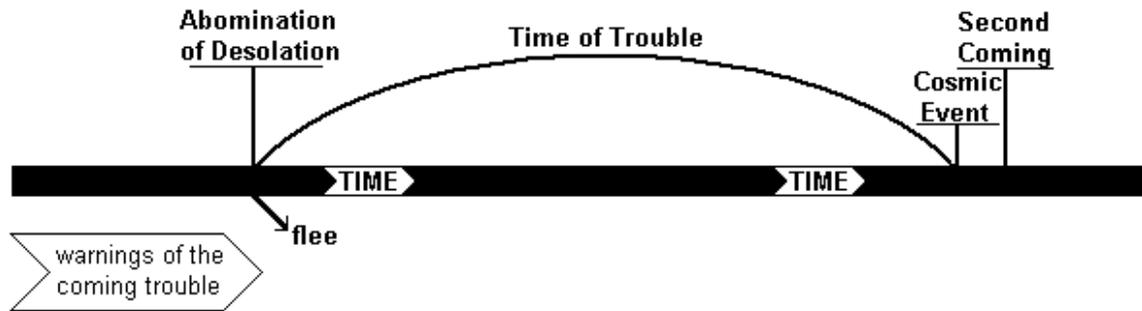
This chapter starts out with the disciples asking Jesus for a sign when the destruction of the Temple and the end-times, (which they think is basically the same event), are about to happen. Beginning with verse 4, and on through verse 14, Jesus tells them of things that will happen as the end draws near. But notice what He says in the last part of verse 6, and again in verse 8, “the end is not yet,” and, “these are the beginning of sorrows.” So none of these things are the sign of the final end-times.

He gives them this sign in verses 15-16, where He says, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel —let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” The next four verses give more details about the escape, and then in verse 21 Jesus tells the reason to flee. “For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now —and never to be equaled again.” The following seven verses, 22-28, tell more about this time of “great distress,” or “Time of Trouble” as Daniel 12:1 puts it, and how to deal with the deceptions of that time. Then, as the prophetic part of the chapter comes to a close, verse 29 describes the Cosmic Event that will occur at the end of the Time of Trouble, and verses 30-31 tell about Jesus’ Second Coming.

This, then, gives us the following “outline of the prominent events to take place before the close of time.”

- warning signs of the coming Time of Trouble
- the “Abomination that causes Desolation,” the sign to take action which marks the beginning of the Time of Trouble
- the Time of Trouble itself
- the Cosmic Event at the end of the Time of Trouble
- Jesus’ Second Coming

Put together on a time-line, the outline looks like this:



So, if we believe Jesus *is* coming soon, then we must also conclude, that we will soon be going through the Time of Trouble; and that we will soon be fleeing to the mountains.

Remember our opening verse, "The wise look ahead to see what is coming?" If we would be wise then, shouldn't we take a look at the rest of the prophecies to find out all we can about what it will be like when we have to flee? How else can we know what to prepare for? With this in mind let's look at some key prophecies in the Bible and Ellen White's writings to see what we can find out.

- Matthew 24:16-18

"...flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak."

- *Testimonies for the Church Volume Five* pages 464,465

"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."

- Revelation 13:16,17

"He [the beast with two lamb-like horns] also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name."

- *Country Living* pages 9,10

"Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one."

- Revelation 13:15

The image of the beast will, "cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

- *The Great Controversy* page 626

"As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places."

- *Early Writings* pages 56-57

"I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. ... God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. ... Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs."

- Isaiah 33:16

"His [God's people's] secure height will be craggy places difficult to approach. His own bread will certainly be given him; his water supply will be unfailing."

- *Maranatha* page 270

'During the night a very impressive scene passed before me. There seemed to be great confusion and the conflict of armies. A messenger from the Lord stood before me, and said, "Call your household. I will lead you; follow me." He led me down a dark passage, through a forest, then through the clefts of mountains, and said, "Here you are safe." There were others who had been led to this retreat. The heavenly messenger said, "The time of trouble has come as a thief in the night, as the Lord warned you it would come.'"

- *S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 7* page 971

"This time, which the angel declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world's history, neither of probationary time, but of prophetic time, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844."

- Matthew 24:37

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."

Before we begin drawing conclusions from these verses and quotations about what it will be like when we "flee to the mountains," we need to notice that there are

actually two stages to our flight. First, by the time of the “decree enforcing the papal sabbath” we should be out of the cities in rural areas where we “can raise our [own] provisions.” Then, as the time of trouble intensifies, there is another decree, the “death decree,” as it is some times called. This decree withdraws “the protection of [the] government” from God’s true people, similar to what happened in the time of Esther. (See *Testimonies for the Church Vol 5* page 450.) It is at this death decree, that we flee to the “most desolate and solitary places.” So, in the first stage, we flee from the cities out into the country side. In the second stage we flee to the wilderness. This second stage is what we typically think of when we talk about “fleeing to the mountains,” and it will be the subject of the rest of our study.

Our first conclusion from these prophecies is that when we “flee to the mountains,” we will be deliberately going to the most inaccessible rocky areas that we can find. Notice that we will not just be going to “desolate and solitary places,” we will be going to the “*most* desolate and solitary places.” Let’s think about this for a minute. We will want to go to places that are hard to get to! This would have to be areas without any roads, and most likely not even any trails. The rugged rockiness would rule out getting there by horse, or in a four-wheel drive or ATV. There are a couple additional reasons why we would not use vehicles at that time. Since we will not be able to “buy or sell,” we wouldn’t be able to buy gas to run them, neither would we want to leave behind the tracks they make to show which way we had gone. So really, the only way to get these places would be on foot. We would be wise then, to learn how to hike cross-country, and to develop good direction finding skills. It would also be a good idea to think about where places like this might be, and how we might get to them.

One additional thought is that people have a strong tendency to flee to a place where they “feel safe,” and most of us are not used to being this far out in nature. Remember the story of Lot and his family fleeing from Sodom? They were reluctant to leave civilization because they didn’t feel safe in the wilderness. When the angel told them to “flee to the mountains,” Lot replied, “I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.” See Genesis 19:17-20. If we don’t feel safe in the wilderness either, we may have problems fleeing there when the time comes. Therefore we should also spend time now experiencing the wilderness. This will not only help us to feel safe there, but also give us a chance to develop wilderness living skills. “Remember Lot’s wife!” Luke 17:32.

Secondly, “fleeing,” usually means moving fast and traveling light. So, this would rule out backpacking as it is typically done. That 40, or more, pound pack, would simply get dumped and left behind —especially if we were fleeing from an angry mob!

Considering this, and what Jesus said in Matthew 24:17-18 about someone on the roof or in the field not going back to get anything, many have concluded that when we flee, we *shouldn’t* take anything with us. However, notice that Jesus didn’t say, “drop everything and run!” He just said, “don’t go back” to get anything. If we have things already with us, or if we can pick them up along the way, it *is* OK to take them along. We are just not to “go back” to get anything —and especially not wait until it’s time to flee to start packing! (See also the parable of the 10 Virgins regarding this idea of “not going back.”)

This observation is significant, because we *do* need certain things to stay alive. (The notion of “surviving on nothing” is a myth —the people who *appear* to be able to “survive on nothing” are actually just skilled at getting by very simply using what nature provides.) You see, if we were in a survival situation without *anything*, we would almost immediately begin to gather and make things we needed. When we moved our camp, we would undoubtedly take some of these items with us —rather than having to find and make new ones. So the point here is, why not bring basic essential items we need along with us in the first place? But remember, we will be “fleeing” —moving fast and traveling light. So, we need to be careful not to try to bring too much. If our pack is too heavy or too bulky we might end up having to leave it all behind. Therefore, we should learn how to keep our needs simple, and meet them with the least amount of equipment possible.

This basic equipment should be kept together, so it can easily be picked up as we head out. It should also be easy and convenient to carry while moving fast. And one last thing, be sure you are already familiar with the use of each item in your pack. You will have enough to worry about when fleeing without also trying to figure out how to make something work!



Our third conclusion centers around the realization that there is no more time prophecy after 1844. In other words, we don't know how long our wilderness experience will last. Therefore, when we flee we should plan on staying indefinitely. This has several implications. One is that the equipment we do take with us should be durable —don't rely on some of the flimsy survival “gadgets” on the market.

Another implication of staying indefinitely goes together with the quotation from *Early Writings* page 56, that says we are not to stockpile provisions, for if we did, they would be taken from us. (We probably wouldn't hide them in the place God will lead us to anyway). The point here though is, whether we'd stashed supplies somewhere, or packed them in with us, no matter how much we had, it would eventually all get used up. So, let's not try to take enough toilet paper to last until Jesus comes! We need to learn how to replenish our supplies from nature.

Notice also the promise at the end of this same quotation, “God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness.” In the same way He has taken care of His children who have lived in primitive areas for thousands of years, He can still provide for us from the things of nature. But we still need to do our part, and learn what we can about “living off the land.” Suppose, for example, He leads us to an area filled with wild edible plants. If we have neglected to learn how to identify or prepare them, would it be God's fault or ours that we go hungry?

Our fourth conclusion is that we will be in groups. Notice the phrases “associate together in companies,” and, “there were others who had been led to this retreat,” in the *Great Controversy* page 626 and *Maranatha* page 270 quotations. We would be wise then to learn group techniques for wilderness survival. This is mentioned because much modern survival instruction just teaches individuals how to survive. Some things must be done a little different. But, although the available resources must be shared, there are many ways that group survival is much easier. It is also comforting to know that we won't be by ourselves during this experience.

For our final point, remember Jesus said the end times would be, “As it was in the days of Noah.” Matthew 24:37. Notice the following quotations from *Patriarchs and Prophets* pages 95 and 100. “All that man could do was done to render the work perfect, yet the ark could not of itself have withstood the storm which was to come upon the earth. God alone could preserve His servants upon the tempestuous waters.” “Angels that excel in strength were commissioned to preserve it.”

In a sense, the ark was Noah's survival pack—and a fairly extensive one at that! Yet, in spite of the workmanship on the ark being “perfect,” it was still “God alone” who could preserve it. Even though Noah spent a lot of time, energy, and resources making extensive preparations; and even though he had to learn and practice good ark building skills; *he still had to “trust wholly in God.”*

Some have thought that since God has promised to take care of us, and since we will have to trust Him completely during that time, that we really don't need to do much to prepare. Others have suggested that by learning how to survive in the wilderness we will become self-sufficient, and depend on our skills and equipment rather than depend on God. Some have even said this type of preparation actually shows a lack of trust in God, that we *shouldn't* do anything to prepare.

But remember Noah's experience. God told him to prepare the ark; and even though Noah did his best, it was still “God alone” who preserved him. Obviously, it is not necessary to have nothing, or do nothing on our part, to “trust wholly in God.” On the other hand, if we expect God to take care of us even though we haven't prepared, wouldn't that be like a Noah who didn't build the ark, yet still expected God to preserve him through the flood? We all need to realize how “faith” and “works” *go together*. We need to do all we can, *and* we need to trust God completely.

To review the conclusions of this study:

- ① We will be going deep into the wilderness, to the “most desolate and solitary places.”
- ② It *is* OK to take things with us, but we need to travel light.
- ③ We will be staying indefinitely.
- ④ We will be in groups.
- ⑤ We should do all we can to prepare, *and* we need to “trust wholly in God.”

To prepare for our end-time wilderness experience, we would be wise to:

- Learn *now* to trust God completely, in all that we do.
- Become familiar with the end-time prophecies, so we know what to expect.
- Put together a *light-weight* equipment pack of basic, durable items; that we know how to use, and keep it ready to take with us into the wilderness.
- Spend time in the wilderness; so we “feel safe,” and are comfortable getting around in nature.
- Learn how to re-supply our needs from nature.
- Learn group wilderness travel and survival techniques.
- Give some thought as to where we might flee, and how we might get there when the time comes.

Please don't just read this study and think, “Oh, that's interesting information.” You see, I've discovered that there are two quite different ways we use the word

“believe.” The Bible also uses the word these same two ways. The difference between the two is probably most clearly described in James chapter two. Verse 19 says, “You *believe* that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons *believe* —and tremble!” This first type of belief is something even the demons have —a knowledge and acceptance of the facts. Don’t misunderstand, knowing and accepting the facts, or “the truth,” isn’t a bad thing. But we just can’t stop there. If we do, we won’t get any farther than the demons are going to get. The second type of belief is described just a couple verses down in verse 23, “Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Abraham’s type of belief goes beyond the mere acceptance of the facts, and produces righteousness.

To make the difference in these two types of “belief” more distinct, let’s look at another verse in Hebrews chapter eleven. Remember, Hebrews 11 is the great “faith chapter.” This chapter is all about Abraham’s type of belief, and it has a lot to say about him, but to make our point as simple and plain as possible, let’s look at verse 7 which is talking about Noah. It says, “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household.” Noah not only accepted the things God had told him as fact, but he *acted* in agreement with the information, and built the ark.

Now, the condition of society before the flood must have been obvious, (see Genesis 6:11-13); and undoubtedly, at least some of the people must have accepted the facts connected with Noah’s message. In the same way that we say, “Things keep getting worse, Jesus must be coming soon,” they probably also said things like, “The world is getting bad, the flood must be coming soon.” But doesn’t this, by itself, show only the demon’s type of belief? This is evidenced by the fact that although they may have fully “believed” what they were saying, they didn’t prepare, and they never got on the ark.

In the same way then, if all we do is recognize and accept the “truth” of the messages God sends our way, can we expect to end up any better than the people before the flood, or the demons for that matter? You see, like Noah and Abraham, we *must also act* in agreement with God and the things He has told us. I pray that, like Noah, you too will move with godly fear, and prepare.

"Sensible people will see trouble coming and avoid it, but an unthinking person will walk right into it and regret it later." Proverbs 22:3

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### Contact Information

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*“Preparing to Stand”*

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