

# 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 3-21-1905

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## Putting Together the End-Time Time-Line

by Jim Buller

“The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew gives an outline of what is to come upon the world.” *This Day with God*, page 152 —Letter 90, 1902. (See also *The Great Controversy* page 25.) We will begin this study by tracing the basic outline from Matthew 24, then we will add elements from other Scripture sources to fill in the picture. Simply due to space, many of the Scripture references have not been written out, so please look them up, and read them in their context.

Matthew 24 starts out with Jesus and His disciples leaving the Temple. The disciples are admiring the magnificent architecture, when Jesus makes the comment that, “not one stone will be left upon another.” Their curiosity is obviously aroused, and they ask Jesus, “When will these things be?” And, assuming that the Temple would be destroyed at the Second Coming, (see *The Great Controversy* page 25), they also ask, “What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?”

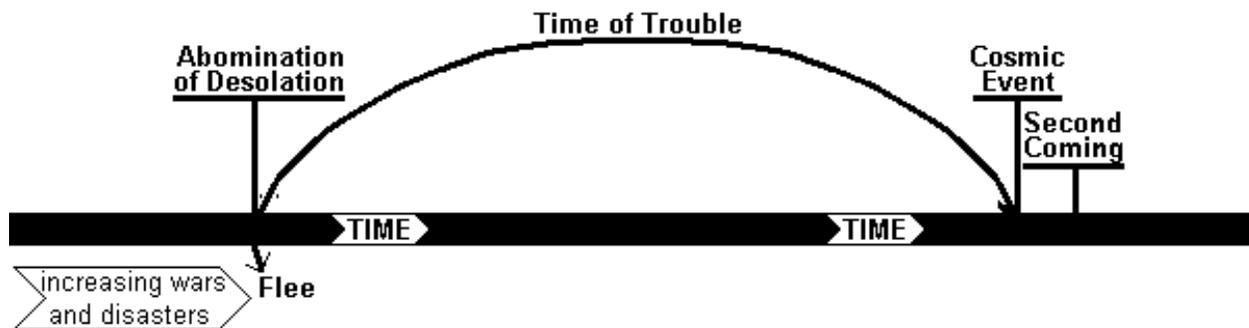
In answer to their questions, Jesus gives a parallel prophecy which applies both to the destruction of the Temple and city of Jerusalem, and the end-times. Although we will refer to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed in the first century A.D., the main focus of this study will be the end-time application of this prophecy.

Since the disciples asked, “What will be the *sign* of Your coming, and of the end of the world?” let’s think a minute about what a *sign* is. To be a sign, it must be ① visible, ② understandable, and ③ signs are usually given in connection with some action to be taken. As we read through Matthew 24 then, we will look for something that is visible, understandable, and that is possibly a signal to take action.

As Jesus begins answering the disciples, in verses 4 and 5, He first warns about deception and false christs. Then in verses 6 through 8, He tells about things that will be happening as we get closer and closer to the end, notably increasing wars and disasters. But these are obviously not *the sign*, as He also says, “but the end is not yet,” and “these are only the beginning of birth pains.” Then, in verses 9 and 10 He talks about the persecutions there will be, and verse 11 contain another warning about deception and false prophets.

Verses 12 and 13 are an encouragement for us to hang on to God, not letting go of our faith or letting our love grow cold, but to steadfastly endure to the end. This brings us to verse 14. Because of the way this verse is worded, many have thought that the gospel going to the whole world was *the sign*. However, as important as this verse is, it cannot be *the sign*, as only God would know when the gospel has reached every heart. It would not be visible, or understandable to *us*. Neither does this verse indicate any action to be taken once the gospel has gone to the whole world.

Then, in verses 15 and 16, Jesus 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*.” Here is possibly *the sign* the disciples had asked for—the abomination that causes desolation. It is something we can see, understand, and we are given an action to take in connection with it. The next four verses give more information about the flight, and then, in verse 21, Jesus tells the reason we will have to flee. “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.” The following verses, 23-28, tell about the deceptions, false prophets, and false christs during the time of “great distress,” or “Time of Trouble,” as it is typically called, based on the wording in Daniel 12. As the prophetic part of Matthew 24 comes to a close, verse 29 describes a Cosmic Event that marks the end of the Time of Trouble, and verses 30-31 tell about Jesus’ Second Coming. Looking at the prophetic part of this chapter as a whole, (verses 4 through 31), the Abomination of Desolation is the only thing that could be *the sign*. It is the signal to flee, and it marks the beginning of the great Time of Trouble just prior to Jesus Second Coming. These events gives us the following basic time-line:



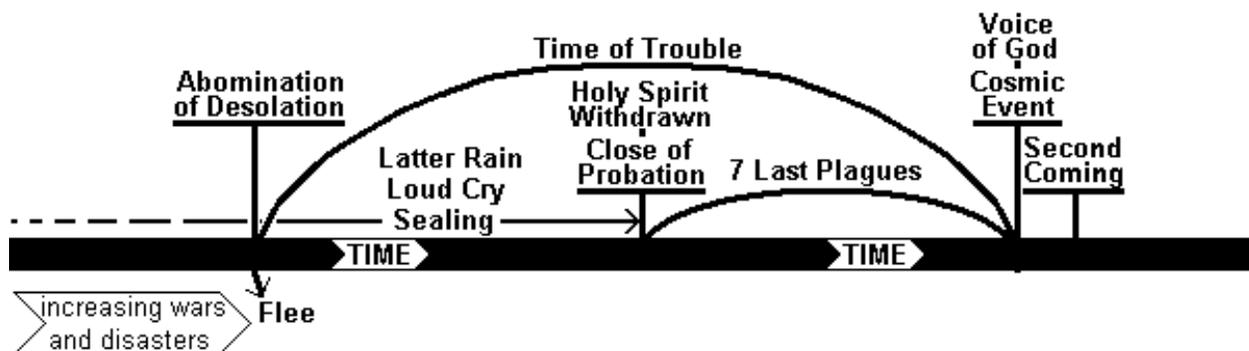
To fill in this time-line some more, let’s first look at the Cosmic Event just before the Second Coming. By comparing Matthew 24:29 with Luke 21:25-26, Isaiah 13:13, Joel 3:15-16, (several other similar Old Testament Scriptures), and Revelation 6:12-17, 11:15-19, and 16:17-21, we find that at this event the sun is darkened, the moon turns red like blood, the stars fall, the earth is moved out of its place, there is a great earthquake and hailstorm, and even the heavenly bodies are shaken. This event is also known as the Sixth Seal, the Seventh Trumpet, and the Seventh of the Seven Last Plagues.

As the Seventh Plague is poured out, a loud voice comes from the Temple in heaven—which obviously must be God’s voice— saying, “*It is done.*” As a result, this Cosmic Event is more commonly known as the “Voice of God.” It is also known as “the great day of God,” and in this connection the question is asked, “who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17), [which ties in with the name of this paper].

Since this Cosmic Event is the *Seventh* Plague, the other plagues must happen *before* this event. It will be a Time of Trouble indeed! But notice what is said in *Early Writings* page 85. “The commencement [or beginning] of that time of trouble,’ here mentioned does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary.” So, we find that there are two parts to the Time of Trouble. The first part, is the “short period” mentioned here as being *before* the Plagues; and a second part, during the time of the Plagues themselves. (Some people have referred to these two parts as the “Little Time of Trouble,” and the “Big Time of Trouble.” The second part has also been referred to as “Jacob’s Time of Trouble.”)

Just before we put all this on the time-line, let us look at the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> chapters of Revelation, which talk about the plagues. Just before the plagues are poured out, Revelation 15:8 says, “The Temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the Temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.” Since the Temple is where sins are forgiven, not being “able to enter the Temple” means no more sins will be forgiven. So, our probation, or the time of grace, closes just *before* the plagues are poured out. This also goes together with what was quoted earlier from page 85 of *Early Writings* where it referred to “a short period just before [the plagues] are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary.”

This means we must confess and be completely cleansed of all our selfishness and sin, and be “sealed,” before probation closes. (See 1 John 1:9, Revelation 7:1-3). The last great evangelistic thrust known as the Loud Cry, under the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit, known as the Latter Rain, also happens during this final Sealing time. As Probation Closes, the Holy Spirit is finally withdrawn from those who have continued to resist His influence. But these are entire studies in themselves, so we won’t take the time to get into all that right now. Adding all this to the time-line, we have the following:



Now, let's go back to the beginning of the time-line and focus on the Abomination of Desolation. The verses in Matthew 24 mentioned earlier, tell us this is our sign to take action and flee, because the Time of Trouble is going to begin. This Abomination of Desolation, or Abomination *that causes* Desolation, (depending on which verse, and which version you are reading), is another whole study in it self! For the time being, we will note that it is an indication, from God's perspective, that things have gotten so bad—the Abomination—that they have to be destroyed—the Desolation. It is similar to what happened at the time of the flood, and to Sodom and Gomorrah, (see also Matthew 24:37, Luke 17:26 and 28).

Comparing Matthew 24:15-16 with it's equivalent in Luke 21:20-21 which says, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies ... flee to the mountains." We find that back in the first century AD, at the time of the destruction of the Temple, the signal for Christ's followers to flee, was Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

For our end-time application, to keep things short, we will put this together with what is said in *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." So, *our* signal event will be a *national* law passed in the U.S.A. (E.G. White was a U.S. citizen), enforcing Sunday as a day of rest. We need to be out of the cities by this "National Sunday Law" as it is typically called. A study of Revelation 13 shows that this law is the same issue as the Mark of the Beast—but again, we don't have space for that whole study here.

However, we do need to look at a couple verses in Revelation 13. Verse 17 says, "no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark." So, connected with the enforcement of the National Sunday Law, the time will come when those who do not comply will not be able to do any business. God has told us how to deal with this in *Country Living* pages 9-10, which says, "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." So, in preparation for the first part of the Time of Trouble we need to be living out of the cities where we will be able to "raise [our] own provisions."

Please notice the way this quotation was worded. It says, "The Lord *has* instructed"—we should *already* be living out in the country, "for *in the future*" we will need to be able to live "off the grid," and raise our own provisions. It would not be wise to wait until the National Sunday Law is passed to move to the country. Please do a little further study, and contrast the experiences of Noah and his family, who prepared ahead of time, with Lot and his family, who waited until the last minute to get out of town.

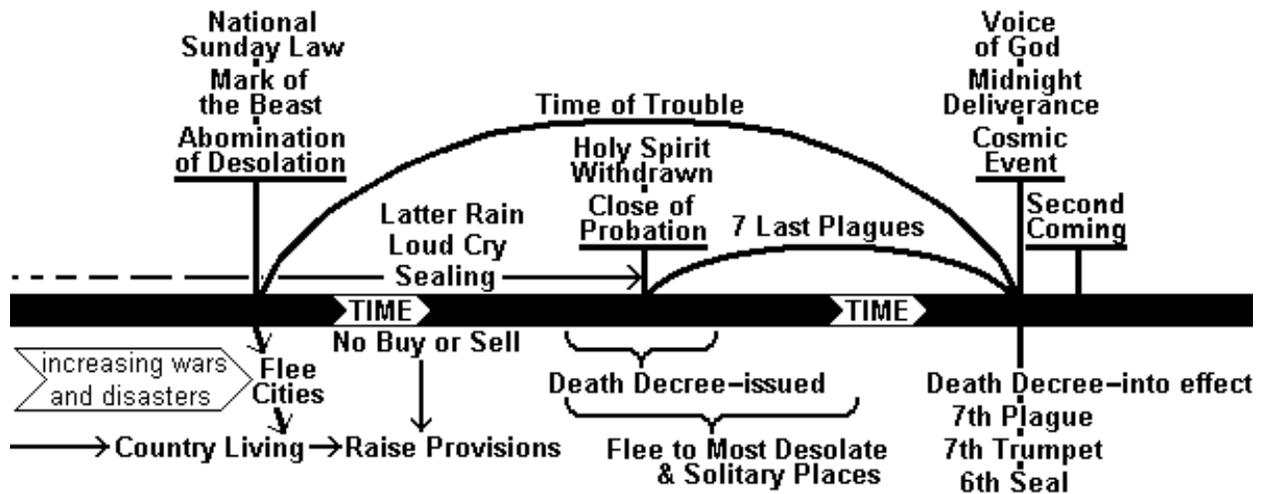
As the Time of Trouble progresses, Revelation 13:15 tells us the time will come when, "as many as would not worship the image of the beast [would] be killed." This is typically called the Death Decree. It happens about the time when the Plagues begin

to be poured out. (Some who have studied the prophecies think it will happen just *before* the Plagues, others think it will happen shortly *after* the Plagues have begun.)

*Prophets and Kings*, page 605 tells us, “The decree that will finally go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews.” Looking at the decree in the book of Esther, we note a couple of significant points. First, the decree did not go into effect the day it was issued. There was a date set in the future when the decree would go into effect. Second, although it was the government that made the decree, it wasn’t necessarily government agencies that went after the Jews. The decree stated that on the specified date it would *not be against the law* for anyone who wanted to, to kill them.

In *The Great Controversy* page 626 God tells us how to respond to the Death Decree. “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.” In response to the Death Decree we will flee into the deepest wilderness we can get to. This is what typically comes to mind when we think about “fleeing to the mountains” in the Time of Trouble.

In connection with this, please read chapter 40 of *The Great Controversy*. The first half of the chapter deals with the Death Decree and when it becomes effective. The second half is about the Second Coming. As it turns out, the date this decree goes into effect is the “Voice of God” or “Cosmic Event” that is already on our time line. On page 636, in this same chapter, is the statement, “It is at midnight that God manifests His power for the deliverance of His people.” As a result, this event has also been called the “Midnight Deliverance.” Adding this last set of information to our time-line, we get:



One question that frequently comes up in connection with this study is, How long will the Time of Trouble last? We have already mentioned a couple things that give us some clues, so let us look at them again.

First, the *Country Living* pages 9-10 quotation talks about being located in the country where we can *raise* our own provisions during the time we will not be able to buy or sell. Therefore, the first part of the Time of Trouble must last *at least one growing season*. But, if it only lasted for *one* growing season, simply stocking up supplies for a few months would be sufficient. So, for this time to last more than just one growing season probably fits this counsel more realistically. Which means the first part of the Time of Trouble could possibly last a couple years.

Second, the quotation from *Prophets and Kings* page 605 about the Death Decree being similar to what happened in the time of Esther, possibly gives us another clue. A closer look at the story in Esther show that they cast lots in the “first month,” when the decree was issued, to determine when the decree would go into effect. The lot fell on the “thirteenth day of the twelfth month.” (See Esther 3:7, 13.) There was almost a full year between the time the decree was issued and when it went into effect! So, *if* there is also a parallel with the *timing* of what happened back in Esther’s time, the second part of the Time of Trouble could last almost a year. (Note that in Esther’s time they were on a completely different calendar system, so these months do not correspond to our months at all.)

These clues point to the Time of Trouble lasting maybe two or three years. *But*, remember what Jesus said in Matthew 24:22. “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” Whatever length of time *was* allotted for the Time of Trouble, the “those days,” will be shortened. And, we don’t know how much “those days” will be shortened. So for all practical purposes it is still an indefinite length of time.

Before we close this study, let’s go back and think just a little more about the Close of Probation, for we will not be able to be standing in the day of God if we are not prepared for our probation to close. In Revelation 22:11, there is a declaration which is made at the Close of Probation. Notice the repeated use of the word “still” in this verse. “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.” *Who* we are —“still;” that is, who we are *habitually*, will determine which side of things we will be on at the Close of Probation. That is why it is so important for us to make a complete surrender to God *now*. We need to let go of *anything* that crowds God out of *any* part of our lives, and allow His Holy Spirit to completely *fill* us. *Now*, while there is still time, before probation closes, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He works to give us a new heart and cleanse us of *all* our selfishness . See Ezekiel 36:25-27. “Work out your own salvation ... for it is God who works in you ...” Philippians 2:12-13. It may be a struggle, but allow God to work in you to prepare you for Heaven.

The Holy Spirit also is the one who seals us for the day of redemption. (See Ephesians 4:31.) The golden plate attached to the forehead of the Jewish high priest tells us a lot about the sealing. In Exodus 28:36-38 it is described as being engraved “like the engraving on a signet,” or official seal, with the words, “HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Since the root word for “holy” is the same as the root word for “wholly,” “Holiness to the Lord” literally means “completely God’s.” This is God’s goal for us, He wants to be able to mark us as being *completely His*. (See Revelation 7:1-3 and 14:1.)

But, He cannot do this while there is still any sinful selfishness remaining in us. Brothers and sisters, we don't have much time to break our old selfish habits, and form new unselfish, loving habits. Don't waste any time. Don't be deceived into putting this off, because by choosing to do it later, you are choosing *not* to do it now —and the habit of putting it off just gets stronger.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, we are given an important and wonderful promise. It says, "Now may the God of peace *Himself* sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, *who also will do it.*" (Emphasis supplied.) Thank God we don't have to do this work on our own! *He* has promised to make us holy, and preserve us blameless, so we will be ready when Jesus comes. We just need to cooperate with Him, and be willing to let go of anything in our lives that would keep Him from accomplishing His work in us.

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Jim Buller

jabuller@juno.com