



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

THE FAITH OF JESUS

by Jim Buller

“Here is the patience of the saints, here are they who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12.) This comment comes at the close of the Three Angel’s Messages —the final end-time messages to everyone on the planet. Its position, just after the third message, is especially significant. In part, this message states, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.” (Revelation 14:9-10.) The issue of worshipping the Beast and its Image, and receiving the Mark of the Beast, comes to a head during the time just before Jesus comes. This time is known as the great Time of Trouble —and, for good reason, is also called the Great Tribulation. (See Daniel 12:1 and Matthew 24:21.)

Revelation chapter 13, tells us more about this issue. Verse 8 says, “All who dwell on the earth will worship him” [the beast]. So *everyone*, “whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” will worship the beast! Then verse 11 tells us about another beast who comes up with “two horns like a lamb” —but it speaks, “like a dragon.” This second beast forces “the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast,” by making an Image of the first beast, and causing “as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.” (Revelation 13:12, 15.)

This creates a dilemma, because as noted earlier, the Third Angel’s Message states that those who worship the Beast and his Image will, “drink of the wine of the wrath of God.” Revelation chapter 15 tells us more about the “wine of Gods wrath.” There, “seven angels” are depicted, “having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.” These angels are given “seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.” So, the “wine of the wrath of God” is the Seven Last Plagues which will be poured out on everyone who worships the Beast and its Image or receives its Mark.

But that is not all. The last verse in Revelation 15 states, “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.” In the Old Testament symbolic service, the Temple was where people’s sins were forgiven. So if no one will be able to enter the Heavenly Temple, this means that from the time just

before the plagues are poured out, no more sins will be forgiven. Therefore, probation, or the time of grace, ends just before the plagues. In other words, those who worship the Beast and his Image, and receive the Mark of the Beast, essentially commit the unpardonable sin, and receive the Seven Last Plagues.

Thus, during the coming Time of Trouble / Great Tribulation, we will all be faced with the choice: (1) to either worship the Beast and its Image, and receive the Mark of the Beast, but in so doing commit the unpardonable sin and have the Plagues poured out on us; or (2) to refuse to worship the Beast or its Image, or receive the Mark, and be sentenced to death by these worldly powers. This will indeed call for patient endurance on the part of the saints who continue to “keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus!” The need for patient endurance through this trial is easy to understand, as is the call to continue keeping the commandments of God. But what exactly is meant by “the faith of Jesus.”

In English, we have two ways to describe possession. We can either say, for example, this is the Bible of John, or we could say, this is John’s Bible. (Other languages don’t have the apostrophe “s” possessive form as we do in English, such as in Spanish it is only possible to say “la Biblia de Juan,” [the Bible of John].) Therefore, in English, “the faith of Jesus,” could also be expressed as “Jesus’ faith.” Both would describe the faith that Jesus possesses. So, this comment connected with the Third Angel’s Message lets us know that in order to make it through this final trial, we will need to have the same type of faith that Jesus possessed. But what exactly is this type of faith? And how can we have it?

James 1:2-3 tells us, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” Thus, our trials and temptations are really a test of our faith. So — since we will need Jesus’ faith to make it through the Great Tribulation —which will be our greatest trial— where can we expect to find the greatest demonstration of His faith? —at His greatest trial!

It was in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus made the decision to go through with the crucifixion. In His humanity, He really didn’t want to be misrepresented and condemned in court, mocked and beaten, nailed to the cross and left there to die. This was evident from the first part of His prayer, as in anguish He says, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But, rather than choosing what *He* wanted, He adds, “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39, see also verses 42 and 44.) This prayer expresses a complete and total surrender to the Father’s wisdom and will. In faith, He actually surrenders even his power of choice! —as He essentially prays, Not what I would choose, but, (based on Your wisdom and love), what You choose! The faith of Jesus, therefore, is a *complete faith in the Father*, that results in a *total surrender to His will*. And this is the type of faith we must also have if we are going to make it through our great trial during the Time of Trouble.

But please note, Jesus did not wait until just before Gethsemane to develop this type of faith. Remember. All along He said, “I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.” And, “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 5:30, 6:38.) Throughout His life He practiced this same type of faith, and made this same level of surrender. Notice also the following quotation from *The Ministry of Healing*, page 479.

Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps.

Therefore, if we are going to make it through our great trial, and keep from worshiping the Beast and receiving its Mark, we will need to have the same type of faith that Jesus showed throughout His life, and especially in the Garden of Gethsemane. But, just like Jesus, we must develop this faith *now*. We dare not risk waiting to supply this need like the foolish virgins in the parable. (See Matthew 25:1-13.) Putting into practice the counsel of the familiar verse in Proverbs 3:5-6 can help us build the habit of exercising this type of faith. It says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." May we faithfully, moment by moment, acknowledge God in all our ways, make a complete surrender to His wisdom and His will, and let Him direct our paths.

Testimonies for the Church Vol. 4, page 355

Without Christ we cannot subdue a single sin or overcome the smallest temptation.

Maranatha, page 275

The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which is easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls.

Steps to Christ, page 70

Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, "Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee." This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.

Selected Messages Book 3, page 172

The third angel's message is the proclamation of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ. The commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand.

CHURCH, IN A CAVE?

For most of his life, my Grandfather, Walter Schubert, was an evangelist throughout South America. Later, he worked for the ministerial department of the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, and in that capacity traveled all over the world. It is assumed that on one of these journeys he visited the Waldensean valleys of Northern Italy, where the following picture was taken.

Several years ago, while going through some of the old slides he used for his evangelistic meetings, I ran across this picture of him in the mouth of a Waldensean cave, had a print made from the slide, and carried it in my Bible. This has become my favorite picture of my grandfather, (he is the third person from the left); not because it's such a good picture of him, (he is not even looking at the camera), but because of where it was taken, and what it represents to me. Unfortunately, both the print and slide were lost in a house fire about twenty years ago. And of all the things we lost, this is probably what I missed the most, as just about everything else, in time we have been able to replace.

However, last month, while going through a couple filing cabinets of things that belonged to my grandfather, we ran across some old pictures. Among them was this photograph! So I am sharing my joy with you, much as the woman in Luke 15:8-9 called her friends and neighbors and said, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!" (Needless to say, I have scanned the photo and saved it in several places.)



But, the real reason I am sharing this picture with you is because I want you to think about what it would be like to have to hide in a cave so we could meet together for church. Please recognize that this isn't just an interesting "what if?" exercise. There are brothers and sisters in different parts of the world who are having to do this now, (although not necessarily in a cave). And based on the prophecies, the rest of us will also be doing this soon.

If you remember, the Waldenses lived in the alpine valleys of Northern Italy to escape the religious persecution during the Dark Ages. Frequently they had to meet in out-of-the-way places, such as caves, to worship together. This particular cave is called "Chiesa de la Tana," which literally translated, means "Auntie's Church." It is near Torre Pellice, about 30 miles from Turino, Italy. This is probably one of the more well known of the Waldensean cave churches, possibly due to it's accessibility.

Near Vallouise, on the French side of the mountains is another cave with a story that is worth relating. The Waldenses had been discovered while having church, and the soldiers who pursued them on that occasion built a large fire in front of the cave to

smoke them out. As the interior of the cave filled with smoke, it became difficult for those inside to breathe. Some tried to rush past the fire into the fresh air, but they were either run through with a spear, or pushed off a nearby cliff. Those who remained inside, died of smoke inhalation. In the end, all the worshipers perished except a couple young boys who were able to wiggle out another entrance, and escape into the nearby woods to tell the story.

So, what would we do—or not do—if we had to risk our lives and meet in a cave to have church? The root idea of worship being “worth it” becomes especially significant in this context. Would we even go? (I mean if you want an excuse to stay home, this would be a good one!) But maybe the more important question is, Is what we typically do on Sabbath mornings worth risking our lives for? If we actually had to risk our lives, would we do things differently? What would we change? What would we leave out? Are there things we would add?

Under “cave conditions” we definitely wouldn’t go just to be “going through the motions!” And I doubt we would worry very much about what we, or anyone else, was wearing. Many of our local or corporate traditions might also stop being important. And certain controversial subjects, such as the discussion on music styles, would in all likelihood suddenly cease to be an issue.

I suspect things would *have* to be more focused, more meaningful, and more intensely spiritual to be worth risking our lives. Therefore, I can’t help but think that in many ways, under “cave conditions,” church would actually be *better* than what many of us typically experience now. So —(forgive me for being a bit radical here), but why should we have to wait until we are suffering persecution to have worship services that are truly worth it? —because what we typically do on Sabbath morning *should* be worth risking our lives for! So couldn’t we choose to have this kind of service now?

Therefore, in the spirit of the recent call to hold ourselves and our leaders accountable, let me propose two questions. First, let’s ask: Would I be willing to risk my life for this? If the answer is, “No,” then let’s work to make it worth it. Maybe we will need to follow the principles laid out in Matthew 18:15-16, and talk to our leaders, as it is appropriate, explaining why we feel the way we do. Second, (and maybe more importantly), when *we* are given the opportunity to lead out in worship, let’s ask *ourselves* whether others should risk *their lives* to attend what we are planning? —and then let’s be honest with the answer.

A couple weeks ago I had an opportunity to do just this. I was preparing to teach a Sabbath School class, as the regular teacher was to be out of town. The lesson that week was on “The Two Covenants,” which is really about two different ways of worshiping. Interestingly enough, these two ways go clear back to Cain and Able. (See also *Christ Object Lessons*, page 152 below.) With the subject touching on worship, this gave me the opportunity to share the picture, my joy in finding it, and the above ideas and questions.

However, while making my preparations this second question caused me to do some serious thinking. Would it be worth it for someone to risk *their life* to attend what I was planning? The conclusion I had to come to, was that there really isn’t *anything* I could present that would be worth that risk —*only God* can offer something worth that much. [Which, by the way, is why we worship *Him*]. Therefore, the most worth while thing I could possibly do would be: (1) To be *sure* that what I was going to present was

what God wanted me to present at that particular meeting. [Note Isaiah 55:8-9 about Gods thoughts not being our thoughts, and Proverbs 3:5 about not leaning on our own understanding.] And probably most importantly (2), to facilitate connecting those who come to the meeting with God, and to encourage them to open their hearts to receive what He has for them. Interestingly, this echos the thoughts in 1 Corinthians 14:25, that even an unbeliever should be able to come away from one of our worship services “and report that God is truly among you.”

May we take Jesus’ promise to meet with us whenever we are gathered together in His name more seriously, and may we prepare our hearts to be in His presence. (See Matthew 18:20 and the following quotations.) May we also do our part to insure that all who come recognize His presence, and are blessed by His Words and the sharing of His thoughts, so that it will have been worth it for them to attend.

Christ Object Lessons, page 152

The Pharisee and the publican represent two great classes into which those who come to worship God are divided. Their first two representatives are found in the first two children that were born into the world. Cain thought himself righteous, and he came to God with a thank offering only. He made no confession of sin, and acknowledged no need of mercy. But Abel came with the blood that pointed to the Lamb of God. He came as a sinner, confessing himself lost; his only hope was the unmerited love of God. The Lord had respect to his offering, but to Cain and his offering He had not respect. The sense of need, the recognition of our poverty and sin, is the very first condition of acceptance with God. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3.

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There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out his Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. ... When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come.

“Preparing to Stand”

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