

# 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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## **GOD IS PROVING HIS PEOPLE**

by Jim Buller

Once, when there was a ‘Week of Prayer’ at the academy I was attending as a teenager, I remember thinking, “I wish Jesus would come *now*, or at least probation would close now, while I’m feeling spiritual.” However since then, I have come to realize that God wants spirituality to be a part of *who we are*, a part of our character, not just something we do once in a while on special occasions.

It is easy to be borne along by the current, and to cry Hosannah with the multitude; but in the calm of everyday life, when there is no special excitement or exaltation, then comes the test of true Christianity. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 4*, page 188.)

God wants us to be consistently and steadfastly spiritual. He even gives us time, allowing the excitement of these occasions to wear off to test us.

God will prove His people. Jesus bears patiently with them, and does not spew them out of His mouth in a moment. Said the angel: “God is weighing His people.” If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character. Many moved from feeling, not from principle and faith, and this solemn, fearful message stirred them. It wrought upon their feelings, and excited their fears, but did not accomplish the work which God designed that it should. God reads the heart. Lest His people should be deceived in regard to themselves, He gives them time for the excitement to wear off, and then proves them to see if they will obey the counsel of the True Witness. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 1*, pages 186-187.)

Because the *place* where many of us have experienced ‘being spiritual’ has been various church meetings, we have a tendency to look to church gatherings for our spirituality. This isn’t necessarily wrong.

We should improve every opportunity of placing ourselves in the channel of blessing. Christ has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." The convocations of the church, as in camp meetings, the assemblies of the home church, and all occasions where there is personal labor for souls, are God's appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain. (*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 508.)

However, it is not safe to *depend* on other humans for our spirituality, or even to depend on the church, for it too is composed of humans. We need be sure that we are connected with *The Source* of spirituality! Remember the parable of the Ten Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13? All ten girls, even the ‘foolish’ ones, were going to the wedding, and waiting for the Bridegroom —symbolic of looking forward to Jesus’ second coming and expecting to enter His kingdom. But at the crisis in the story, the ‘foolish’ girls turned to their ‘sisters!’ This shows that their relationship had only been with the church. They had failed to connect with *The Source*. Let’s not be like them.

If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. (*Desire of Ages*, page 668.)

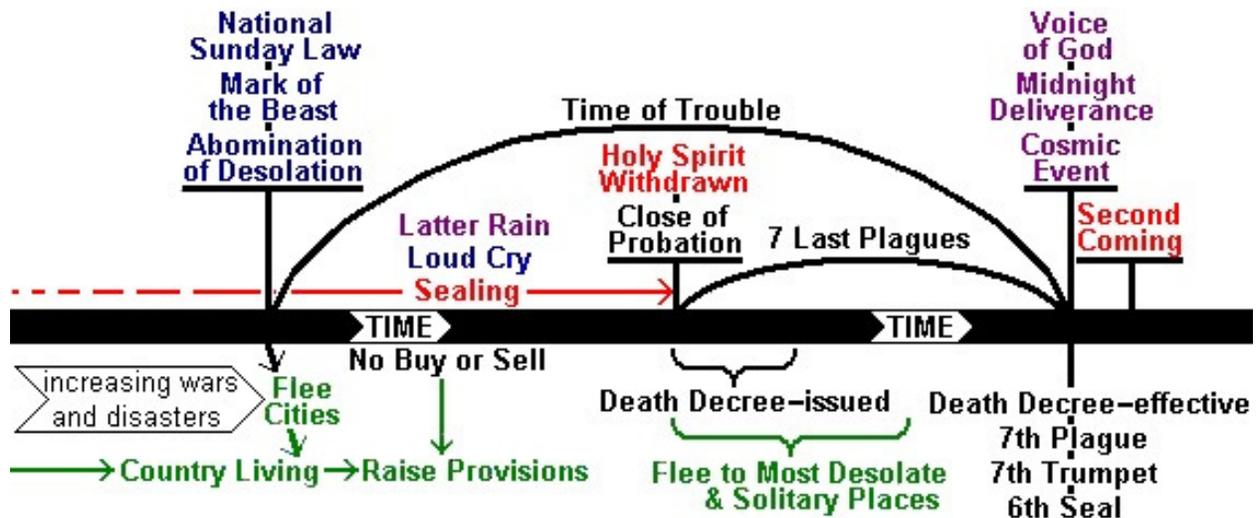
So, if we want to be a spiritual person, to be one of those who have the ‘extra oil,’ let’s heed God’s call to, “Come up higher. Be holy, holier still.” (*Ministry of Healing*, page 503.) Let’s develop our own connection with Jesus, and not be dependant on our ‘sisters,’ or on the ‘excitement’ of some special church meeting. Let’s be willing to let God “prune” away the things in our lives that get in the way of our spirituality, our relationship with Him, and our ability to “bear fruit” for His Kingdom. (See John 15:1-8.)

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## HOW LONG MIGHT THE TIME OF TROUBLE LAST?

I remember growing up with the idea that the Sunday law would hit, we’d go backpacking for a couple weeks, and then Jesus would come. For what it is worth, I have run across several other people who’ve said they grew up with essentially this same idea. So I’m not sure what was ‘floating around’ back then. But from some comments I’ve heard recently it seems that there are many others who expect the Time of Trouble to be relatively short. “The final movements will be rapid ones,” is often quoted in connection with these remarks. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 1*, pages 11.) And frequently the conclusion seems to be that we don’t need to worry about making any extensive preparations for the Time of Trouble because we will be able to get through it by essentially ‘toughing it out’ for

a short time. However, further study into the prophecies, has convinced me that it is not going to be quite that simple.



It is true that "...The people will not have another message upon definite time." And, "That day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." (*S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 7, page 971, Matthew 24:36.*) So we do not, and probably will not, know for sure how long the Time of Trouble is going to last. However, we do have some 'clues,' which give us at least a rough idea about how long it will be. Please remember that these are only 'clues,' and that they only give us a 'ball-park figure,' so to speak. So we are not even attempting to do any 'time-setting' here.

**CLUE #1:**

Referring to the Great Tribulation, or Time of Trouble, in Matthew 24:22, Jesus said, "And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." The "those days" in this verse, sounds like there was an allotted time for the Time of Trouble, but that "those days" have been "shortened." So, what might be this allotted number of days?

From the disciples question that begins the 'Olivet Discourse,' (see Matthew 24:3), and from the prophecies of Daniel that Jesus refers us to in Matthew 24:15, we find that there are two 'parallels' to the Time of Trouble in the end-times. The first is when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in the first century, and the second is the time of papal supremacy during Dark Ages.

In the first parallel, Jerusalem being "surrounded by armies," was the equivalent to the 'Abomination that causes Desolation,' which marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, or Time of Trouble. (Compare Luke 21:20-21 with Matthew 24:15-16, 21.) Roman armies, "the people of the prince who is to come," coming back to "destroy the city and the sanctuary," (Daniel 9:26), was the equivalent of the destructive 'cosmic event' that marks the end of the Time of Trouble, (see Matthew 24:29, Isaiah 13:9-13, Revelation 6:12-17, 11:15-19, 16:17-21). From history we find that Jerusalem was surrounded by the

Roman armies in the fall of AD 66, and that they didn't come back until the spring of AD 70. The time in between, which paralleled the Time of Trouble was three and a half years—a very interesting time period!

The time of papal supremacy in the Dark Ages was three and a half prophetic years—the “time, times and half a time,” of Daniel 7:25, and the “forty-two months,” and “1260 days” of Revelation 12:6, and 13:5.

So IF there is any parallel between these time periods and how long the Time of Trouble is going to last, then the ‘allotted time’ —the “those days”— would be 3½ years. BUT, Matthew 24:22 says that “those days” would be “shortened.” Please note that we don't know how much it will be ‘shortened,’ or whether it will be the first part, or the last part, or somewhere in the middle that will be ‘shortened.’ So we still will not be able to know the “day and hour” or any definite time. CLUE #1 therefore, is a ‘shortened’ 3½ years.

#### CLUE #2:

In preparation for not being able to buy or sell during the first part of the Time of Trouble, (see Revelation 13:16-17), we have been counseled to get set up on a piece of country property so we will be able ‘raise our own provisions.’ (See *Country Living*, pages 9-10.) This same quotation states that, “the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one.” In other words, it will be something we will not be able to just pass over because it isn't going to last very long. We *will* need to deal with it ‘seriously.’

In order to ‘raise our own provisions’ we are talking about at least a ‘growing season’ and being able to preserve what we have grown until the next crop is ready to harvest—so, a bit over a year. Since the problem will be “a very serious one,” we are probably looking at an even longer length of time, as we could easily store up enough food ahead of time to last through one ‘growing season’ —but that is not what we have been counseled to do. So we are probably talking about at least a couple of ‘growing seasons.’ Therefore, CLUE #2 is that the first part of the Time of Trouble, the time we will be raising our own provisions, might last about 2 years.

#### CLUE #3:

We have been told that the ‘Death Decree,’ (see Revelation 13:15) will be “very similar” to what happened to God's people during the time of Queen Esther. (See *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, page 450, and *Prophets and Kings*, page 605.) This ‘Death Decree’ happens in response to the Seven Last Plagues being poured out, and is ‘issued’ by the time of the 3<sup>rd</sup> plague. (See *Early Writings*, pages 36-37, and Revelation 16:4-7.) In response, “the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places.” (*Great Controversy*, page 628.) The Death Decree ‘goes into effect’ at the ‘Voice of God’/cosmic event which marks the end of the Time of Trouble. (See Matthew 24:29, and *Great Controversy*, pages 635-640.)

Esther 3:7, 12-13 states that the decree in her time was ‘issued’ on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month, and went into ‘effect’ on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month. So IF the *timing* between when the decree in the time of Esther was issued, and when it went into effect is also “similar” to what will happen in the end-times, then we will be “dwelling in the most

desolate and solitary places” a little less than a year. So, CLUE #3 is a little less than a year.

Note that CLUE #2, of ‘about 2 years,’ plus CLUE #3, ‘a little less than a year,’ add up to CLUE #1, ‘a shortened 3½ years.’ So all three clues fit together, and we have the “two or three witnesses” that establish the matter, (see Deuteronomy 19:15 and Matthew 18:16).

Again, keep in mind that these are only ‘clues’ which give us a basic idea of how long things might last. At any rate, it will be longer than a couple week backpacking trip! And we will not be able to get through it just by ‘toughing it out’ without having made some serious preparations.

Yes, the “final movements will be rapid ones.” But keep in mind that, we have been saying, ‘Jesus is coming “soon,”’ for the last a hundred and seventy plus years. So if “soon” can be 170+ years, “rapid” could easily be a ‘shortened’ 3½ years.

If this length of time seems overwhelming, like something we just *can't* do. Remember that Jesus said, “Without Me you can do nothing,” (John 15:5), and that He has promised to be with us until the end, and to never leave us, (see Matthew 28:20, John 14:16, and Heb 13:5). Remember also the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, that we will not be tempted beyond what we will be able to endure in His strength. This especially includes the temptation to just give up, for James 1:2-3 tells us that all our trials and temptations are a test of our faith—to put it simply, are we going to continue hanging on to Jesus and keep following Him in faith, or will we give up and let go?

The various counsel we have been given to prepare, both spiritually and physically, make a lot more sense knowing how long the Time of Trouble might last. We *will* need to have a solid relationship with God, and know from our own experience that we can trust Him to bring us through. We will also need to know how, and have the necessary facilities and equipment to be able to raise, process, and preserve our own vegetables, fruits, nuts, and grains. Not only that, but we may also have to be set up to grow enough for those ‘last minute’ converts who haven’t had a chance to prepare, that God sends our way. And, we will need to know how to identify, gather, and craft the things we need in order to live in the wilderness for the time we will be there.

Let’s take these warnings and counsel seriously, and not delay, or allow ourselves to be distracted from making our preparations. Remember, “faith without works is dead.” (See James 2:18-26.) If we truly believe the prophecies, then like Noah, we will make the necessary preparations—even if they absorb a major portion of our time and energy. In itself, our preparations will be a witness to the world, possibly even the very witness the world needs most. “Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.” Noah “gave the world an example of believing just what God says.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 95.)