

## WHEN TO FLEE WHERE

The disciples are admiring the Temple buildings, when to their surprise, Jesus says, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Later, at their camp on the Mount of Olives, the disciples ask Jesus about this statement. "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:2-3.) Although they didn't realize it at the time, they actually asked about two separate events.

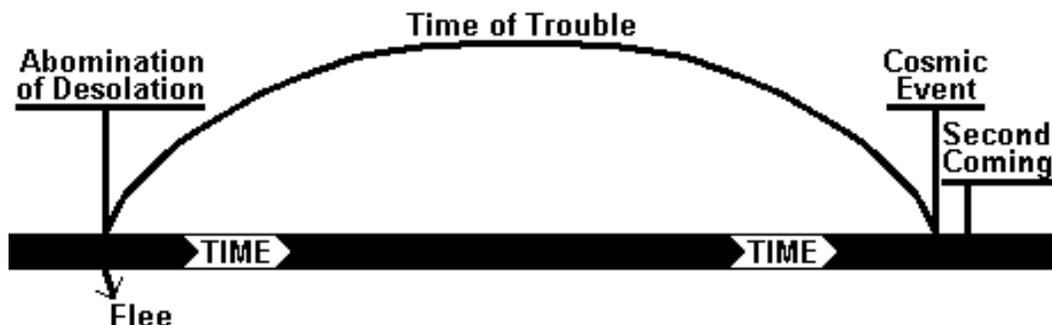
Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming. He mingled the description of these two events. ... He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves. ... This entire discourse was given, not for the disciples only, but for those who should live in the last scenes of this earth's history. *The Desire of Ages*, page 628

In answer to the disciples request for a "sign," Jesus told them, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Matthew 24:15-16.) In the verses that follow, He gave instructions regarding the flight. Then He told them why they should flee, and what this event signifies. "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21.) The "Abomination of Desolation" then, marks the beginning of the "Great Tribulation" or "Time of Trouble." (See Daniel 12:1.)

After warning about false christs, Jesus adds, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Matthew 24:29.) At the end of the Time of Trouble there is even a cosmic event, and Jesus comes!

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:30-31).

So, the Abomination of Desolation marks the beginning of the great Time of Trouble, there is a cosmic event the end, and Jesus comes right after that, which gives us a time-line that looks like:



Note again what happens at the cosmic event: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Many verses in Scripture talk about this event. One of them is in Revelation 6:12-17.

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Here we see this cosmic event is also the sixth seal. Note that in addition to the cosmic happenings these verses also describe a “great earthquake,” which causes “every mountain and island” to be “moved out of its place.” Another Scripture which talks about this great earthquake is Revelation 16:17-21. Notice what else it says.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

This cosmic event then, is also the seventh of the Seven Last Plagues! Notice how the description of this plague begins with a “loud voice” coming from “the throne” in “the temple in heaven.” This is none other than God’s voice! So, this cosmic event is more commonly known of as the “Voice of God.”

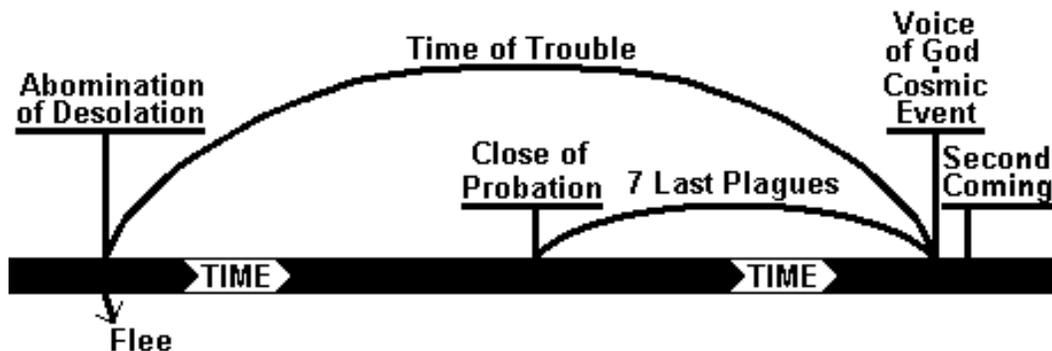
Now, since the *seventh* of the Seven Last Plagues happens at the end of the Time of Trouble at the Voice of God, the other plagues must come before it during the last part of the Time of Trouble. It will be a Time of Trouble indeed! Revelation 15:8 describes another significant event which happens *just before* the plagues are poured out. It 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.”

In the symbolic Hebrew services, the temple was where one went to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. So if no one is able to enter the heavenly temple, it must therefore mean that sins are no longer being forgiven. This is commonly called the Close of Probation, and marks the end of the “time of grace,” and the end of the judgement.

Although the “Abomination that causes Desolation” is close of probation language, probation does not close at the beginning of the Time of Trouble as pointed out in the following quotation from *Early Writings*, pages 85-86.

“The commencement 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. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the “latter rain,” or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out.

So, the Close of Probation divides the Time of Trouble roughly into two parts. During the first part, although world conditions are steadily worsening, grace is still being offered. During the second part probation has closed, and the Seven Last Plagues are being poured out. This gives us a time-line that looks like:



As has already been pointed out. The prophecy Jesus gave in Matthew 24 is a parallel prophecy which deals with both the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century A.D. and the end-times. The verse in the Gospel of Luke that is equivalent to Matthew 24:15-16, about the “Abomination of Desolation” and fleeing to the mountains, is found in chapter 21, verses 20 and 21. Here Jesus says, “when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.” To keep things short, notice the end-time parallel to the armies surrounding Jerusalem as described in the following quotation from *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, pages 464-465.

The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. 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.

In the same way that the armies surrounding Jerusalem was the signal to flee for the Judean Christians, “the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath,” or a National Sunday Law in the U.S.A. “will be a warning to us.” In response to this National Sunday Law, we are to flee from the cities.

In the same way as the Judean Christians were told to “flee to the mountains” *before* all the terrible things that happened in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem; and in the same way as Lot and his family were told to “Escape to the mountains” *before* the destruction of Sodom; we have been told to leave the cities *before* the great Time of Trouble. The following quotations from *Country Living*, page 7 and 11 tell us why.

The ungodly cities of our world are to be swept away by the besom of destruction. In the calamities that are now befalling immense buildings and large portions of cities, God is showing us what will come upon the whole earth.

But ere long there will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able. We must be preparing for these issues.

At first, the National Sunday Law *may* only be a “national day of rest,” with mild fines imposed for those who don’t comply. But as conditions during the Time of Trouble worsen, the penalties will stiffen. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, please note that the Mark of the Beast in the book of Revelation is the same issue as the Abomination of Desolation in Matthew. Revelation 13:16-17 describes one way these penalties will become more severe.

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Those who do not receive the Mark of the Beast will not be able to buy or sell! The following quotation from *Country Living*, pages 9-10, tells us how we should prepare for when this will happen.

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. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies.

In anticipation of this event, we should *already* have places out in the country where we can raise our own provisions. It can take several years to get set up to be able raise all our own provisions. Therefore it would not be wise to wait until the National Sunday Law.

Shortly after the Close of Probation the penalty connected with the Sunday Laws will become even more severe. Revelation 13:15 tells us, “He was granted power to give

breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.” This is also known as the Death Decree. *The Great Controversy*, page 626, tells us how we are to respond to this decree being issued.

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. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains.

This is what we typically think of when we talk about fleeing to the wilderness during the Time of Trouble. While we are in these “most desolate and solitary places” the plagues fall. Then, in connection with the date the Death Decree goes into effect, God delivers us with the Voice of God event, and shortly after that, Jesus comes to take us to Heaven!

Thus, as we have seen, unlike the Judean Christians in the first century, our flight has two phases. In response to the National Sunday Law we will flee from the cities into the country where we can raise our own provisions. Then later, in response to the Death Decree, we will flee to the “most desolate and solitary places.” And so we end up with a time-line that looks like:

