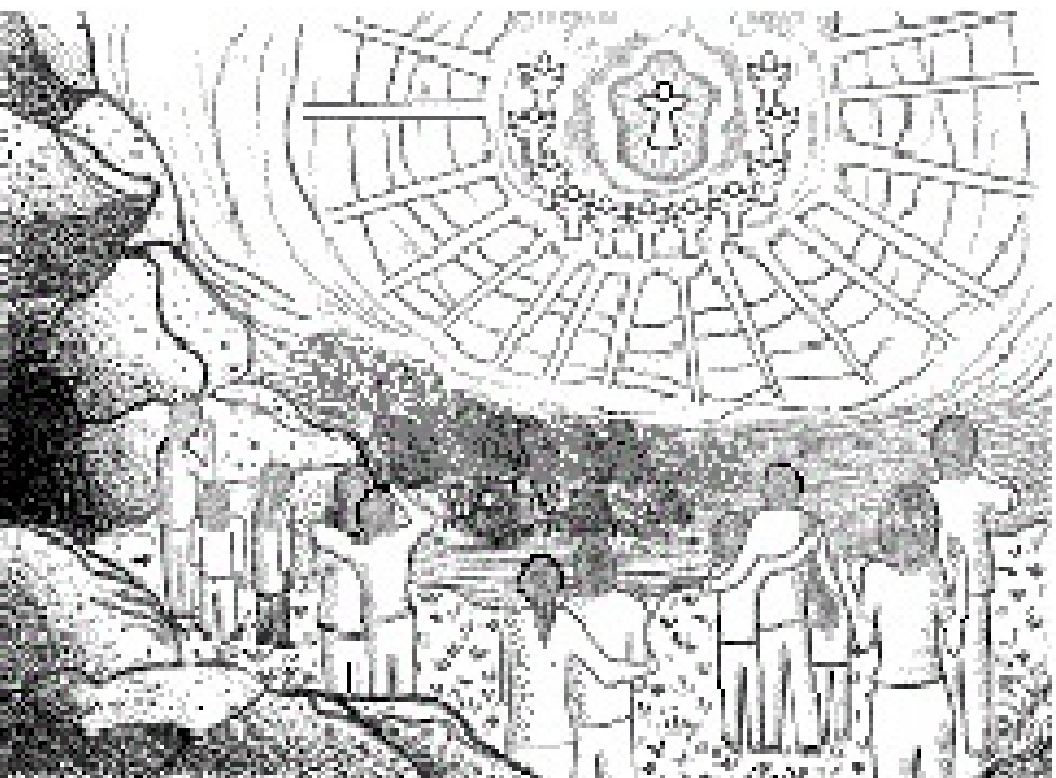


“Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of Man.” (*Early Writings* 58)



An Important Guiding Principle for End-Time Christian Living

3rd Printing
by Jim Buller

Let's begin by looking at John 14:26, which says,

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Notice the promise here: that the Holy Spirit will come and “teach us all things.” Besides praying to claim this promise, the following quotation tells us what we must do if we want the Holy Spirit to come and teach us.

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. (*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.)

So if we want to be taught by the Holy Spirit we must “clear the way by removing every hindrance” —we must be willing to set aside anything that might be standing between us and God.

Let's pray and ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we get into this study: ‘Father, thank you that You have not left us to rely on our own understanding, and that You have promised to send Your Holy Spirit to teach us all things. Lord, we claim this promise right now as we begin this study. May we be willing to set aside anything that might be standing between You and us, so You can send your Holy Spirit to teach us. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.’

In this study we will discuss an important principle for end-time Christians to live by, which is,

Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of Man. (*Early Writings* 58.)

As we look forward to Jesus' coming, let's be careful we don't make the same mistake the Jew's made in Christ' time. They focused on the prophecies of the Messiah coming as a conquering King, and totally overlooked what was said about Him coming to suffer and die. They, 'skipped to the good part,' so to speak. Let's be honest here. In a very similar way, we too have a tendency to focus on Jesus' Second Coming, and ignore what will happen between now and then. We don't want to end up like the Jews in Christ's time did, so let's keep in mind what Jesus said in Matthew 24:13.

"He that endures to the end will be saved."

This verse lets us know there will be things we will have to 'endure' in order to get through to the end and be saved when Jesus Comes.

Echoing this thought is a dream Ellen White had that is recorded in Testimonies for the Church Vol. 2, pages 594-597. (Please read this whole article as we only have time and space for the first five paragraphs here.)

While at Battle Creek in August, 1868, I dreamed of being with a large body of people. A portion of this assembly started out prepared to journey. We had heavily loaded wagons. As we journeyed, the road seemed to ascend. On one side of this road was a deep precipice; on the other was a high, smooth, white wall, like the hard finish upon plastered rooms.

As we journeyed on, the road grew narrower and steeper. In some places it seemed so very narrow that we concluded that we could no longer travel with the loaded wagons. We then loosed them from the horses, took a portion of the luggage from the wagons and placed it upon the horses, and journeyed on horseback.

As we progressed, the path still continued to grow narrow. We were obliged to press close to the wall, to save ourselves from falling off the narrow road down the

steep precipice. As we did this, the luggage on the horses pressed against the wall and caused us to sway toward the precipice. We feared that we should fall and be dashed in pieces on the rocks. We then cut the luggage from the horses, and it fell over the precipice. We continued on horseback, greatly fearing, as we came to the narrower places in the road, that we should lose our balance and fall. At such times a hand seemed to take the bridle and guide us over the perilous way.

As the path grew more narrow, we decided that we could no longer go with safety on horseback, and we left the horses and went on foot, in single file, one following in the footsteps of another. At this point small cords were let down from the top of the pure white wall; these we eagerly grasped, to aid us in keeping our balance upon the path. As we traveled, the cord moved along with us. The path finally became so narrow that we concluded that we could travel more safely without our shoes, so we slipped them from our feet and went on some distance without them. Soon it was decided that we could travel more safely without our stockings; these were removed, and we journeyed on with bare feet.

We then thought of those who had not accustomed themselves to privations and hardships. Where were such now? They were not in the company. At every change some were left behind, and those only remained who had accustomed themselves to endure hardships. The privations of the way only made these more eager to press on to the end.

Notice the first phrase in the fourth sentence of that last paragraph, "At every change some were left behind."

When they left the wagons, there were some who stayed back. When they cut the luggage off of the horses, there were others who stayed behind. When they left the horses, some more stayed back. When they took off their shoes, some stayed behind. And as close as they were to the end, even when they took off their socks, there were some who stayed

back. “At every *change* some were left behind.” Indeed, “he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

So we need to ask ourselves: Are we just *planning* to go all the way? —like the ‘foolish virgins’ in the parable were *planning* to go to the wedding, (see Matthew 25:1-13); while in reality we are setting ourselves up to stay behind at one of the ‘changes?’ Or like the ‘wise virgins,’ are we actually doing whatever ‘extra’ is needed to *prepare* ourselves, *and* those we have been called to serve, to go all the way to the end of the path?

Notice the following quotations.

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. (*Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905.)

Our work is to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God. (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, page 68.)

So let’s take a look at the great end-time prophecy that Jesus gave us in Matthew 24 to see what we will need to ‘endure’ through, because we are told that,

The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew gives an outline of what is to come upon the world. (*This Day with God*, page 152.)

As we read through the chapter, we’ll look for this outline.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. (Matthew 24:1.)

On their way out of the Temple, one of the disciples points out the magnificent buildings. In response 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. (Matthew 24:2.)

That probably was not what the disciples expected Him to say, and they were probably thinking about this the whole way from the Temple, down and across the Kidron valley, and up to their camp on the Mount of Olives, (about one kilometer, or a little over half a mile).

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3.)

So when they get settled in at their camp, they asked Him,
(1) "When will these things be?"
(2) "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Because they actually asked about two different events,

The prophecy which He [Jesus] uttered [in Matthew 24] was twofold in its meaning; while foreshadowing the destruction of Jerusalem, it prefigured also the terrors of the last great day. (Great Controversy, page 25.)

Notice also that the disciple asked for a "sign" that would let them, (and us), know when the world was about to end and Jesus would come. We will look for this "sign" as we read through the prophecy. To be sure we don't miss it, let's note that in order to be a "sign," something must be:

- (1) Visible
- (2) Understandable
- (3) Frequently signs are put up to get us to take some sort of Action

In the next couple of verses Jesus begins the prophetic sequence part of this chapter with a warning.

And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” (Matthew 24:4-5.)

Jesus’ concern about His people being deceived is a theme throughout this talk He has with His disciples, which is known as the “Olivet Discourse,” (Matthew 24 and 25). Please study this more on your own so you are not deceived, as we simply don’t have time or space here. Then He says,

And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The Greek word translated “sorrows” here is a direct reference to ‘birth pains.’ (The same Greek word is also used in 1 Thessalonians 5:3.) So these “wars ... famines, pestilences, and earthquakes,” are the “beginning” of the End-Time ‘Birth Pains’ —and many of the more modern translations word it just that way.

Since the disasters listed are just “the beginning,” there must also be other disasters coming! And as we look at what is happening in the world around us, it is easy to see that these End-Time ‘Birth Pains’ have already begun! From this “more sure word of prophesy,” (2 Peter 1:19), we can *know* Jesus IS coming soon. Also, keep in mind that labor pains become more frequent and more intense until the baby is born. So we can expect that these disasters will continue to happen, and only get worse until Jesus Comes. Since many of these disaster would require us to evacuate, we would be wise to prepare and have a plan.

In verses 9-10 Jesus states that there will be persecutions, and in verse 11 He gives another warning about false prophets and deception.

Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

We haven't found the "sign" yet. Then in verse 12, He tells us to be sure we don't let our connection to God grow cold. Remember, "Love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God." (1 John 4:7-8.)

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

The next verse is verse 13, which we looked at earlier as we began this study.

But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

Then verse 14 says,

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Many people have thought the gospel going to the whole world must be the "sign" because it says, "and then the end will come." But, we really have no way of knowing when this has happened. God can read hearts, so He'll know, but we have no way of verifying it. Therefore it can not be a "sign" for us.

Now don't misunderstand here, this is a very important verse! It lets us know something that must happen before the end can come, and it lets us know what our job in the end-

times is. But it simply can not be the “sign,” because it would not be either Visible or Understandable to us. So, we need to read on. Verses 15-16 say,

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.

Here is something we can “see,” and something we need to be sure and “understand.” There is also an action connected with it —“flee to the mountains.” So quite possibly the ‘Abomination of Desolation’ is the “sign!” But *what* is the ‘Abomination of Desolation?’ We will come back and talk about that in a bit. If it is the “sign” the rest of the passage should bear it out, so for now, let’s read on.

Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. (Matthew 24:17-20.)

These verses contain instructions for when we “flee” —which points us back to the ‘Abomination of Desolation’ as the signal to flee. Then verse 21 starts out by saying,

For then ...

Let’s stop just a minute and notice the flow of verses 15-21: “When you see the ‘Abomination of Desolation’ ... flee to the mountains,” then Jesus gives some instructions for when we flee, and then He says, “For then ...” So this “then,” can only refer to when we “see the ‘abomination of desolation.’”

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.

So, the 'Abomination of Desolation' marks the beginning of the "great tribulation," or Time of Trouble—to use the wording of Dan 12:1 that Jesus referred us to. The 'Abomination of Desolation' therefore, must be the "sign!" But before we talk about it, let's go ahead and finish the prophetic sequence part of this chapter. Verse 22 tells us,

And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

And then verses 23-28 contain additional warnings about false christs and deception.

Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand.

Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.

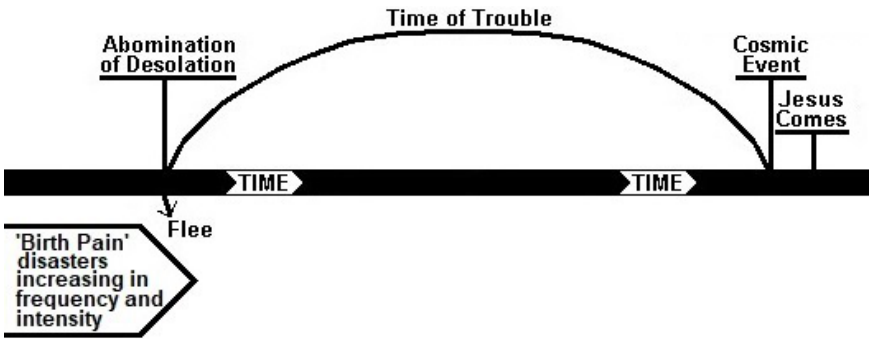
Next, verse 29 describes a 'Cosmic Event which marks the end of the Time of Trouble.'

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.

And in verses 30-31, 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.

This give us a time-line “outline” that looks like this:



To get the whole picture here, we need to fill in this “outline” a bit. We’ll start by taking a closer look at the ‘Cosmic Event.’ This event is mentioned many places in Scripture, and makes for an interesting study. Joel 3:15-16 tells us,

The sun and moon will grow dark,
And the stars will diminish their brightness.
The Lord also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the Lord will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.

Note that in addition to the same things happening with the sun, moon, and stars, and the heaven and earth shaking mentioned in Matthew, Joel adds “The Lord also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem.” Accordingly, this event is known as the ‘Voice of God,’ and this is primarily what Ellen White refers to it as. Revelation 6:12-17 also talks about this event.

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?”

Notice that these verses add that there will also be “a great earthquake,” the ‘earth shaking,’ where “every mountain and island [will be] moved out of its place.” Also note the question at the end of this passage, “the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” When Jesus comes, He wants somebody to be waiting for Him to come for! He wants people who will have ‘endured to the end,’ who didn’t stay behind at one of the ‘changes,’ that will still be “[standing] in the great day of the Lord!” Let’s determine in our hearts that we will be there!

Let’s look next at Revelation 16:17-21 which describes the 7th of the 7 Last Plagues. These verses also talk about this ‘Voice of God’ event. Although the things happening with the sun, moon, and stars, aren’t specifically mention like they are

in the other verses we have looked at, we know it is referring to this same event because God speaks with a loud voice, and because, “there was a great earthquake” when “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”

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 thunders 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.

So this ‘Voice of God’ event which marks the end of the Time of Trouble, is also the 7th of the 7 Last Plagues. Since it is the 7th Plague, the other Plagues must therefore happen before it, and Revelation 15:8 tells us something significant that happens just before the Plagues are poured out.

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 Old Testament times, people went to the temple to offer sacrifices to be forgiven and cleansed of their sins. (See also 1 John 1:9.) But please note: as important as it is to be forgiven and cleansed, this are not enough. Our sins have caused a separation between us and God, (see Isaiah 59:2). So the purpose of forgiveness and cleansing is to enable us

to *reconnect* with Him. With this in mind, note the parable Jesus told us in Luke 11:24-26.

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The person in this parable had the demons cast out, and he was cleansed. But because he remained 'empty,' the demons were able to come right back in, and he ended up worse off than he was before! So, once we have been forgiven and cleansed, let's be sure to go on and reconnect with God and be filled with His indwelling Holy Spirit. (See 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, John 14:16-17.)

Therefore, if no one is able to "enter the temple" this means there is no more forgiveness and cleansing from sin, and also no more reconnecting with God. In other word, just before the Plagues are poured out, the Time of Grace ends, and human Probation Closes.

OK, let's go back now and talk about the 'Abomination of Desolation.' Many of the more modern translations word it as the 'Abomination that *causes* Desolation' —and this is reflective of the way the term is used in the book of Daniel, which Jesus referred us to.

Let's look at the meaning of the words in this term. The word 'abomination' means something 'gross' and 'disgusting' —something very 'bad.' The word 'Desolation' mean to be totally destroyed —'not one stone left upon another,' as Jesus said. So to put it in simple language, the 'Abomination that causes Desolation,' literally means: things are so 'bad' they have to be 'destroyed.' Interestingly, this has happened several times throughout history. Noah's flood, and Sodom

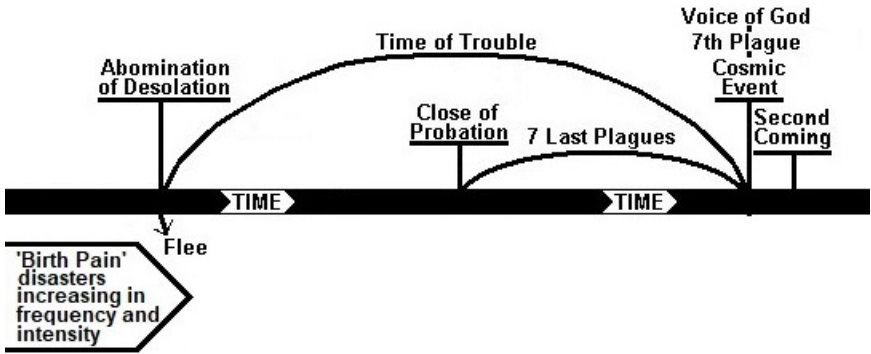
and Gomorrah are classic examples, and in Luke 17:26-30 Jesus says the end-times will be like both of these. So this declaration, that things have gotten so bad that they have to be destroyed, marks the beginning of the final end-time sequence known as the 'Time of Trouble.' But, what will we 'see?'

Note also that 'Abomination that causes Desolation,' is Close of Probation language! However, there is a very interesting quotation on Early Writings, pages 85-86.

On page 33 is given the following: ... "At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully."

This view was given in 1847 ... "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.

This quote says a lot! and deserves more study. But note where it says that after the "commencement" or beginning "of that time of trouble," there is a "short period just before" the "plagues shall begin to be poured out." Putting all this together, adds the following to the time-line.



So what will we “see” at the ‘Abomination of Desolation?’ Luke’s version of Matthew 24 is in Luke 21. (Luke tends to focus more on the destruction of Jerusalem parallel, whereas Matthew focuses more on the end-times—which is why we tend to study Matthew more.) Luke 21:20-21 states,

But 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, ...

So in the 1st century, their “promised sign” was Jerusalem being “surrounded by armies.” With this in mind, let’s look at a quotation from *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, pages 464-465, which tells us what *our* “promised sign” is—what we will “see.”

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.

Note that in the same way that “the siege of Jerusalem” was their “sign,” so “the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath” is our “sign.” Based on Revelation chapter 13, the “nation” referred to here is the United States of America. Be sure you are familiar with this chapter as it points directly to the U.S.A. being the end-time superpower. The U.S.A. will assume the power of making a “decree enforcing the papal sabbath,” or Sunday. This is the “warning” we will “see.” This “decree” is commonly referred to as the ‘National Sunday Law,’ and it will be our “sign” to flee the cities because the Time of Trouble is beginning! Again, be sure to study and understand Revelation 13 as it also describes the connection between the “mark of the beast” and this National Sunday Law. We simply just don’t have time or space to study all this here.

In the following verses and quotations, note that there will be 3 phases to the enforcement of Sunday observance.

(1) At first, it will just be enforced with “fines and imprisonment.”

As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, ... (*Great Controversy*, page 607.)

(2) As things progress ‘economic sanctions’ will be imposed.

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. (Revelation 13:16-17.)

(3) And finally there will be the death penalty.

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.” (Revelation 13:15.)

This being “killed” is commonly referred to as the ‘Death Decree,’ and it will happen in connection with the 3rd Plague, (see Revelation 16:4-6, Early Writings pages 36-37, and Great Controversy, pages 627-628).

Going back to the second phase, notice what the following quotation tells us to do in response to not being able to “buy or sell.”

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. (Country Living, pages 9-10, —Letter 5, 1904.)

Note that this was written in 1904! So we should already be living in the country preparing for this. Don’t wait until the National Sunday Law to move out of the cities. It will take some time to get set up to be able to “raise [our] own provisions.” Thus, rather than being the signal to start leaving the cities, this law is our ‘Last Call’ to *get out of town!*

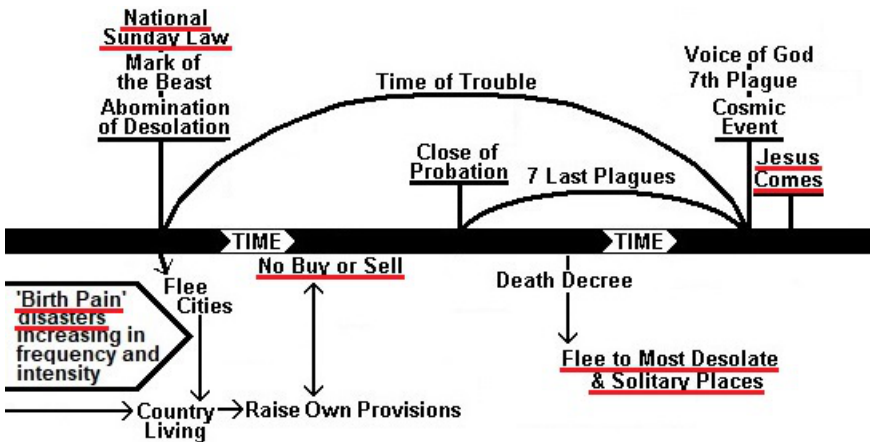
The following quotation tells us what to do when we are faced with the Death Decree.

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. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains.” (*Great Controversy*, page 626.)

At the Death Decree, we flee again, this time to the “most desolate and solitary places,” where we will dwell / live until Jesus comes.

Let’s add all this to the time-line. On this time-line, please note there are several ‘changes’ we will be going through between now and when Jesus comes that will make a major impact on our lifestyle. These ‘changes’ have been underlined.



Those who have lost their homes in the recent fires, floods, volcanic eruptions, wars, etc. —the ‘Birth Pain’ Disasters— have already had their lives turned upside down. As these ‘birth-pains’ become more frequent and intense, sooner or later, each of us will be affected.

Not being able to buy or sell, is also going to make a huge impact on our lifestyle. And living in the “most desolate and solitary places” will be quite different from what we are used to! Then, when Jesus comes, *everything* is going to change! So let’s not be in denial or yield to our natural inclination toward Normalcy Bias —this is ‘foolish virgin’ thinking.

This is the class [the 'foolish' virgins] that in time of peril are found crying, Peace and safety. They lull their hearts into security, and dream not of danger. (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411-412.)

Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Himself has warned us that all these things will happen. So let's not 'skip to the good part,' and ignore what we will be going through before He comes. Instead, may we determine to "endure to the end" and not be "left behind" at one of the 'changes.' Let's also work "to prepare a people to stand," who will be ready and waiting at His arrival. And especially now, since the end-time 'Birth Pains' have already begun, let's "Live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of Man."



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