

IS IT TIME YET?

*Compiled from the writings of
E. G. White, with annotations
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[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

Several years ago the Sabbath Bible Lessons quarterly was entitled Country Living. What a blessing to learn more of God's will for His children. We learned that God's plan was for us to be in places where we could raise our families, and, even if alone, we could commune with God in nature, apart from the hustle and bustle of the cities and the sights and sounds of humanity's works.

We learned that this is one of the means for us to develop Christlike characters, that by beholding the beautiful scenes of nature, we can be imperceptibly changed into the same image. We learned more of the specifics of what to look for and how to locate our necessities. However, one of the main objections given regarding moving to the country is that the time has not come yet. Many are waiting for events to take place that will really motivate them to move and to move quickly.

Our purpose here is not to rewrite the Sabbath Bible Lessons, but to address this objection. We are told that there will come a time when many will try to leave the cities and will not be able. I pray that we have not reached that time yet, though I believe we are very close.

In our study of this subject, we will use the biblical principle of Isaiah 28:10, line upon line, precept upon precept. We will let the clear counsel of God explain the statements that may perplex the understanding. We need to heed the warning given in 2 Peter 3:16 regarding the wresting of the Scriptures which are hard to understand, for this principle applies to the Spirit of Prophecy as well,

and if we take the messages and wrongly understand them, we will not be benefited by their counsels.

Let us now look into what Inspiration has given us. Prayerfully take note of the time when the counsel was given.

Written in 1885:

"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."¹

Many have read the above statement and are waiting to see the National Sunday Law as the fulfillment of this prophecy and the sign to move out of the large cities. Let us analyze the statement further, letting Inspiration define what is given here. "The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture."²

First, let us examine more of the siege of Jerusalem. We just read above: "The siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians."

In Matthew 24:15–18 and Luke 21:20, 22 we find the warning of what was going to happen, so that the disciples could be spared. In *The Great Controversy*, pp. 26–30, is the description of what happened in that historic event. Please read the passages for clearer details than what could be written here.

In Matthew we find the warning that when they would see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, then they were to flee. At a first-glance reading, one might assume that when the Roman armies were within the temple, then it would be time to flee. But that would have been too late!

The Great Controversy, p. 26, describes the holy ground to be some furlongs outside the city walls. When the “idolatrous standards” were to be set up there, it was the signal for flight. In AD 66, the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem, led by Cestius, and then that army mysteriously withdrew for a time. This was God’s opportunity for His faithful disciples to flee from Jerusalem, while all around was clear, to go to the small city of Pella. What mercy God extends to His children!

“When the idolatrous standards of the Romans should be set up in the holy ground, which extended some furlongs outside the city walls, then the followers of Christ were to find safety in flight. When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed. He who chanced to be upon the housetop must not go down into his house, even to save his most valued treasures. Those who were working in the fields or vineyards must not take time to return for the outer garment laid aside while they should be toiling in the heat of the day. They must not hesitate a moment, lest they be involved in the general destruction.”³

In AD 70, another general, Titus, appeared with his armies and surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the temple. However, not one Christian perished. Why? They took the warning seriously

and had already departed 3–4 years previously. It is an interesting note that the first siege was the signal, the second siege was the destruction.

Back to the prophecy for our time. Is there a parallel?

“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.”

1888

In 1888, Ellen White warned that an amendment to the Constitution would bring with it Sunday legislation that will oppress the followers of God.”

“The National Reform movement, exercising the power of religious legislation, will, when fully developed, manifest the same intolerance and oppression that have prevailed in past ages. Human councils then assumed the prerogatives of Deity, crushing under their despotic power liberty of conscience; and imprisonment, exile, and death followed for those who opposed their dictates. If popery or its principles shall again be legislated into power, the fires of persecution will be rekindled against those who will not sacrifice conscience and the truth in deference to popular errors. **This evil is on the point of realization.**

“When God has given us light showing the dangers before us, how can we stand clear in His sight if we neglect to put forth every effort in our power to bring it before the people? Can we be content to leave them to meet this momentous issue unwarned?”⁴

1889

In 1889, Ellen White wrote the following warning.

“We must show to the world that we recognize, in the events that are now taking place in connection with the National Reform movement, the fulfillment of prophecy. That which we have, for the last thirty or forty years, proclaimed would come, is now here; and the trumpet of every watchman upon the walls of Zion should raise the alarm.”⁵

Why should this raise such a warning? Because this was an assumption of power that belongs only to God, not to humans. Please note *The Signs of the Times*, November 22, 1899, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 88, and *The Review and Herald*, December 20, 1898. In these references we find that the act of compelling others to worship God and to keep His laws is wrong. To change God’s law and His time is also wrong. See Daniel 7:25.

The prophet of God, under His Inspiration, was given understanding of what was going on and of the warnings that needed to be given.

“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.”⁶



“The time has come, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities.”

1897

Please note what Ellen White wrote in Letter 90, **1897**.

“The Protestant world have set up an idol sabbath in the place where God’s Sabbath should be, and they are treading in the footsteps of the Papacy. For this reason I see the necessity of the people of God moving out of the cities into retired country [places].”⁷

In order to rightly understand what is written, we need a little background history as well. You will notice in the quote above, that the Protestant world in **1897 had set up** an idol sabbath. Prior to this time, various States had Sunday laws with different degrees of enforcement already on their books, but in 1888, a Sunday bill was brought before the U.S. Congress by Senator H.W. Blair of New Hampshire, seeking that Congress enforce Sunday as a ‘Day of Worship,’ as well as an amendment to the religious education portion of the Constitution. Supported by the National Reform Association, organized in 1863, which declared the country a “Christian Nation,” changes were being suggested.

1900

“Before the overflowing scourge shall come upon the dwellers of the earth, the Lord calls upon all who are Israelites indeed to prepare for that event. To parents He sends the warning cry, Gather your children into your own houses; gather them away from those who are disregarding the commandments of God, who are teaching and practicing evil. Get out of the large cities as fast as possible. Establish church schools. Give your children the word of God as the foundation of all their education.”⁸

“As we near the close of time, there will be greater and still greater external parade of heathen power; heathen

deities will manifest their signal power and will exhibit themselves before the cities of the world; and **this delineation has already begun to be fulfilled**. By a variety of images the Lord Jesus represented to John the wicked character and seductive influence of those who have been distinguished for their persecution of God’s people. All need wisdom carefully to search out the mystery of iniquity that figures so largely in the winding up of this earth’s history. . . . **In the very time in which we live**, the Lord has called His people and has given them a message to bear. He has called them to expose the wickedness of the man of sin who has made **the Sunday law a distinctive power**, who has thought to change times and laws, and to oppress the people of God who stand firmly to honor Him by keeping the only true Sabbath, the Sabbath of creation, as holy unto the Lord.

“The perils of the last days are upon us, and in our work we are to warn the people of the danger they are in. Let not the solemn scenes which prophecy has revealed be left untouched. If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches, and many more would believe the message. We have no time to lose; God calls upon us to watch for souls as they that must give an account. Advance new principles, and crowd in the clear-cut

truth. It will be as a sword cutting both ways. But be not too ready to take a controversial attitude. There will be times when we must stand still and see the salvation of God. Let Daniel speak, let the Revelation speak, and tell what is truth. But whatever phase of the subject is presented, uplift Jesus as the center of all hope, ‘the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star’ (Revelation 22:16).”⁹

“I do hope that the trumpet will give a certain sound in regard to **this Sunday-law movement**. I think that it would be best if in our papers the subject of the perpetuity of the law of God were made a specialty. Should there not be a paper or a pamphlet issued to take the place of the *Sentinel*? I have not been able to think that it was the wise thing to do to let that paper drop. It was a voice that was constantly speaking in defense of religious liberty. The truth should be presented in short articles, in clear, distinct lines, giving special points in regard to the Lord’s Sabbath, and showing that those who frame laws to compel the observance of the first day of the week, are disloyal to the Lord of heaven, who placed His sanctity upon the seventh day. Are we doing all we can to exalt the law of Jehovah?

“We should now be doing our very best to defeat **this Sunday law**. The best way to do this will be to lift up the law of God and make it stand forth in



“Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation.”

all its sacredness. This must be done if the truth triumphs.”¹⁰

“The decree enforcing the worship of this first day [of the week] is to go forth to all the world. **In a limited degree, it has already gone forth.** In several places the civil power is speaking with the voice of a dragon, just as the heathen king spoke to the Hebrew captives.”¹¹

“I could not sleep past two o’clock this morning. During the night I was in council. I was pleading with some families to avail themselves of God’s appointed means, and get away from the cities to save their children, Some were loitering, making no determined efforts. The angels of mercy hurried Lot and his wife and daughters by taking hold of their hands. Had Lot hastened as the Lord desired him to, his wife



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would not have become a pillar of salt. Lot had too much of a lingering spirit. Let us not be like him. The same voice that warned Lot to leave Sodom bids us, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean." Those who obey this warning will find a refuge. Let every man be wide awake for himself, and try to save his family. Let him gird himself for the work. God will reveal from point to point what to do next.”¹²

1902

“God will help His people to find such homes outside the cities.”¹³

1903

“The time has come, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities. The children should be taken into the country. The parents should get as suitable a place as their means will allow. Though the dwelling may be small, yet there should be land in connection with it, that may be cultivated.”¹⁴

1906

“More and more, as time advances, our people will have to leave the cities. For years we have been instructed that our brethren and sisters, and especially families with children, should plan to leave the cities as the way opens before them to do so. Many will have to labor earnestly to help open the way.”¹⁵

Lessons from the past

“Before the destruction of Sodom, God sent a message to Lot, ‘Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.’ The same voice of warning was heard by the disciples of Christ before the destruction of Jerusalem: “When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Luke 21:20, 21). They must not

tarry to secure anything from their possessions, but must make the most of the opportunity to escape.

“There was a coming out, a decided separation from the wicked, an escape for life. So it was in the days of Noah; so with Lot; so with the disciples prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; and so it will be in the last days. Again the voice of God is heard in a message of warning, bidding His people separate themselves from the prevailing iniquity.”¹⁶

“Let it be your study to select and make your homes as far from Sodom and Gomorrah as you can. Keep out of the large cities. If possible make your homes in the quiet retirement of the country, even if you can never become wealthy by so doing. Locate where there is the best influence.

“I am instructed by the Lord to warn our people not to flock to the cities to find homes for their families. To fathers and to mothers I am instructed to say, Fail not to keep your children within your own premises.

“Take your families away from the cities is my message. . . .

“Parents can secure small homes in the country, with land for cultivation, where they can have orchards and where they can raise vegetables and small fruits.”¹⁷

Missionary families needed

“We see the great need of missionary work to carry the truth not only to foreign countries, but to those who are near us. Close around us are cities and towns in which no efforts are made to save souls. Why should not families who know the present truth settle in these cities and villages, to set up there the standard of Christ, working in humility, not in their own way, but in God’s way, to bring the light before those who have no knowledge of it?”¹⁸



and in a very few minutes the entire block of buildings was falling and the screeching and mournful groans came distinctly to my ears. I cried out, in my raised position, to learn what was happening: Where am I? And where are our family circle? Then I awoke. But I could not tell where I was for I was in another place than home. I said, Oh Lord, where am I and what shall I do? It was a voice that spoke, 'Be not afraid. Nothing shall harm you.' I was instructed that destruction hath gone forth upon cities. The word of the Lord will be fulfilled."²¹

Brethren and sisters, what is now happening in our day? Look at the last pope's "Dies Domini" for the agenda to be dealt with. Study to find out what the "moral agenda" is for our time today in the Christian world. It is time to move out of the cities, **before it is too late.**

"Our restaurants must be in the cities; for otherwise the workers in these restaurants could not reach the people and teach them the principles of right living. And for the present we shall have to occupy meetinghouses in the cities. **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. This is the light that is given me.**"²² *R*

References

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465.
- ² *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 42.
- ³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 26.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 712.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, January 1, 1889.
- ⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465.
- ⁷ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 359.
- ⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 195.
- ⁹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 117, 118.
- ¹⁰ *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 97, 98.
- ¹¹ *The Signs of the Times*, May 6, 1897.
- ¹² *The Advocate*, December 1, 1900.
- ¹³ *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906.
- ¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 360.
- ¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, September 27, 1906.
- ¹⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 166.
- ¹⁷ *The Adventist Home*, p. 139.
- ¹⁸ *Christian Service*, p. 180.
- ¹⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 244.
- ²⁰ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 253.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 11, p. 361.
- ²² *The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1903.

"It is not the purpose of God that His people should colonize or settle together in large communities. The disciples of Christ are His representatives upon the earth, and God designs that they shall be scattered all over the country, in the towns,

cities, and villages, as lights amidst the darkness of the world. They are to be missionaries for God, by their faith and works testifying to the near approach of the coming Saviour."¹⁹

This statement is from 1903. Please note the time it was given, as well as



the fact that it would have still been in accordance with the counsel to leave the larger cities and still work the smaller ones. Now we are over one century later. We are closer to the end of the prophecy than to its beginning. Now, she repeats, "Take your families away from the cities, is my message."²⁰

We must remember that the Sunday law is progressive, working behind the scenes. Now it is time to work the cities, from the outposts.

The warnings include that the cities shall be consumed with fire.

"In the night I was, I thought, in a room but not in my own house. I was in a city, where I knew not, and I heard expression after expression. I rose up quickly in bed and saw from my window large balls of fire. Jetting out were sparks, in the form of arrows, and buildings were being consumed,