

## The Significance of Matthew 24 Today—Part 1

This morning I want to share something with you that some of you may be troubled to hear. What I have to say today is not said in order to try to manipulate your feeling or get you to do something from any other motive than to see you make right choices so you can be ready to meet the Lord in peace when He comes, and that you might be instrumental in bringing others to a knowledge of the truth for this time.

Those of you who have been listening to me for some time, know that I spend a considerable amount of my time talking about heart preparation, and the things we must do to form the kind of character that God can accept into His everlasting kingdom, because if we don't develop a righteous character, everything else we may do or believe will be meaningless in the end, and we'll be a part of those that say, "Lord, Lord", haven't we done thus and so, and the Lord will say, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." Oh, may we never hear those terrible words.

And so, I firmly believe that character development is where our emphasis should be, because the third angel's message is a righteousness by faith message, and righteousness by faith has everything to do with character development. But, the third angel's message is also a warning about receiving the Mark of the beast, isn't it? And even though that's not the topic today, we don't want to neglect that part of the message by not knowing about the events that will lead up to that great test.

If we live to see the Lord come, we're all going to be tested on the Sabbath/Sunday issue in the future, in a way that we're not being tested now, but here's the important point I want you to think about. At this time, right now, there's another test before the mark of the beast test that all of us must make a decision about or we will fail the mark of the beast test when it comes, and you'll find out what I mean by that in a few minutes.

This morning I'd like to begin by reviewing the events foretold by Jesus in **Matthew 24**. There are **51 verses** in this chapter, but I want to zero in on just the first **20 verses**, and then we can discuss the rest at another time.

As we read through this chapter we're going to find that most of what Jesus said is now history, and that's encouraging, because we know that it won't be much longer before He appears "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." However, many of the events Jesus foretold also have a dual application that applies to us today, and I'll read a few statements to you later on that will show this to be true. But for now we'll start at the beginning of **Matthew 24**, and discuss it as we go along.

Before we read **Matthew 24** I'd like for us to consider the context, or the setting of this chapter. **Matthew 23** contains Jesus' last public discourse in the temple, that's why **chapter 24** begins by saying, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple."

You see, previous to this, in **Matthew 23:38**, Jesus told the Jewish leaders that their house, or their temple that they were so proud of, was left unto them "desolate." Just the day before,

speaking of the temple, Jesus said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people”, but now He says, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” The word “desolate” means “deserted”; “empty”; “lifeless”; and “wasted.” In other words, God wasn’t going to be there any more, they had sinned away their day of grace; probation had closed for the Jewish denomination; God’s chosen people were no longer His chosen people; they were no longer the apple of His eye. Because they rejected Christ and were already plotting His death, their temple service, from henceforth was meaningless, and they crucified Jesus three days later.

**Matthew 24:1** says, “*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciple came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple.*”

“Jesus, do You realize what You said to the religious leaders a little while ago? Do You know what You’re talking about? Aren’t You being a bit hasty? Did You get carried away when You were telling the scribes and Pharisees they were hypocrites, and serpents, and a generation of vipers? And do You see how well built this temple is? We’ve always been taught that this is God’s own city; that this organization is as the voice of God to the people, and now You’re telling us that that’s all over?” What a shock that must have been for the disciples to try to comprehend. What Jesus said to the disciples was just as shocking as if you would tell a Seventh-day Adventist that their church is the synagogue of Satan, or a sister to fallen Babylon.

You see, you have to understand what was going on in the minds of the disciple at this point. This was God’s church, and it was so firmly established in their minds that it could never be anything but what it had always been. And now Jesus said it’s done; it’s over. This was radical thinking; this was almost over the top, and it was hard for the disciples to comprehend what this all meant. But even though it was radical thinking and almost incomprehensible, was Jesus right? Did He know what He was talking about? Of course He did.

You see, a line had been crossed that the disciples couldn’t see, but One infinite in wisdom could. And you have to wonder, could something similar to this happen again and we not know it? Could we be so blind that we cling to our preconceived ideas because they’re incomprehensible to us? Could what we thought was going to stand forever be discarded because of stupid pride and disobedience?

Josephus, the Jewish historian who was born a few years after Jesus was crucified and lived during the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, says the size of some of the stones of the temple were 66 feet long, 7 feet high, and 9 feet thick, and almost 50 years in the making. Everything about the temple and it’s service was very imposing, and it looked like it would be there forever, but Jesus said, it’s over!

“Jesus, do you see the buildings of this temple?” And in **verse 2** Jesus said, “*See ye all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be throw down.*”

In 70 AD when the temple was destroyed by fire, the gold inside melted and ran down through the cracks of those huge stones, and in order to retrieve the gold, the stones were removed and the dirt plowed like a field. That was the prediction that was made many years earlier in **Jeremiah**

**26:18** when Jeremiah said, *“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall be heaps (or a pile of rubble), and the mountain of the house (or temple) as the high places of the forest (that is, overgrown and uncared for).”*

You see, Jesus was a student of the Scriptures, and He could confidently make such a statement because He knew what the Bible said, and that it was true, and what it predicted would come to pass. Do you know that Jesus had to learn like we do. In *The Desire of Ages, page 69, 70* it says, “From her (Mary) lips and from the scrolls of the prophets, He learned of heavenly things. The very words which He Himself had spoken to Moses for Israel He was now taught at His mother's knee. . . He gained knowledge as we may do, His intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures shows how diligently His early years were given to the study of God's word.”

You see, we make a great mistake when we think that Jesus was born into this world with a head full of knowledge and that He didn't have to apply Himself to learn anything. If you take the time to study about Jesus' growing up years, you will discover that in His humanity He was more like us than many people think. When you get the time, read the chapter in *The Desire of Ages* titled, *As a Child*. It's a fascinating subject to think about.

**Matthew 24:3** says, *“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”*

According to **Mark 13:3** there were only four of the disciples present; Peter, Andrew, James, and John. And why did they come to Jesus “privately”? Because it was considered treason to speak against the temple like Jesus had done, and they didn't want anyone to hear their questions and Jesus' answer, because you could be executed for speaking against their precious church.

The disciples didn't understand who and what the church is at this point, and to this day, people still don't get it. We need to understand that Christ is the Church! It's not a building or an organization, but the body of Christ. “Where Christ is, even among the humble few, this is Christ's church, for the high and holy One who inhabits eternity can alone constitute a church.” (*Upward Look, 315*) This is such an important point to understand, because if you don't understand it, you can be held in bondage to an organization that claims to be God's church, when in reality it's simply individual people that love God and keep His commandments.

After Jesus said the temple was left deserted of God's presence and would be destroyed, what's the first thing He said to His disciples in **Verse 4**? *“Take heed that no man deceive you.”* These words not only apply to the many deceptions that would come upon the church from that point in time and on through to the last days, but more specifically they apply to what we've just been talking about; a correct understanding of who and what the church is, because that's what Jesus had just been talking to His disciples about when He spoke the way He did of the temple. If the Jewish denomination was no longer God's church, where was it? Jesus would have them understand that it's His presence that makes the church the church.

Don't let anyone deceive you by saying that regardless of how deep the denominational organization goes into apostasy, or how far it strays from the counsel we've been given in the

Bible and Spirit of Prophecy that it's still God's church, and the ship's going to sail safely into the heavenly port. That's what the Jews thought, but they were deceived, and Jesus warns the church in these last days to "*take heed*" also, because the same deception that was perpetrated upon the Jewish church would be perpetrated on the last day church as well.

Maybe this would be a good time to read you a few of the statements I told you about earlier; statements that would show that these prophecies in **Matthew 24** apply, not just to the literal destruction of Jerusalem and the desolation of the Jewish denomination, but also to our time as well.

*Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 753*, "While these prophecies (**speaking of the prophecies given in Matthew 24**), while these prophecies received a partial fulfillment at the destruction of Jerusalem, they have a more direct application to the last days."

In other words, the fulfillment of these prophecies has more to do with our day than they did 2,000 years ago.

Also in *The Desire of Ages, page 628*, in the chapter titled *On the Mount of Olives*, which is based on **Matthew 24**, it brings this point out very clearly. It says, "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."

Also on *Page 631* it says, "As one of the signs of Jerusalem's destruction, Christ has said, many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. False prophets did rise, deceiving the people, and leading great numbers into the desert. Magicians and sorcerers, claiming miraculous power, drew the people after them into the mountain solitudes. But this prophecy was spoken also for the last days, this sign is given as a sign of the Second Advent."

Again on *Page 633*, "In the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction Christ said, because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.... This prophecy will again be fulfilled. The abounding iniquity of that day finds its counterpart in this generation."

*Selected Messages, Book 2, page 111*, "Satan is working that the history of the Jewish nation might be repeated in the experience of those who claim to believe present truth."

Who would that be talking about if not Seventh-day Adventists?

*Manuscript Releases, volume 13, pages 379, 380*, "In His Word the Lord declared what He would do for Israel if they would obey His voice. But the leaders of the people yielded to the temptations of Satan, and God could not give them the blessings He designed them to have, because they did not obey His voice but listened to the voice and policy of Lucifer. This experience will be repeated in the last years of the history of the people of God, who have been established by His grace and power. Men whom He has greatly honored will in the closing scenes of this earth's history pattern after ancient Israel."

She didn't say "might be repeated", or "could be repeated"; she said they "will be repeated in the last years of the history of the people of God."

So what is this telling us? It's telling us that just as the Jewish church listened to the voice and policy of Lucifer, the last day church will do the same, and if you read on a little further, it says it will be with even more devastating results.

*Testimonies for the church, volume 8, page 67*, "Jerusalem is a representation of what the church will be if it refuses to walk in the light that God has given. Jerusalem was favored of God as the depository of sacred trusts. But her people perverted the truth, and despised all entreaties and warnings. They would not respect His counsels. . . Christ turned from them, saying: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,' how can I give thee up? 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' (**And then these sad words**) So Christ sorrows and weeps over our churches, over our institutions of learning, that have failed to meet the demand of God."

And one more from *Review and Herald, August 1, 1893*, "Of those who boast of their light and yet fail to walk in it Christ says, 'But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum [Seventh-day Adventists, who have had great light], which art exalted unto heaven [in point of privilege], shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.'"

When Sister White referred to **Matthew 23:37** where Jesus said, "*Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how can I give thee up?*" We know that Jesus did give them up, because the next verse says, "*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*"; that means that the presence of God would no longer be in their midst.

So the question is, have these same words been pronounced over the last day church that God has made the depository of sacred trusts? All indications are that they have. And I know there are many who don't want to hear this, and I take no pleasure in staying it, but we shouldn't close our eyes to the possibility that this has already happened.

Has God made promises to Seventh-Day Adventists that the church is going through to the Kingdom no matter what? No, not any more than the promises He made to the Jewish church. We need to understand that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional, you can read that in *Selected Messages, book 1, page 67*, and this goes for individuals and churches alike. No one can hold God hostage based on promises He has made when we don't do what He has asked us to do. Simple logic tells us that God's promises are based on obedience if we would realize the blessings that come when we do what He says. I think as we continue reading in **Matthew 24**, realizing that the history of the Jewish church is being repeated within Adventism, we will see, unfortunately, more clearly that the same outcome will be realized in these last days.

Let's continue on beginning with **verse 5 of Matthew 24**. **Verse 5** says, "*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*"

*7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, (that is, by the truth they once believed) and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. (Christians hating Christians. Have we seen this in the past? Yes. What about Adventists hating Adventists. Do we see these things happening today? The answer is yes. I have personally experienced some of this hatred myself because of a straight testimony.) Verse 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, (because sin shall increase, or multiply) the love of many (better translated "most") shall wax cold. (We see here that it's sin that causes the love of the majority of professed Christians to grow cold against their former brethren. And why should we expect anything different when the church of today is teaching salvation in sin? But when this happens we're told we must draw warmth from the coldness of others) Verse 13 But he that shall endure (this hate and persecution without hating in return) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."*

I think we can agree that the things we just read about have had a fulfillment in the past and that they are being fulfilled today; in fact, we already read that this is the case, but these things are just an introduction to the more important points I want to share with you this morning, and so we're going to have to move on or we'll not have time to finish up. The really interesting parallel experience that is even now in the process of fulfillment within Adventism is what Jesus said in **verses 15-20**.

After Jesus brings His hearers up to the point in this prophecy where the end comes, or when He returns, He then backs up to give more detail to those who want to be ready for that great event. Beginning with **verses 15** Jesus said, "*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)* [**In other words, there's a deeper meaning to Jesus' words here that the surface reader is not going to comprehend, and so we have to apply ourselves**] **16** *Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.*"

First of all, what is "*the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet*" standing "*in the holy place*"?

In *The Great Controversy, page 26* it says, "When the idolatrous standards of the Romans (**that is their flag or the banner of their military**) 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."

And so, the abomination of desolation refers to the Roman army with its military standard, which was the eagle; and this abomination standing in the holy place is the Roman army besieging Jerusalem. This is what Daniel the prophet said would happen in **Daniel 9:26, 27**. And what were the Christians supposed to do when they saw these things?

**Verses 17-20**, Jesus said, “*Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.*”

Now, let’s take a look once again at **verses 15-20**, but this time we’ll look at the spiritual application as it affects us today and not the literal fulfillment of the Jewish state 2,000 years ago. In **verse 15**, what would be represented today by the “*abomination of desolation standing in the holy place*”? Because remember, this prophecy has more to do with our day than it did back then, and we’re told that “Satan is working that the history of the Jewish nation might be repeated in the experience of those who claim to believe present truth.”

During Christ’s day, Jerusalem was where the headquarters of God’s church resided, correct? That’s what is meant by the “*holy place*” even though it was no longer holy by the time it was destroyed, but it was still holy to the Jews. When the idolatrous standard of the Romans (or the Roman banner, or emblem, or flag) was set up within the precincts of the Old Testament church, that was the signal for Christ’s followers to flee to the mountains, and it’s interesting that several times in the New Testament it says that Jesus taught the people in the mountains, and that He often went to the mountains alone to pray.

It was a place where He could go to get away from the spies and the false teachers of God’s professed church and also a place where He could teach His disciples the truth rather than a mixture of truth and error. It’s interesting also that the places where gold, and silver, and precious stones are found, is generally where? In the mountains! And did you know that the word of God is likened to these things. These things have a spiritual significance.

*Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, page 157* says, “There are truths in the word which, like veins of precious ore, are hidden beneath the surface. The hidden treasure is discovered as it is searched for, as a miner searches for gold and silver.” And this is precisely why Jesus said, “*whoso readeth let him understand.*” Truths are hidden and they need to be dug out.

Also in *The Great Controversy, page 69* it says of the Waldensian Christians that hid out in the mountains, “By patient, untiring labor, sometimes in the deep, dark caverns of the earth, by the light of torches, the Sacred Scriptures were written out, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Thus the work went on, the revealed will of God shining out like pure gold.”

And so I don’t think it’s a far stretch for us, in a spiritual sense now, to say that fleeing to the mountains is the same as fleeing to the safety of God’s word and away from where the truths of that word are not being presented. The Piedmont Mountains is where the Waldenses found refuge from Rome, “*the abomination of desolation.*” And what did they do there? They very painstakingly copied the word of God and gave it to the people who were held in bondage to the cunningly devised fables of the papacy.

And so the mountains represent a place where we can commune with God unmolested and listen to the truth and not a Babylonian mixture of truth and error combined; a place where we don’t have to listen to church leaders that are supposed to be teaching the foundation pillars of

Adventism, but instead are teaching the “new theology” that isn’t very new. It’s at least 6000 years old, because it’s the same lie the serpent presented to Eve in the Garden.

Some of you may not realize this, but on July 8, 1995 the General conference of Seventh-day Adventists, broadcast over worldwide satellite TV from Utrecht Netherlands the famous parade of nations. This was when the Vatican’s papal representative was allowed to carry the pope’s Banner bearing his triple miter crown across the stage, symbolically planting his standard “*in the holy ground.*” And Jesus said; “*when ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,*” do what? flee to the mountains, get out of there immediately and go to God’s word for the truth rather than sitting in a professed Protestant church that would allow such a thing!

You see, when Jesus walked out of the temple for the last time, that means that His disciples had no reason to stay. In fact, they had every reason to leave. Jesus said when you see the abomination of desolation, it’s time to flee to the mountains; it’s time to flee to God’s word, because you’re not going to hear it in the church that claims to be the remnant church but actually looks nothing like the early church that they’re supposed to be the remnant of!

Now you can correct me if I’m wrong, but isn’t it the purpose of the parade of nations to show that the church has a presence in that particular nation, or region? I remember clearly the standing ovation that was given when the pope’s representative strolled across the stage with a big smile on his face. What was he doing there? Why was he allowed to represent the Adventist church as having a presence at the Vatican? Or could it be that the Vatican has a presence in the church?

In **Verse 18** Jesus said, “*Neither let him which is (where?) in the field return back to take his clothes.*” Field, back, clothes, three important words. In *Christ's Object Lessons, page 70* we’re told metaphorically that the field represents the church. Jesus spoke this same way when He told the parable of the wheat and tares in **Matthew 13**. In other words, if you’re thinking of leaving an apostate church, or if you’ve already left the apostate church, or the doomed city because it’s been left desolate; by the way, in *Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, page 250* the prophet said a city is also likened to the church. So if you’re thinking of leaving, or you’ve already left, there’s nothing worth returning back for. In fact, Jesus said don’t go back! It’s detrimental to do so. If you go back you’ll lose your soul, otherwise He wouldn’t have told them to flee. He didn’t say take your flight and then when it’s safe you can go back; He said leave because there would be no reason to go back after its destruction.

And what about clothes, what do they represent? Jesus said don’t go back to take your clothes. Remember the story of Joshua the high priest in **Zachariah 3**? The Lord said to the angel, “*Take away the filthy garments from him and clothe him with change of raiment.*” In *The Home Missionary, November 1, 1897* it says, “Christ clothes me with his righteousness, in order that I shall not continue in sin, but perfect a character after the similitude of Christ.”

Why would I want to go back to a church that tells me I’m saved in sin when we just read that the clothes Jesus gives are so “I shall not continue in sin, but perfect a character after the similitude of Christ.” We’re not to go back to a church where the glory has departed in order to prepare our



characters for Jesus' return. It won't work, because they'll be formed in the wrong way. We can't wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb when the people we fellowship with are using a different soap.

**Verse 19**, *“And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!”*

Just as it would be difficult for a pregnant woman, or one nursing a baby to flee from literal Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, so it would be difficult now to try to flee with those who are not yet *“weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts”* as it says in **Isaiah 28:9**. In other words, don't try to leave with, or wait around for, those that are not spiritually mature enough to understand the significance of this prophecy.

There will be those that won't understand why you're fleeing, but you must flee anyhow, because if you don't, you will be destroyed just as surely as those that were destroyed in the general siege of Jerusalem. Perhaps God in His mercy will yet give the milk drinkers a little more time to graduate to a meat diet and still find refuge in the mountains, but I can tell you one thing for sure, time is running out! When you see the sign and understand what it means, you better get out quick. The sign was given 10 years ago, how much longer will the gates be open? Not much longer.

And please, don't be fooled by those who today are exposing the apostasy within the church, but encouraging people to stay and not flee, because they are doing just the opposite of what Jesus told His followers to do. There was a man 2,000 years ago who represented this same class leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, and listen to what happened to him.

In *The Great Controversy, page 30*, it speaks of a man that for seven years “continued to go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, declaring the woes that were to come upon the city. . . To insult and abuse he answered only: woe, woe to Jerusalem! Woe, woe to the inhabitants thereof! His warning cry ceased not until he was slain in the siege he had foretold. **(And then it says)** Not one Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem.”

Oh he sighed and cried for all the abominations done in the land, but he didn't leave, and he lost his life just the same as those that insulted and abused him for speaking out against the church.

This prophecy Jesus told makes it clear that it's a dangerous thing to continue to attend and support a church in apostasy, and it's also dangerous to expose the sins of a religious organization, and yet remain a member when you can see they're not going to change. And don't think God will not hold you corporately accountable for doing so.

**Verse 20**, *“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.”*

There are a couple interesting points here. #1, this is a prophecy that Jesus knew would not be fulfilled for 40 years, because it took place in 70AD, and yet He expected Christians (and that's who He's talking to here, not to the members of the Jewish synagogue), that Christians would still be observing the seventh day Sabbath 40 years after His resurrection when Jerusalem would be destroyed. That kind of shoots a big hole in Sunday sacredness, doesn't it?

By the way, most Sunday church goers will tell you that they go to church on Sunday in honor of, or as a memorial of the resurrection, but nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, **Romans chapter 6** tells us plainly that baptism is the memorial of the resurrection, not Sunday! When a person is baptized they are lowered into the watery grave and come up to walk in newness of life. **Romans 6:4** says, *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”*

Sunday sacredness is a child of the papacy that was incorporated into Christianity from pagan sun worship in order to make church going more comfortable for idolaters, plain and simple. And of course the devil is behind it all in order to get Christians to transgress God’s explicit command to keep holy the seventh day. And not only that, but enforced Sunday worship, which is coming soon, is also the mark of the beast; the beast of **Revelation 13:1-10** being the papacy, and Sunday sacredness being the mark of her authority, because she’s the one that changed the day of worship without even one Bible verse to back up her claim.

The main reason the judgments of God came upon Jerusalem of old was because of their violation of the Sabbath; did you know that? This was their problem off and on from the beginning. Oh they kept it according to their traditions, but they didn’t keep it the way God told them to. They even accused the One who created the Sabbath of breaking it while He was here. And it’s much the same way today. The Seventh-day Adventist Church of old and the Seventh-day Adventist church of today have much in common in this respect. A bunch of DOs and DON’Ts, but very few that have true Sabbath observance from the heart, and that’s one of the reasons so many young people today don’t want anything to do with their hypocrisy.

The Christians 2,000 years ago were told to pray that their flight from Jerusalem wouldn’t be on the Sabbath when the signs Jesus told them to look for came to pass, and they did pray, for 40 years they prayed. And guess what? As a result they were spared that trial. In *Signs of the Times November 12, 1894* it says, “In accordance with His instruction, the followers of Christ were enabled to depart from the besieged city, and escape to the mountains, not taking their flight either in the winter, nor upon the Sabbath day.” Praise the Lord that they were faithful and they were able to leave unmolested, and at a better season of the year, but what about us today? What is the spiritual significance for us today?

The one thing I want to remind you of once again is that these prophecies "have a more direct application to the last days" than they did 2,000 years ago, and the context of "taking your flight" is in reference to leaving, or "fleeing" an apostate church that was once God’s true church just like the Jewish church used to be, because it’s being destroyed by Rome. 2,000 years ago the church was destroyed by pagan Rome, but in these last days by the infiltration of papal falsehoods and the erroneous teachings of her harlot daughters from apostate Protestantism.

One of the reasons Jesus told His followers to pray that they wouldn’t have to flee on the Sabbath was because the gates to the city would be closed in accordance to Jewish law and custom, making it very difficult to get out. You can read about that in *Exodus 16 & Nehemiah 13*.

But here’s the point; if you don’t heed the same instruction from Jesus today when the sign to flee comes to you, you may find it impossible to leave when the gates are closed. What do I mean by

that? I want to read you something that I hope will answer this question. It's from *Early Writings, pages 240-243* under the title heading *The Advent Movement Illustrated*. We're not going to read all of it because we don't have time, but I encourage you to do that when you get the opportunity. The context of this vision is the Ten Virgin Parable, and before we read I want you to understand that the ten virgin parable, like the prophecy of **Matthew 24** has a dual application that applies to us in these last days as well. Let me prove that to you before we read *Early Writings*.

*Review and Herald, August 19, 1890* "This parable (**the ten virgin parable**) has been and will be fulfilled to the very letter, for it has a special application to this time, and, like the third angel's message, has been fulfilled and will continue to be present truth till the close of time." And then she says, "This represents the condition of the Church." And so, what I'm about to read to you isn't something that happened back in 1844 only, but something that's being repeated today.

So listen carefully as I read excerpts from *Early Writings, pages 240-243*, "I saw a number of companies that seemed to be bound together by cords. Many in these companies were in total darkness; their eyes were directed downward to the earth, and there seemed to be no connection between them and Jesus. But scattered through these different companies were persons whose countenances looked light, and whose eyes were raised to heaven. Beams of light from Jesus, like rays from the sun, were imparted to them. An angel bade me look carefully, and I saw an angel watching over every one of those who had a ray of light, while evil angels surrounded those who were in darkness. . . (**So you can see how important it is that we cherish every ray of light that comes from Jesus**)

"A glorious light then rested down upon these companies, to enlighten all who would receive it. Some of those who were in darkness received the light and rejoiced. Others resisted the light from heaven, saying that it was sent to lead them astray. (**And I think there are those today that think what I'm sharing with you is to lead them astray as well, but friends, it's light from Jesus!**) The light passed away from them, and they were left in darkness. Those who had received the light from Jesus joyfully cherished the increase of precious light which was shed upon them. . . Then many who cherished the sacred light, broke the cords which confined them and stood out separated from those companies. As they were doing this, men belonging to the different companies and revered by them passed through, some with pleasing words, and others with wrathful looks and threatening gestures, and fastened the cords which were weakening. These men were constantly saying, 'God is with us. We stand in the light. We have the truth.' I inquired who these men were, and was told that they were ministers and leading men who had rejected the light themselves, and were unwilling that others should receive it.

"As discouragement settled upon the waiting ones (**that is, because of the disappointment in 1844**), the ministers and leading men whom I had before noticed, rejoiced, and all those who had rejected the light triumphed greatly, while Satan and his evil angels also exulted.

"Then I heard the voice of another angel saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen!' A light shone upon those desponding ones, and with ardent desires for His appearing, they again fixed their eyes upon Jesus. I saw a number of angels conversing with the one who had cried, 'Babylon is fallen,' and these united with him in the cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.' The musical voices of these angels seemed to reach everywhere. An exceedingly bright and

glorious light shone around those who had cherished the light which had been imparted to them. Their faces shone with excellent glory, and they united with the angels in the cry, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.' As they harmoniously raised the cry among the different companies, those who rejected the light pushed them and with angry looks scorned and derided them. But angels of God wafted their wings over the persecuted ones, while Satan and his angels were seeking to press their darkness around them, to lead them to reject the light from heaven.

"Then I heard a voice saying to those who had been pushed and derided, 'Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean.' In obedience to this voice, a large number broke the cords which bound them, and leaving the companies (**obviously a reference to churches**) that were in darkness, joined those who had previously gained their freedom, and joyfully united their voices with them. I heard the voice of earnest, agonizing prayer from a few who still remained with the companies that were in darkness. The ministers and leading men were passing around in these different companies, fastening the cords more firmly; but still I heard this voice of earnest prayer. Then I saw those who had been praying reach out their hands for help toward the united company who were free, rejoicing in God. The answer from them, as they earnestly looked to heaven, and pointed upward, was, 'Come out from among them, and be separate.' I saw individuals struggling for freedom, and at last they broke the cords that bound them. They resisted the efforts which were made to fasten the cords tighter and refused to heed the repeated assertions: 'God is with us.' 'We have the truth with us.'"

"Persons were continually leaving the companies that were in darkness and joining the free company, . . . All who cherished the light shed upon them were gazing upward with intense interest, and Jesus looked upon them with sweet approbation."

What I just read to you, the prophet said would be fulfilled again in these last days "to the very letter", and that it "represents the condition of the Church." How much plainer can it be? Are you going to wait until the gates are closed, or are you going to take your flight while you can do so unmolested like the Christians of old? Are you going to loose yourself of the cords that bind you, or are you going to allow unfaithful ministers and church leaders to fasten them more firmly until it's impossible to break free?

This prophecy in **Matthew 24** implies that a time is coming when it will be too late to leave, and why would we want to stay in a church where things are dead and dying as represented by the fact that Jesus said, "*pray that your flight be not in the winter.*" In winter things are barren and everything has the appearance of death. The trees are stripped of their leaves, and the bare, skeleton-like frames speak of nothing but decay, and the ground can't produce a crop because it's frozen.

This is a good representation of the church that has in many ways rejected the present truth for these last days, and as a result, the judgments of God will come upon it as surely as they came upon Jerusalem of old. As you consider the application of **Matthew 24** for today, there should be no doubt in your mind that it's time to leave those companies that are in darkness once and for all and join the free company of those who cherish the light that has been shed upon them and shed upon you this morning.

I started out by telling you that the third angle's message is a righteousness by faith message, and we're told that this is the message we're to take to the world, and that it will swell into a loud cry, and this is all true, but who's going to give it? Wouldn't it be those that have been made righteous by faith? Certainly it can't be given by anyone else, because all others will end up with the mark of the beast if they're alive when Sunday observance is enforced by law.

And so since this is true, my question to you is this; which person will be declared righteous by faith so they can give the last message of mercy to a perishing world, the one who does not heed the words of Christ and stays in a church that is made desolate? or the one who takes his flight when he see the sign of the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel stand in the holy place? Jesus said, "*Whoso readeth, let him understand.*"