

The Abomination of Desolation – Then and Now

An analysis of the Spirit of Prophecy counsel regarding leaving the cities

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Introduction:

The following article is written in response to questions raised concerning the Abomination of Desolation as it relates to the time for God's people to leave the cities. Those who believe that the out of the cities message is now urgent and applicable to all of God's people are often criticized as being alarmists. Critics usually point to the following statement as proof that it is not yet time for such a warning.

“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.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, pages 464-465

The Prophetic Parallel

Mrs. White's reference to the siege of Jerusalem quoted above, points to a prophecy given by Christ Himself:

“And 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

When the Romans laid siege on the city, they set up standards, or banners upon which were depicted their pagan gods. Those standards were planted in an area of ground around the city walls known as “The holy ground” or “The holy place” – not to be confused with “The holy place” in the temple. Hence, this is the same event as that found in the book of Matthew:

“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:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Matthew 24:15-16

Thus we see that the “Abomination of Desolation” standing in the holy place referred to the Roman armies planting those pagan standards in “The holy ground” around the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Notice Mrs. White's description:

“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.” The Great Controversy, 26

Notice once again Mrs. White's comparison of this event with its application in modern times:

“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.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, pages 464-465

Based on this statement, many assure us that it will not be necessary to leave the large cities until the national Sunday law is officially passed. However, a careful consideration of the language in this quotation along with a comparison of Mrs. White’s use of the same or similar language in other places reveals a very different conclusion.

Let’s examine carefully each key phrase of this statement, using the following principle to arrive at a correct understanding:

“The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture.” Selected Messages, Vol. 1, 42

1. “As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians...”

This of course establishes the foundation for what Mrs. White goes on to say in the rest of the paragraph (5T 464-465). The prophet is the one pointing to the parallel event for us to consider. The word, “As” indicates that the sign in modern times would be like the sign of old. We’ve already seen that the sign in Jerusalem came when the Roman armies, under general Cestius, planted their pagan standards in “The holy ground”. That siege was very short lived, and did not come to fruition in a desolation of the city and the temple:

“After the Romans under Cestius had surrounded the city, they unexpectedly abandoned the siege when everything seemed favorable for an immediate attack. The besieged, despairing of successful resistance, were on the point of surrender, when the Roman general withdrew his forces without the least apparent reason. But God’s merciful providence was directing events for the good of His own people. The promised sign had been given to the waiting Christians, and now an opportunity was offered for all who would, to obey the Saviour’s warning.” The Great Controversy, 30

It was several years before the Roman armies returned under a different general – Titus. It was this second siege that ultimately led to a desolation of the city and the temple.

Notice that that first siege of Jerusalem was limited to a mere threat. When the Romans set up their banners in the holy ground, they were making their intentions known as well as making a show of their apparent power. Nevertheless, that which the Roman armies

threatened, did not come to full fruition at that time. Rather, a retreat ensued, leaving the way open for the disciples to obey the warning.

In 1897 Mrs. White penned a remarkable statement that certainly suggests that the modern day fulfillment of this prophecy had already taken place:

*“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.” Letter 90, 1897 (Country Living, 21)*

Consider, once again, the language used to describe the siege around Jerusalem noting the almost identical language of these two statements:

*“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.” The Great Controversy, 26*

Is it merely a coincidence that the prophet used virtually identical language in these two instances? Is it mere coincidence that she used this language in pointing out the reason that it had become a “Necessity” for God’s people to leave the cities? Some suggest that it is. The present writer says emphatically, “No – this is not a coincidence!”

What could the prophet be referring to as the setting up of the idol Sabbath in such a significant way that she would point to that as the reason to leave the cities? It turns out that during the late 19th century there were some remarkable developments with reference to a nation wide Sunday law in America. Of particular significance is a bill which was introduced into congress by Senator H.W. Blair of New Hampshire, now simply known as the “Blair Bill”. This was the first ever attempt to pass a federal Sunday law. Prior to this, there had been state Sunday laws, but this bill, if passed into law, would make Sunday the legal day of worship in all federal territories. Due in part to the efforts of A.T. Jones in hearings before a congressional committee, the Blair bill was not passed into law. During the late 1880’s and early 1890’s agitation continued over Sunday legislation, and in 1892 there was even an act of congress to keep the Chicago world’s fair closed on Sunday. Over time, the issue subsided.

But before we can unequivocally point to these developments as the fulfillment of the modern day “Sign” to leave the cities, we must consider the rest of the language in the statement from Testimonies, Volume Five.

2. “So the assumption of power on the part of our nation...”

With reference to this phrase, some assures us that no such power was assumed in the developments surrounding the Blair Bill. Let’s test the truthfulness of that conclusion by using the testimonies to explain themselves, just as scripture is explained by scripture.

First, notice the following uses of the same and similar phrases:

*“But there must be no **assumption of power** on the part of God's chosen people. Those who take their orders from Christ must not **seek to compel** others to obey the law of Jehovah.” Signs of the Times, November 22, 1899*

Notice here, that even to “Seek” to compel others constitutes an “Assumption of power”. In fact, according to Mrs. White, even setting aside the seventh-day Sabbath, substituting a counterfeit in it’s place, is an “Assumption” of the authority of Jehovah. Notice the following statement:

*“The Creator has with His own authority given you His Sabbath to observe; and yet human agencies will attempt to set aside the seventh-day Sabbath, which commemorates God's holy work of creating the world in six working days, and resting on the seventh day. How can men dare **assume the authority** of Jehovah, and represent themselves as God, to change times and laws?” Manuscript Releases, Vol. 21, 88*

This being the case, it would most certainly be an “Assumption of power” to even entertain the idea of passing a Sunday law. Thus, the hearings on the Blair Bill in themselves would be an assumption of power on the part of our nation. It should not then surprise us that toward the end of the 19th century, Mrs. White stated that such an assumption had already taken place:

*“So it will be again. But it is over the seventh-day Sabbath that the battle will be fought. The authorities of this world will rise up in their pride and power to make laws to restrict religious liberty. They will **assume a right that is God's alone**, and, like Nebuchadnezzar, will think that they can force the conscience, which only God can control. **Even now they are making a beginning**, and this they will carry forward till they reach a boundary over which they can not step. Then God will interpose in behalf of his loyal, commandment-keeping people.” Review and Herald, December 20, 1898*

Notice the phrase, “Even now they are making a beginning...”. We ask, “A beginning of what?” The answer is simple - a beginning of an “Assumption” of power – “A right that is God’s alone.” Some insist that no such power was assumed in the Sunday law developments of more than a century ago, but we see in the statement above that Mrs. White makes clear that indeed such an assumption had already begun.

Yet, according to Mrs. White, things would get worse. Here we see glimmerings of that parallel, namely the two sieges around Jerusalem. In light of this parallel, we would expect “Two sieges” in modern times. Notice this remarkable statement:

*“The pressure of the Sunday law **has come and is coming**. ...We can see that that which we have been talking about for the last thirty-five years--this law causing*

the Sunday to be exalted and making human inventions take the place of God's holy day--is now being fulfilled.” Manuscript Releases, Vol 10, 275

If ever there were evidence that there would be “Two sieges” in the last days, here it is! What better way to describe the situation than that the pressure of the Sunday law “Has come and is coming”! This serves as startling evidence that we are indeed living between these two sieges. This would also explain why Mrs. White spoke of a coming crisis even after the events surrounding the Blair Bill.

3. “The decree enforcing the papal Sabbath...”

Once again, some assure us that in the Sunday law crisis of more than a century ago no such law was enforced, thus only when such a law is actually passed can the conditions described by the above statement be fulfilled. But what does the prophet have to say? What does she mean by the language, “The decree enforcing the papal Sabbath”? Furthermore, did she ever indicate that such a decree had gone forth?

First, it is interesting to note that Mrs. White referred to the “Sunday law” as such even though it had not yet officially been passed. Notice the following statements:

“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.” Testimonies to Ministers, p. 118. (1903)

“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 all its sacredness. This must be done if the truth triumphs.”-- Letter 58, 1906. (Counsels to Writers and Editors, 98)

But Mrs. White went beyond this, pointing out that the decree enforcing the papal sabbath had indeed gone forth:

“The decree enforcing the worship of this day 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.” Signs of the Times, May 6, 1897

Once again we see clear evidence that the sign had come. Just as the first attack by Rome was “Limited” to a siege outside the walls of Jerusalem, so the modern day “First attack” was “Limited” as well, and did not come to full development in terms of a national Sunday law in America.

4. "Will be a warning to us..."

Did Mrs. White give any indication that this warning should go forth? The answer is a resounding "Yes" and with clarity! Notice the following quotation:

*"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." *Patriarchs and Prophets, 166**

Does this warning pertain specifically to the "Out of the cities" message? We find the answer in the following statement:

*"I could not sleep past two o'clock this morning. During the night season 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 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." *Review and Herald, December 11, 1900**

The prophet makes clear that just as the disciples were warned prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and just as Lot was warned to leave Sodom, so God's people were receiving the same warning even in her own day! She's the one making the comparison. She's the one drawing the parallel.

5. "It will then be time..."

Prior to this, Mrs. White had penned statements laying out the advantages of country living as compared with life in the cities. But if the words "It will then be time", have any meaning at all, we must certainly understand that at the time of their writing (1885), there was some sense in which it was not yet time for the message to be pressed with

such urgency. In keeping with the principle that “The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture is explained by scripture”, let us see if the testimonies themselves indicate that such a time ever came? Consider the following:

*“**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.” Man. 50. 1903 (Country Living, 24)*

Notice the phrase here, “The time has come...”. Once again, if language means anything, then these words signify a change in circumstances. If the reasons for leaving the cities at this time were simply limited to the reasons given all along in Mrs. White’s ministry, then there would be no sense in using the words, “The time has come”. Furthermore, these words answer to the antecedent phrase “The time is coming”, or more specifically, “It will then be time”.

We previously looked at another statement which clearly points to developments in the protestant world which brought about the “Necessity” of getting out of the cities. Let’s consider that statement again:

*“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.” Letter 90, 1897 (Country Living, 21)*

Here we see a change in circumstances which precipitated the need for God’s people to give special attention to relocating.

But there is even more evidence of a change in circumstances brought about by events which transpired in Mrs. White’s day particularly related to the matter of Sunday legislation. Notice the following statement regarding the developments surrounding the Blair Bill of 1888. Keep in mind that the National Reform Association was the major backer of the bill, and that hearings on that bill had just taken place when this statement was published in January of 1889:

*“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.” Review and Herald, January 1, 1889*

Remember that in 1885 Mrs. White referred to the “Sign” to leave the cities with the words, “It will then be time” (5T 464-465). Notice now in 1889 she said that those events which we had been told “Would come” were “Now here”. Clearly she is speaking of a change in circumstances with reference to the Sunday law issue, and the focal point

for that change is in the events surrounding the Blair Bill of 1888. Some suggest that since the Bill was never officially passed into law, it is of little significance. If that is true, why then did Mrs. White refer to the events surrounding the Blair Bill as a “Fulfillment of prophecy”?

6. “...Leave the large cities...”

Here we see Mrs. White’s instruction that the first step to be taken when the “Sign” should come would be to leave the large cities. Later on, God’s people would find it necessary to leave the smaller cities as well, finally moving to “Retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.” As we compare what she had to say later in her ministry, we find a clear and urgent call to take this first step and leave the “Large” cities:

*“Get out of the **large cities** as fast as possible.” Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, 195 (1900)*

*“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 home in the quiet retirement of the country....” Lake Union Herald, April 7, 1909 (Author’s note: Notice here that the prophet is clear on staying out of the large cities, but also encourages that “If possible”, God’s people should be looking to move beyond the smaller cities as well to the “Quiet retirement of the country”.)*

*“Human wisdom has urged the advantage of remaining in Battle Creek, when the Lord had said, Go; make plants in various places **near to but outside the large cities**.” Manuscript 76, 1905 (The Publishing Ministry, 186)*

*“I have received much instruction regarding the location of sanitariums. They should be **a few miles distant from the large cities**....” Selected Messages, Vol. 2, 291 (1903)*

*“Look for such places **just out from the large cities**, where suitable buildings may be secured, either as a gift from the owners, or purchased at a reasonable price by the gifts of our people. Do not erect buildings in the noisy cities.” Medical Ministry, 308-309 (1909)*

Some tell us that this counsel refers specifically to our institutions. However, two of the statements quoted above are directed toward people not institutions. Furthermore, what difference does it make when the counsel does refer to institutions. Are we to believe that God is more concerned about the location of buildings than his chosen people?

7. “...Preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains...”

This phrase should make one thing abundantly clear - Mrs. White did not teach that the modern day parallel of the Abomination of Desolation “Standing in the holy place” was

the signal to abandon the work in the cities. Furthermore, she did not here support the idea of “Sudden flight” directly to the mountains. Rather, this signal would indicate the time to begin a process of moving carefully and wisely, first from the large cities, later from the smaller ones – finally relocating to secluded mountain homes.

This is why the prophet used language such as “Whenever possible”, “As fast as possible”, and “As God opens the way”. Here we see the parallel between how God’s people were to respond at the time of the first siege of Jerusalem, and how we are to respond in these last days. Even in the siege of Jerusalem, the disciples of Christ could not leave the city until “God opened the way” in the retreat of the Roman armies. Just so, we must watch for God’s providential openings. Yet, while we must move only as God opens the way, we must not in any case use this counsel to rationalize a lack of earnestness in following Christ’s clear instructions to relocate:

*“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.**”* Review and Herald, Sept. 27, 1906

The only way we can know that we are moving out “As fast as possible”, is if we are actually exerting efforts along those lines. This is what our people should be encouraged to do now.

This counsel of moving in the providence of God is especially important in that it gives caution against rash moves. This of course is based on a Biblical principle as stated by the apostle Paul:

“Let all things be done decently and in order” 1 Corinthians 14:40

In 1893 Ellen White wrote to a brother in Battle Creek warning against making hasty, presumptuous moves. Note the following excerpt:

“Your letter tells me, my brother, that there are many who are stirred deeply to move out of Battle Creek. There is need, great need, of this work being done, and now. Those who have felt at last to make a move, let it not be in a rush, in an excitement, or in a rash manner, or in a way that hereafter they will deeply regret that they did move out. . . .

Take heed that there shall be no rash movements made in heeding the counsel in moving from Battle Creek. Do nothing without seeking wisdom of God, who hath promised to give liberally to all who ask, and who upbraideth not.” Letter 45, 1893. (Country Living, 25-28)

Please notice here that while she warned against moving “In a rush”, etc., Ellen White nevertheless made clear that “There is need, great need, of this work being done, **and now.**”

How Are We to Work the Cities?

Another reason to avoid rash moves is that such a course would have a very negative impact on the work of evangelism in the great metropolitan areas. The inspired counsel does not support dropping our outreach work “Cold” in order to move out of the cities. Rather, Mrs. White urged that careful research and planning be made so that God’s people could relocate while continuing to do the work of evangelism in these important centers. Notice the following statements:

“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. But until it is possible for them to leave, so long as they remain, they should be most active in doing missionary work, however limited their sphere of influence may be.” *Review and Herald, Sept. 27, 1906*

“Let men of sound judgment be appointed, not to publish abroad their intentions, but to search for such properties in the rural districts, in easy access to the cities, suitable for small training schools for workers, and where facilities may also be provided for treating the sick and weary souls who know not the truth.” *Medical Ministry, 308-309 (1909)*

While we see that it is not God’s plan that the work in the cities be abandoned as His people endeavor to relocate, the pen of inspiration makes clear that His ultimate plan was, and is, to work in these metropolitan centers but not live in them. Consider these statements:

“Said the messenger of God, “Shall not the cities be warned? Yes, not by God’s people living in them, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth.” *Manuscript Releases, Vol. 1, 253 (1902)*

“As God’s commandment-keeping people, we must leave the cities. As did Enoch, we must work in the cities but not dwell in them.” *Evangelism, 78-79 (1899)*

In a most remarkable and blatant contradiction to this inspired counsel, some declare that God is now calling workers to live in the large cities. We have already seen that those who are working in the large cities are counseled to continue working, but begin making wise plans to move out, at which time they will be able to continue their evangelistic efforts by visiting these cities from outposts. We should not advise that a good work going forth in the city be dropped. Nor should we encourage rash moves out of the cities. Yet, neither should we misrepresent the Spirit of Prophecy by suggesting that it teaches that the Lord is now calling workers to live in the cities.

Inspiration points to a number of ways to reach the cities of our day including: literature evangelism, restaurant work, public evangelism, and home bible studies. To facilitate this work, God has instructed that we have restaurants, sometimes even with small rooms attached for medical missionary work.

“The Lord has a message for our cities, and this message we are to proclaim in our camp meetings and by other public efforts and also through our publications. In addition to this, hygienic restaurants are to be established in the cities, and by them the message of temperance is to be proclaimed. Arrangements should be made to hold meetings in connection with our restaurants. Whenever possible, let a room be provided where the patrons can be invited to lectures on the science of health and Christian temperance, where they can receive instruction on the preparation of wholesome food and on other important subjects.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7, 115

“I have been given light that in many cities it is advisable for a restaurant to be connected with treatment rooms. The two can co-operate in upholding right principles. In connection with these it is sometimes advisable to have rooms that will serve as lodgings for the sick. These establishments will serve as feeders to the sanitariums located in the country and would better be conducted in rented buildings.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7, 60

The counsel is also to have meeting houses (Church buildings) which serve as memorials to God in these cities.

“Repeatedly the Lord has instructed us that we are to work the cities from outpost centers. In these cities we are to have houses of worship, as memorials for God; but institutions for the publication of our literature, for the healing of the sick, and for the training of workers, are to be established outside the cities. Especially is it important that our youth be shielded from the temptations of city life.” Selected Messages, Vol. 2, 358

Notice in this previous statement the instructions to “Work the cities from outpost centers”. It is interesting that Mrs. White spoke of outpost centers as being “In” certain cities, even though they were located outside of the cities themselves. For example, she referred to the sanitarium work “In San Diego” with reference to a location that was more than six miles from the city. (See SpTB14 8.2 & PH094 40.1) Keep in mind that a distance of six miles by horse-and-carriage could take as much as an hour to travel.

In spite of such clear counsel to work the cities from outposts, some would make Mrs. White contradict herself by a misuse of the following statements.

“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?” Christian Service, 180 (1891)

“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.” Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, 244-245 (1903)

On the surface, it could appear that these statements contradict the previous counsel we have already read. But we will find perfect harmony if we simply let the testimonies explain themselves. Remember, as we have already seen - God’s people were explicitly instructed to leave the large cities first. It would then make perfect sense that for a time it would be appropriate to live in smaller cities. The only consistent view in considering these statements quoted above, is that Mrs. White was referring to the smaller cities. To suggest the alternative, would be to suggest a glaring contradiction. Notice that the language in both of these quotations fits this interpretation perfectly, placing these “Cities” in the context of towns and villages. Notice again the language used - “*Cities and towns*”, “*Cities and villages*” and “*Towns, cities, and villages*”.

In Summary...

We have seen clear evidence from the testimony of the Spirit of Prophecy that indeed the conditions for the fulfillment of the prediction found in Testimonies, Vol. 5, 464-465 have been met. Let’s review these points again:

1. Mrs. White drew the parallel between the siege around Jerusalem and the sign to leave the cities at the end. Her description of the events surrounding the Sunday law movement of the late 1800’s was almost word for word identical to her description of the first siege around Jerusalem.
2. Inspiration makes clear that the “Assumption” of power was already being witnessed in Ellen White’s own day.
3. Inspiration further states that the decree enforcing the papal sabbath had already gone forth in a limited degree, a reminder of the first assault by Rome on the city of Jerusalem which was limited to merely a siege of the city.
4. Mrs. White herself likened the warning in her own day to the warning sign which was given to the disciples in Jerusalem, as well as the warning message sent to Lot in Sodom.
5. Following the Sunday law developments of the late 1800’s, the prophet explicitly stated that “The time has come” with reference to the need to get out of the cities. Furthermore, she specifically pointed to the Sunday law developments as the reason to do so.
6. Following the Sunday law developments of the late 1800’s, Mrs. White gave explicit counsel to leave the “Large cities” – the first step we were instructed to take when the “Sign” should appear.
7. The Lord made clear that His plan was to work the cities from outposts. “Said the messenger of God, ‘Shall not the cities be warned? Yes, **not by God’s people living in them**, but by their visiting them, to warn them of what is coming upon the earth.’” *Manuscript Releases, Vol. 1, 253*

Anybody Losing Sleep Over This?

Sadly lacking today is a sense of urgency corresponding to the urgent tones of the prophet over a century ago -

"I could not sleep past two o'clock this morning. During the night season 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 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." Review and Herald, Dec. 11, 1900. (Country Living, 6-7)

"Leave the cities, and like Enoch come from your retirement to warn the people of the cities." Manuscript Releases, Vol. 1, 250 (1902)

"Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one. We should now begin to heed the instruction given us over and over again: Get out of the cities into rural districts, where the houses are not crowded closely together, and where you will be free from the interference of enemies." Letter 5, 1904. (Country Living, 9-10)

"Let children no longer be exposed to the temptations of the cities that are ripe for destruction. The Lord has sent us warning and counsel to get out of the cities. Then let us make no more investments in the cities. Fathers and mothers, how do you regard the souls of your children? Are you preparing the members of your families for translation into the heavenly courts? Are you preparing them to become members of the royal family? children of the heavenly King? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" How will ease, comfort, convenience, compare with the value of the souls of your children?" Manuscript 76, 1905. (Country Living, 12)

"Out of the cities; out of the cities!"--this is the message the Lord has been giving me. The earthquakes will come; the floods will come; and we are not to establish ourselves in the wicked cities, where the enemy is served in every way, and where God is so often forgotten. Review and Herald, July 5, 1906

"Out of the cities, is my message at this time. Be assured that the call is for our people to locate miles away from the large cities. One look at San Francisco as it

is today would speak to your intelligent minds, showing you the necessity of getting out of the cities. . . .

The Lord calls for His people to locate away from the cities, for in such an hour as ye think not, fire and brimstone will be rained from heaven upon these cities. Proportionate to their sins will be their visitation. When one city is destroyed, let not our people regard this matter as a light affair, and think that they may, if favorable opportunity offers, build themselves homes in that same destroyed city...

Let all who would understand the meaning of these things read the eleventh chapter of Revelation. Read every verse, and learn the things that are yet to take place in the cities. Read also the scenes portrayed in the eighteenth chapter of the same book.” Manuscript Release 1518 (1906) (Last Day Events, 95)

“The instruction is still being given, Move out of the cities.” Letter 26, 1907. (Country Living, 28)

“Who will be warned? We say again, Out of the cities.” Manuscript 85, 1908 (Country Living, 14)

Conclusion

It is the firm belief of this writer that for more than a century now we have been in a merciful window of opportunity to act on these warnings given long ago. While we must keep in mind the cautions against rash moves, let us also remember that it is a dangerous thing to presume on God’s mercy:

“...Erelong 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.” General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903

Even more importantly, let us not forget this precious promise from the pen of inspiration:

“God will help His people to find such homes outside the cities.” Medical Ministry, page 310

For more information and resources on getting out of the cities, contact:

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