

Out of the Cities!

An urgent appeal to Seventh-day Adventists

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Dear Reader,

For Seventh-day Adventists these are exciting times. Predictions we've been hearing for years are now coming to pass with stunning accuracy. Meat and dairy products becoming so contaminated they would be considered unfit for human consumption. Apologies made by the Roman Catholic Church for crimes committed against humanity. A false revival counterfeiting the latter rain of the Holy Spirit. These fulfillments of prophecies given many years ago, are bringing a renewed surge of confidence into the hearts of many, and waking others up to the reality that we are indeed living on the threshold of Christ's return.

Meanwhile, life in this "New Millennium" is showing cracks in the foundation that make one ask if modern civilization is really as wonderful as it's been touted. Many are becoming disillusioned with the fast paced, stressful lifestyle we call "The Good life". In the great centers of population the air we breathe and water we drink are becoming toxic. The media blasts us with values and modes of thinking which are hostile to spiritual development. We find ourselves at the mercy of the systems of this world — electric power, communications, even the transportation system. Many are dependent upon a quick stop at the supermarket for this evening's dinner. But what if there was a problem in the food supply?

God has a better plan. He is calling for His followers to choose a radically different way of life.

At the time of this writing I find myself at a major pivotal point in my own life. In just a few days, I will be taking my family to a place in the country we believe God led us to and trading a full time salary for working in the orchard and garden, as well as ministering in new and different ways. I'll be spending more time with my family and living a very different lifestyle.

Why am I doing this? You'll find the answer to that question in this volume. These short articles will introduce you to a study that led me to conclude that this is God's call to me now. Furthermore, it's His call to you too. How can I be so sure? Well, why not take a careful look at the evidence. Ask God to give you an open heart as you read. Then see if you don't hear His voice as I did! And when you're tempted to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of the changes God is calling you to make - just remember, "He who has called you is faithful who also will do it".

Dave Westbrook, May 2001

Abomination in the Holy Place!

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, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465.

Ellen White made the statement quoted above based upon her understanding of a prediction Jesus made in Luke 21:20-21: "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; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." This is the same event that is referred to elsewhere as "The abomination of desolation standing in the holy place". (See *Matthew 24:15-18*) This can be better understood by taking a brief look at history.

It turns out that there was an area outside the walls of Jerusalem which was designated as the "Holy ground" or "Holy place". Notice this statement, "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." *Great Controversy, p. 26* It was customary for an attacking army in those days to lift their standard as a threatening sign of their power and intended overthrow. This constituted the "Abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." Notice that it hadn't caused desolation yet, it was merely standing as a threat of impending destruction. Jesus' words in Luke 21:20 actually capture this idea, "Then know that the desolation thereof is nigh."

The prophecies found in these passages of the Bible have special significance for those of us living in the last days. That's because these prophecies regarding the fall of Jerusalem have a secondary application to the end of the world. Remember that Jesus was answering a broad question posed by the disciples, "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" *Matthew 24:3* In mercy, Jesus did not explain that His second coming would be much later than they would hope. He simply put it all together in one description, thus pointing to the fall of Jerusalem as a microcosm of the end of the world.

But why did Ellen White make a connection between the abomination in the holy place and the Sunday law issue? The answer to that question can only be understood when we identify the modern day counterpart of ancient Rome. History reveals that the pagan Roman empire handed over it's power to the Papal system, or what we refer to now as the Roman Catholic church. The Papacy has made clear what she sees as her standard or "Mark" of authority: "Sunday is our mark of authority. . . The Church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact."

Catholic Record, Sept. 1, 1923

But the story gets even more intriguing as we study the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. Here the Papacy

is represented by a strange beast with seven heads. But starting in verse eleven, an alliance forms in which a second beast, described as having two horns like a lamb, becomes the "Front man" for the Papacy. This second beast is symbolic of the United States. (*For a complete study on this topic write and ask for the Amazing Facts study guides entitled "Antichrist is Alive Today" and "The USA in Bible Prophecy".*) Here in this chapter of Revelation we watch as the United States becomes the power to attempt to force by law the setting up of the "Mark" of the beast's authority — Sunday sacredness.

Thus, we can identify the modern day application of the words of Jesus, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." *Matthew 24:15-16* This event, the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, is a parallel to the threat of forced false worship in the last days. This threat would then signify the time for God's people to head out of the cities for less populated areas. Eventually, they end up in solitary places in the mountains when Jesus returns in glory to rescue them.

How important is it that God's people recognize the appearing of this sign? Well, in the case of Jerusalem, it was a matter of life and death. The Christians who recognized the sign fled to the safety of Pella in the mountains. The crisis that later engulfed Jerusalem was horrible. Finally, in the Roman attack, blood flowed like water down the steps of the temple where many within the city had fled hoping to find safety.

The parallel is clear. We must recognize the sign and follow God's instruction as His early followers did. But here's the startling truth that should arrest the attention of Seventh-day Adventists everywhere — the sign has already come! That's right! Most are looking forward to the future, thinking that the sign is on it's way. Unfortunately, many will discover too late that they missed it. Ellen White spoke of a time when "There will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able." *General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903*

You don't need to be caught by surprise. God has blessed us with all the instruction we need to navigate safely into the final events of Earth's history — we just need to take some time to read the manual. In the next article we'll see exactly when the sign took place and discover that God brought it into sharp focus through the ministry of Ellen White.

The Almost Forgotten Sign

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, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465.

Seventh-day Adventists have long anticipated the passing of a national Sunday law, expecting this to usher in the final movements of God in wrapping up world events prior to His second coming. They have also understood that God's people would be called to leave the cities for secluded country homes, eventually fleeing on foot for solitary places in the mountains. Many recognize that the Sunday law issue is the appointed sign to tell God's people when to leave the cities, but few realize that this signal has already come. It is a signal that was foreshadowed by the siege of Jerusalem.

Jesus said, "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; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out. . . ." *Luke 21:20-21* The Roman army first surrounded Jerusalem under the leadership of Cestius. However, for no apparent reason, the forces withdrew with the Jewish army chasing after them. "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. Events were so overruled that neither Jews nor Romans should hinder the flight of the Christians. Upon the retreat of Cestius, the Jews, sallying from Jerusalem, pursued after his retiring army; and while both forces were thus fully engaged, the Christians had an opportunity to leave the city. At this time the country also had been cleared of enemies who might have endeavored to intercept them." *Great Controversy, pp. 30-31* Christ's followers in the city had recognized the appointed sign for their departure and with the opening providence of God they fled without delay to the city of Pella beyond the Jordan.

The siege was later resumed under the leadership of a new general, Titus. The magnitude of the calamities then to fall upon the city were terrible indeed. Millions of Jews were within its walls for the celebration of the passover. Stores of food had been destroyed by warring factions in the city, which brought "All the horrors of starvation." *Great Controversy, p. 31* Men were seen gnawing the leather of their belts and sandals. Family members stole food from one another and parents actually even ate their own children. "The Roman leaders endeavored to strike terror to the Jews and thus cause them to surrender. Those prisoners who resisted when taken, were scourged, tortured, and crucified before the wall of the city. Hundreds were daily put to death in this manner, and the dreadful work continued until, along the Valley of Jehoshaphat and at Calvary, crosses were erected in so great numbers that there was scarcely room to move among them. So terribly was visited that awful imprecation uttered before the judgment seat of Pilate: "His blood be on us, and on our children." *Matthew 27:25.*" *Great Controversy, 32*

Finally, Titus and his army stormed the city and blood flowed like water. Yet, not a Christian perished in the attack. Why? Because they had recognized the sign and left the city in accordance with Christ's

instructions.

In the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem we find a striking parallel to last day events. Ellen White referred to this when she said, "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." *Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 464* Thus we can see that the siege around the city of Jerusalem served as a parallel to the end-time signal which would indicate the time for God's people to leave the cities. Most Seventh-day Adventists are looking to the future to see the fulfillment of this prophecy. They believe that when the National Sunday law is finally passed, it will then be imperative to relocate out of the cities and seek secluded country homes. While they recognize the benefits of country living, and even admire those who are already making this a priority, they believe that it is not yet time to make such a move an urgent necessity.

The alarming fact is this — the signal actually came more than one hundred years ago. That's right! It came while Ellen White was still living. But, you say, why didn't she recognize it? She did! After pointing to the Sunday law issue as the modern day parallel to the siege around Jerusalem, notice what she said, "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, vol. 5, pp. 464-465* Did you catch that phrase - "**It will then be time**"? Mrs. White made that statement in 1885. She must have recognized a fulfillment somewhere along the way for in 1903 she said, "**The time has come**, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities." *Manuscript 50, 1903*. In fact, as early as 1897 she said, "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* Notice also that this signal would indicate when it would be time to leave the "**Large cities**". In 1900 she said, "Get out of the **large cities** as fast as possible." *Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 195* By 1906 the pitch was increasing — "'Out of the cities; out of the cities!'"--this is the message the Lord has been giving me." *Life Sketches, p. 409* So what happened? What did Ellen White recognize as the signal and when did it come?

It turns out that 1888 was a big year for more reasons than Minneapolis! The same year in Washington D.C. a bill was introduced into Congress by Senator H.W. Blair of New Hampshire. It would enforce Sunday in all Federal territories as a "Day of worship". As you can imagine, Seventh-day Adventists were alarmed. Alarmed enough to send A.T. Jones to the nation's capital to fight the passage of this bill. God blessed in this effort and the law did not pass. "But wait a minute!", you say, "The bill did not pass! How can that be a fulfillment of the prediction?" To understand this we must look back at history once again.

You will remember that there were actually two sieges around the city of Jerusalem. The first in A.D. 66 under the generalship of Cestius. While this served as a threat to Jerusalem, it did not come to fruition in the taking of the city. It came to a sudden end as was described already. A period of about three and one half years followed during which God's people had ample opportunity to leave for the mountains. Once the siege was resumed in A.D. 70, there would not be another chance to leave before the carnage that ensued under the leadership of Titus. You can see that it was imperative that God's people should leave

while they had opportunity to do so.

That brings us back to modern times. In 1888 a threat was made. The Sunday bill was introduced. It certainly represented an assumption of power on the part of our nation in the form of a decree which would enforce the Papal Sabbath. With stunning similarity to the retreat of Cestius, the "Forces" were turned back with the defeat of the bill in 1888. Just as the first siege of Jerusalem proved to be a threat that did not culminate in destruction, so the Blair Sunday bill also proved to be a threat that did not result in the final closing scenes, but rather served as a warning of what was coming. It was followed by a reprieve that would give God's people ample opportunity to obey God's instructions and begin the process of leaving "The large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains." *Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 464-465*

The rumbling of the returning Roman armies can now be heard. The Papacy is calling for Sunday legislation once again. If the parallel holds true, the second siege will be more than a threat — it will come to fruition. National apostasy will be followed by national ruin. God in His mercy has given His people more than one hundred years to respond to this warning, but time is running out. Those who do not act on God's warning will find themselves in an unenviable position for, "Erelong there will be such strife and confusion in the cities, that those who wish to leave them will not be able." *General Conference Bulletin, April 6, 1903*

In 1900 Ellen White penned these words: "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." *Review and Herald, Dec. 11, 1900.*

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: Since Christ could have come near the end of the 19th century but didn't due to our unbelief, wasn't this counsel put off until the time when we would near the "Borders of the promised land" again?

As early as 1883 we find that Jesus could have come already. "Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the third angel and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive His people to their reward." -- *Manuscript 4, 1883*.

Mrs. White gave two reasons for the delay — mercy for the lost (*See Evangelism, 697*) and our unbelief (*See Manuscript 4, 1883*). In the latter quotation we are pointed to an Old Testament parallel for this experience. It is found in the story of Israel's unbelief at the borders of the promised land. Indeed they had to turn back and wander in the wilderness forty more years before returning to the gates of Canaan.

However, notice that God did not send them back to Egypt. They were to remain in the wilderness. The parallel is quite clear. God has called us to leave the city and move to the country in preparation for entry into the heavenly promised land. That happened at the end of the 1800's. God's people were then at the brink of entry, but because of unbelief they turned back. To suggest that God's people should return to the cities or that the counsel to leave them was retracted would be tantamount to God telling the Israelites to return to Egypt during the forty years. Rather than the "Prophetic clock" turning backward, we were told, "More and more, as time advances, our people will have to leave the cities." *Review and Herald, Sept. 27, 1906*. Well past the time when Seventh-day Adventists had "Turned back" God's counsel was still going forth from the pen of inspiration: "Who will be warned? We say again, Out of the cities." *Manuscript 85, 1908*.

QUESTION: Jesus' warning in the gospels to flee to the mountains carries great urgency — how can the Blair bill fit as the modern day "First siege" when more than one hundred years have now passed since that time?

Jesus certainly instructed swift action in response to the sign. In Matthew 24 it says, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: 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." Vs. 16-18 The book "Great Controversy" points out that God's people could not leave while the first siege was in place. However, God "Opened the way" by turning back the Roman armies. Immediately after this retreat, the way was especially clear for the Christians to flee as the Jewish armies were gone, having pursued the Romans. Thus, they were able to go unhindered. Many do not realize however that the second siege did not commence until approximately three and one half years later. This is not to take away from the clear instructions of Jesus Himself that His followers leave promptly. We can assume

from the historical account that after the Jewish armies returned, it was more difficult to leave than during that short period of time when, "The country also had been cleared of enemies who might have endeavored to intercept" the Christians. (*See Great Controversy, pp. 30-31*)

This experience serves as a microcosm of the last days. If the parallel holds true, than we could expect to see a lengthy time period between the two "Sieges" of modern times. Certainly, those who acted long ago found it easier to leave than those who are just now getting around to it. Homesteading is no longer an option. With every passing day it seems tighter regulations and codes make it difficult and more costly to build. Land and building material prices are steadily rising. It is getting more and more difficult to make the move. Yet we are promised, "God will help His people to find such homes outside the cities." *Medical Ministry, p. 310. (1902)*

QUESTION: The book "Country Living" ends with a quote regarding the Sunday law issue signaling the time for our departure. It appears under the heading: "Emergency Flight in Closing Conflict". Doesn't that lead to the conclusion that it is referring to a time yet in the future?

The booklet "Country Living" is a compilation with headings supplied by the compilers. The heading, "Emergency Flight in Closing Conflict" almost captures the idea of the final flight at the time of the death decree. Careful consideration of the statement however reveals a two step process.

The first step involves leaving the large cities for the smaller cities and towns. The second step is to secure homes in secluded places among the mountains. This is all preliminary to the time at which we will have to "Leave it all behind" and head out on foot. Notice, however that this is clearly identified as the modern day counterpart to the flight of the Christians out of Jerusalem — "It will then be time to leave the large cities for smaller ones . . . etc.." Thus we see that Ellen White understood the modern day application to involve a process rather than a single, final flight.

That Ellen White recognized the modern day fulfillment of this prediction is clearly evident by her urgent calls to heed the warning sign. In fact with great specificity she called for God's people to take the first step in the process explained above: "Get out of the large cities as fast as possible." *Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 195* Notice the urgency of the following statements as well: "The time has come, when, as God opens the way, families should move out of the cities." *Manuscript 50, 1903.* "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* ""Out of the cities; out of the cities!"--this is the message the Lord has been giving me." *Life Sketches, p. 409* Therefore, to suggest that this warning is pointing to a time yet in the future misses the mark. This is not to suggest that the compilers had any intent to mislead, but more likely just overlooked this point.

QUESTION: What about those who say that we shouldn't try to protect ourselves from the coming

disasters in the cities as we will have to rely upon God in the end?

The Spirit of Prophecy makes it clear that one of the reasons God's people are to leave the cities is to avoid the judgements of God that will fall on them. Notice the following statements: "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. . . ." *MR 1518 (May 10, 1906)* "'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...." *Life Sketches, p. 409*

The story of Lot serves as a good example of this. Surely God could have saved Lot and his family while they remained in the city. What an amazing story that would have been — Lot, along with his wife and daughters standing amidst the sizzling ruins of Sodom. But that wasn't God's method. He told Lot to leave. Regarding this incident, the pen of inspiration says, "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." *Review and Herald, Dec. 11, 1900.*

QUESTION: Didn't Ellen White state that we are to be taking the message of the gospel to those living in the cities?

The call to leave the cities is not a call to forget the lost there. On the contrary, we are counseled to make special plans to warn those living in the great centers of population. "We must make wise plans to warn the cities, and at the same time live where we can shield our children and ourselves from the contaminating and demoralizing influences so prevalent in these places." *Life Sketches, p. 410* "The cities are to be worked 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."" *Letter 182, 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, pp. 77-78*

QUESTION: Didn't Ellen White indicate that God would have some of His people remain in the cities right up to the very end?

In the book, "*Last Day Events*" the following title appears on page 121, "Some Righteous Still in the Cities After the Death Decree Has Been Passed". Interestingly, this quotation immediately follows: "In the time of trouble we all fled from the cities and villages but were pursued by the wicked, who entered the houses of the saints with a sword." *Last Day Events, p. 121* Notice that the houses of these

"Righteous" individuals are outside the cities, not in them. What were they doing in the city if their homes were without? As we noted in the previous question, "The cities are to be worked 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."" *Letter 182, 1902.*

QUESTION: Can't God send someone to knock on my door and offer to buy my house when I'm supposed to leave the city?

God can do and even does many things, often times in spite of our unbelief. However, we are counseled to take action on the counsel He has given us. Notice the following statements. "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 [Emphasis supplied]. 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.* "Serious times are before us, and there is great need for families to get out of the cities into the country, that the truth may be carried into the byways as well as the highways of the earth. Much depends upon laying our plans according to the word of the Lord and with persevering energy carrying them out. More depends upon consecrated activity and perseverance than upon genius and book learning. All the talents and ability given to human agents, if unused, are of little value." *Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 178-179*

QUESTION: Didn't Ellen White caution against rash moves?

Yes indeed she did. She spoke of the importance of moving in the providence of God. God should be sought for guidance and every plan laid before Him. "There may be individuals who will make a rush to do something, and enter into some business they know nothing about. This God does not require. . . . Let there be nothing done in a disorderly manner, that there shall be a great loss or sacrifice made upon property because of ardent, impulsive speeches which stir up an enthusiasm which is not after the order of God, that a victory that was essential to be gained, shall, for lack of level-headed moderation and proper contemplation and sound principles and purposes, be turned into a defeat." *Letter 45, 1893*

In moving too hastily there is great danger of running ahead of the Lord. Going forward in our own strength is precarious at best, and ultimately leads to failure. Thus, Ellen White counsels, "If in the providence of God we can secure places away from the cities, the Lord would have us do this." Manuscript 99 "Think candidly, prayerfully, studying the Word with all carefulness and prayerfulness, with mind and heart awake to hear the voice of God. . . . To understand the will of God is a great thing." *Letter 45, 1893*

Four More Reasons to Leave Now

"Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." II Chronicles 20:20

So far we've learned that the signal for God's people to leave the cities came at the end of the 1800's. It involved the introduction of a bill into congress which would enforce Sunday as a "Day of worship" in all Federal states. But Ellen White also pointed to four other reasons for leaving the cities. Here they are:

Reason #1: The Spiritual Influence

Clearly the most important reason for moving away from the great centers of population is the spiritual, or shall we say the anti-spiritual influence of city life. This is a serious matter of priorities - "In choosing a home, God would have us consider, first of all, the moral and religious influences that will surround us and our families." *Adventist Home, p. 131* Many do not recognize the insidious nature of a city influence, but consider this: "Life in the cities is false and artificial. The intense passion for money getting, the whirl of excitement and pleasure seeking, the thirst for display, the luxury and extravagance, all are forces that, with the great masses of mankind, are turning the mind from life's true purpose. They are opening the door to a thousand evils. Upon the youth they have almost irresistible power." *Country Living, p. 6*

"What were the conditions chosen by the Infinite Father for His Son? A secluded home in the Galilean hills; . . . the quiet dawn or twilight in the green valley; the holy ministries of nature; the study of creation and providence; and the soul's communion with God . . ." *Ministry of Healing, pp. 365-366* Long ago we were instructed that "Faith, hope, love, happiness, can far better be gained in retired places, where there are fields and hills and trees." *Country Living, p. 13* This is most certainly of paramount importance to God's people living at the end. Our mission is represented by the ministry of John the Baptist who was called to "Prepare the way of the Lord". Notice that "It was John's (John the baptist) choice to forego the enjoyments and luxuries of city life for the stern discipline of the wilderness. Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of providence." *Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 221* "So with the great majority of the best and noblest men of all ages. Read the history of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, of Moses, David, and Elisha. Study the lives of men of later times who have most worthily filled positions of trust and responsibility, the men whose influence has been most effective for the world's uplifting. How many of these were reared in country homes. They knew little of luxury. They did not spend their youth in amusement. Many were forced to struggle with poverty and hardship. They early learned to work, and their active life in the open air gave vigor and elasticity to all their faculties. Forced to depend upon their own resources, they learned to combat difficulties and to surmount obstacles, and they gained courage and perseverance. They learned the lessons of self-reliance and self-control. Sheltered in a great degree from evil associations, they were satisfied with natural pleasures and

wholesome companionships. They were simple in their tastes and temperate in their habits. They were governed by principle, and they grew up pure and strong and true. When called to their lifework, they brought to it physical and mental power, buoyancy of spirit, ability to plan and execute, and steadfastness in resisting evil, that made them a positive power for good in the world." *Country Living*, p. 15

Thus the appeal was made - "I urge our people to make it their lifework to seek for spirituality. Christ is at the door. This is why I say to our people, 'Do not consider it a privation when you are called to leave the cities and move out into the country places. Here there await rich blessings for those who will grasp them. By beholding the scenes of nature, the works of the Creator, by studying God's handiwork, imperceptibly you will be changed into the same image.'" *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 356

Reason #2: Health Hazards of City Living

"The physical surroundings in the cities are often a peril to health. The constant liability to contact with disease, the prevalence of foul air, impure water, impure food, . . . are some of the many evils to be met." *Adventist Home*, p. 135 Intuitive logic will tell you that the dangers of epidemic disease greatly increase by our living in constant contact with the masses of humanity. Certainly Mrs. White was thinking of this when she penned these words. But notice also her reference to the problems of pollution.

Foul air is becoming more of a problem as cities continue to mushroom in size. It has been said that on a "Bad day" in Mexico City, simply breathing the air is equivalent to smoking one pack of cigarettes. According to a study by the Harvard School of Public Health, "15% to 17% of people who live in polluted cities are more likely to die prematurely than those in cities with the cleanest air." *What's In The Air*, p. 83 (Stephen E. Blewett with Mary Embree, Seaview Publishing, 1998) But notice that this study was comparing city dwellers in varying degrees of air cleanliness. How about comparing with those in country and wilderness settings where smog is not present? How important is air? "Fresh air will prove far more beneficial to sick persons than medicine, and is far more essential to them than their food. They will do better, and will recover sooner, when deprived of food, than when deprived of fresh air."

Counsels on Health, 55

The rise in pollution of city water supplies is troubling, especially with the appearance of MTBE — a gasoline additive intended to lessen the effects of combustion on air pollution. The auto-exhaust cure has merely brought a new worry as MTBE seems to be showing up everywhere. A recent nationwide news magazine documented the disturbing findings and revealed that even when fuel storage tanks at gas stations are replaced, it's just a matter of time before MTBE shows up again due to new leaks. While gas stations everywhere face this problem, country or city, it stands to reason that heavier concentrations of gas stations such as are found in metropolitan areas raise more concern. While there are questions as to what the effects might be to human health, one study noted, "Both in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and in Alaska there was a rash of health complaints after MTBE was introduced. The problems reported were headaches, dizziness, nausea, coughs and skin rashes. The EPA rejected the request by the governor of

Wisconsin to suspend the reformulated gasoline. In Alaska, however, when MTBE was replaced by ethanol as the additive, the health complaints disappeared." *ibid*, p. 64 For those who say, "We don't yet have enough scientific data on the potential risks" — I just have one question: who wants to be a lab rat?

It is interesting that Ellen White mentioned "Impure food" in her list. One could consider the dangers of poor hygiene in food preparation. But, new and perhaps even greater dangers loom over us with the advent of genetically modified (Known as "GM" for short) produce. You might ask, "So what's that got to do with getting out of the cities?" Ellen White's simple answer is that country living affords us enough space to grow our own food. With reference to genetic engineering there's already startling evidence that we're in over our heads. Take bio-engineered corn for example. Recently a crop turned up engineered that had never been genetically modified — so they thought. What happened? Nobody bothered to tell the wind which way to blow and genetically modified pollen blew into a field of natural corn! Adverse skin reactions on the hands of farmers who merely handle the GM corn and ill effects seen in monarch butterflies may just be omens of what lies ahead as we continue down this path.

In all of this we haven't even mentioned the effects of noise, stress, and the fast pace of urban life upon mental health. Long ago we were counseled, "Take your children away from the sights and sounds of the city, away from the rattle and din of streetcars and teams, and their minds will become more healthy." *Country Living*, p. 13

Reason #3: Economic Problems

"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." *Adventist Home*, p. 141 Here we see Ellen White encouraging an independence from the systems of this world. Advances in modern technology have led to a tremendous dependence upon power companies, telecommunications providers, fossil fuels, and even something as simple as supermarkets to get along from day to day. Many would not enjoy their dinner today except for the fact that food is on the shelf when they stop at the supermarket on their way home. The evening news has often depicted scenes of empty shelves within hours of receiving word of an approaching hurricane. What would happen if natural disaster or just plain old panic were coupled with a break-down in the food transportation system?

The recent passing of Y2K provided a wonderful opportunity for all of us to contemplate scenarios not so far from the realm of believability. But with the millennial turn not even sending so much as a blip onto the radar screen, many have haply rolled back over into their indifferent slumber.

Someone is probably saying, "But wait a minute! We have been counseled not to store stock piles of food. Let's not overreact here and set up militia-like compounds! Shouldn't we simply trust God for our needs when times get bad?" The answer is a resounding yes! In fact, we are told that those who try to

build up a stash of provisions will see them taken from them when times get bad. But, look once more at this statement, "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." *Adventist Home, p. 141* Clearly, there will be a period of time during which those who have their own gardens and orchards will be spared from great hardship. Now, could you honestly conclude that God's people should just stroll along blissfully, not giving due consideration to this issue? I hope not.

Reason #4: Coming Judgements

"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. . . . 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 (May 10, 1906)*

I've heard it said that God is not calling us to leave the cities for our own physical protection. That is simply not true. Ellen White clearly saw this as a very important reason for leaving. In 1906 she penned these gripping words, "'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...." *Life Sketches, p. 410*

A familiar Bible story helps make the point here. God could have spared Lot and his family right in the midst of Sodom. Can you imagine it? Here they come, walking calmly — each step crunching in the charred remains strewn across the sizzling plain. It wouldn't be the first time God preserved people in the midst of fiery flames. But this wasn't God's plan. The instructions were simple — GET OUT! Jesus pointed to Lot's escape from Sodom as a parallel for God's people at the end. (*See Luke 17:28-30*)

Make no mistake about it. We will be completely dependent upon God's protection as the final cataclysmic events unfold. But, not while disobeying the clear instructions from the lips of Jesus himself.

Conclusion

How we fare in the coming days will have everything to do with whether or not we trust God and follow His instructions. We are left with a simple choice: "*Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.*" *II Chronicles 20:20*

Taking the Next Step

We've learned that God has given us five compelling reasons to leave the cities now. One of those reasons — the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place — makes the need to do this especially urgent. God's people have had more than one hundred years to respond to the warning, but time is running out and it is now imperative that we take swift action to follow the instructions before it is too late.

So where does one start? Many have become so entangled in the systems of this world that such a radical shift might seem overwhelming. Jesus said, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." *Matthew 19:26* Remember, God is the one asking us to do this, so He must have a place in mind for you. Let's look at six simple steps you can take which will put you on track to finding that place.

STEP ONE: Study the subject out for yourself

There is no substitute for doing your own study on this topic. Second hand information is never as compelling as that which you have studied out for yourself. There's too much at stake here not to spend time doing this. Start with a study on the fall of Jerusalem using the Bible and a good historical account such as that found in the "Great Controversy". Consider the act of the Romans in setting up their standards in the "Holy Place" surrounding the walls of Jerusalem. Learn why that is a parallel which represents the setting up of the "Standard" or "Sign" of modern day Rome's authority — Sunday sacredness. Study the Bible description of what is coming upon the cities of the world. Notice this statement, "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." *MR 1518 (May 10, 1906)* Read the little booklet, "*Country Living*" and the sections on this topic in the book, "*Last Day Events*".

Part of the process of becoming informed would include talking with those who have gone before you. While each person's experience is different, there is much to be gained by learning from the mistakes of others. In fellowshipping together with like minded believers we will find encouragement. However, this should not take the place of getting our marching orders direct from the captain. "We are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else." *Desire of Ages, p. 668*

STEP TWO: PRAY FOR GOD'S GUIDANCE

This step isn't so much about praying as to whether or not you should leave the city. After step one, it should be clear to you that this is God's instruction for His people. Praying as to whether or not you should follow His instructions is presumptuous. What we are talking about here is to seek God's guidance in the process of leaving. Where would He have you go? What does He want you to do in terms of your occupation, or maybe He has a place that would not require you to make a change in your employment. Ask God to help keep you on track and avoid the enemy's deceptions.

STEP THREE: MAKE A START

First consider your options. Perhaps you already own some country property that shouldn't be overlooked. Maybe there's something "In the family" that might be used. What are your employment options? Actively begin seeking alternatives. I've heard people say, "Well, when God sends someone knocking on my door to buy my house, I guess I'll know it's time to go". Perhaps you need to put a "For Sale" sign up! Think of this, "All that needs to be done cannot be specified till a beginning is made."
Letter 25, 1902

One man told me the story of how he did put the "For Sale" sign up, but nothing happened. During this time, he became convicted that God wanted him to make a change in his employment. Two years passed, and yet he still hesitated in following God's leading. Finally, he made the change, and remarkably, within several days someone approached him to buy his home.

STEP FOUR: DON'T RATIONALIZE

It's not uncommon for people to say, "I'm not really living in the city am I?" City living has become so common that it is hard for many people to understand what God's plan for His people really is on this point.

Grab an almanac and look at the population records for well known cities in America one hundred years ago. You might be surprised. While New York city was huge, even in 1900, other cities would probably be referred to as towns by us today. For example, at the turn of the last century Los Angeles was just under 100,000. I have met people who live in urban areas twice that size and believe they are living in the country.

Another rationalization has to do with what it means to be "Out" of the city. Some who live in quiet neighborhoods within the city limits believe they are "In the country". Others feel the suburbs qualify. Ellen White said, "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. 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*, pp. 308, 309 Notice that she used the phrases, "In easy access to the cities", and "Just out from the large cities". So, what did she mean by these phrases?

To seek an answer to this question, I decided to consider some of the places that God gave special indication we were to obtain for the establishing of schools. There is a simple principle involved here. They should be close enough to centers of population to provide opportunity for the students to minister to the people, yet not be so close as to provide convenient access to the temptations of the city. These places were typically in the neighborhood of 8-10 miles from the nearest city or town. But here's the interesting point. The common mode of travel then was horse and buggy. If the roads were good, that meant a travel speed of 6-7 miles per hour! In other words, these places were often one to two hours out and that was considered "Just out" from the cities!

Some would say, "Do you really think that God expects us to be that far away from the cities today?" Keep in mind that God would have us move farther out as time goes on. Remember the statement, "Leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains." *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 464, 465 You can see here a step progression. God has made provision for that with the advent of the automobile.

So is there one rule that fits everyone? No! God's step for one may not be the same as that for another. The main point here is not to rationalize your way out of the conviction that God wants you to move if you're in the city. He will show you how far away that needs to be.

STEP FIVE: DON'T MOVE RASHLY

In 1893 there was a large interest by many people to follow the counsel of God and leave Battle Creek. Ellen White wrote a letter cautioning against moving too hastily. "There may be individuals who will make a rush to do something, and enter into some business they know nothing about. This God does not require. ...Let there be nothing done in a disorderly manner, that there shall be a great loss or sacrifice made upon property because of ardent, impulsive speeches which stir up an enthusiasm which is not after the order of God, that a victory that was essential to be gained, shall, for lack of level-headed moderation and proper contemplation and sound principles and purposes, be turned into a defeat." *Letter 45, 1893*

She also pointed out what can often result from rash moves. "...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. . . ." *Ibid*

Perhaps the greatest danger of moving too hastily is that we may run ahead of the Lord. Going forward in our own strength is precarious at best, and ultimately leads to failure and defeat. Thus, Ellen White counsels, "If in the providence of God we can secure places away from the cities, the Lord would have us do this." Manuscript 99 "Think candidly, prayerfully, studying the Word with all carefulness and prayerfulness, with mind and heart awake to hear the voice of God. . . . To understand the will of God is a great thing." *Letter 45, 1893*

STEP SIX: MOVE FORWARD AS GOD OPENS THE WAY

As we see the providences of God, we are called to move forward. Every detail will probably not be made clear in advance. This calls for a deeper walk with Christ that we may come to discern His voice. As we step out in faith, more will be revealed, more of the details unfold.

The story of God's people at the shores of the Red Sea offers some insight. They were stuck! The Red Sea lay before them while the Egyptians were pressing in from behind. God gave the directions to Moses, "Go forward". While Moses was instructed to raise his rod, the people were first to start moving — dead ahead! How important was it that these instructions be followed? "The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was "by faith" that "they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." Hebrews 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken by Moses. They did all that was in their power to do, and then the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet.

The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, "Go forward." We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, "Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;" but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things. . . . The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path." *Patriarchs and Prophets, 290*

For Those Who Remain

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20

Seventh-day Adventists have always seen themselves as people with a global evangelistic mission. Without a doubt, God has raised up this movement to take His truth to a dark world just before Jesus comes back. But, is it now time to "Sign off" on reaching the lost who still remain in the cities, and as one church leader put it, go minister to the jack rabbits? What about those who suggest that we must not leave the cities lest we abandon the lost there? The reasoning goes something like this: Jesus got close to the people, shouldn't we? One minister even made an appeal to those whose children are grown, to leave their country homes and return to the cities to evangelize the lost?

Isn't it ironic that just now, as things are taking a noticeable turn for the worse - as we hear the return of the Roman armies - at just such a time we should hear voices calling people to stay in the cities, or worse yet, move back after having left? Do I smell a rat? Now don't misunderstand me — I'm not suggesting that those who have made these statements are purposefully trying to mislead. But just how could we be fulfilling God's commission - even being like Jesus - while ignoring such plain counsel as that concerning leaving the cities?

Please notice, however, that while Mrs. White was urging people to leave the cities, she was also making statements like this, "In preparation for the coming of our Lord, we are to do a large work in the great cities. We have a solemn testimony to bear in these great centers." *Words of Encouragement to Self-supporting Workers (Ph 113) p.5* Here are a couple more: "Day after day the centers of commerce and trade are thronged with men and women who need the truth for this time but who gain no saving knowledge of its precious principles because earnest, persevering efforts are not put forth to reach this class of people where they are." *Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 14* "Our cities everywhere are calling for earnest, wholehearted labor from the servants of God." *Review and Herald, Nov. 17, 1910*

One thing was absolutely clear in her mind, "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, pp. 77-78* "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.'" *Selected Messages, vol. 2, p. 358* "When iniquity abounds in a nation there is always to be heard some voice giving warning and instruction, as the voice of Lot was heard in Sodom. Yet Lot could have preserved his family from many evils had he not made his home in this wicked, polluted city. All that Lot and his family did in Sodom could have been done by them even if they had lived in a place some distance away from the city." *Evangelism, p. 78*

The plan is a simple one. It involves small outposts from which God's people work the cities. Notice what she wrote: "The cities are to be worked from outposts." *Letter 182, 1902* "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. 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*, pp. 308-309 I believe that even our country homes can serve as outpost stations from which we minister to those living in the great centers of population. "It is God's design that our people should locate outside the cities, and from these outposts warn the cities, and raise in them memorials for God. There must be a force of influence in the cities, that the message of warning shall be heard. *Review and Herald*, April 14, 1903

This helps us understand a suspenseful scene described by Ellen White in the book *Early Writings*. "As the saints left the cities and villages they were pursued by the wicked, who sought to slay them. But the swords that were raised to kill God's people broke and fell as powerless as a straw. Angels of God shielded the saints." *Early Writings*, pp. 284, 285 But another statement tucked neatly away in the same book adds an interesting detail: "In the time of trouble we all fled from the cities and villages but were pursued by the wicked, who entered the houses of the saints with a sword." *Early Writings*, p. 34 Do you see the picture? These "Saints" are pictured fleeing out of the cities and villages. Following, in hot pursuit are the wicked with "Swords" in hand. But where do they run to? All the way to their HOMES! That's right, homes which are outside the cities and villages. The obvious question — what are these saints doing in the cities and villages during such turbulent times if they don't live there? There is only one logical answer — they must be doing missionary work!

It's time to enlist in God's great missionary army. Even if you haven't yet found your home in the country, the instructions for mission work are clear. "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

Epilogue

At the time of this writing, I am literally days away from taking my family out of the city to a place we believe God has led us to. It's been an amazing journey just getting to this point. There have been difficulties, obstacles, joys and disappointments, even unexpected turns in the road, yet we see God's hand throughout. He's been faithful! And while there are many unknowns ahead, we are anticipating exciting new chapters in our story as He opens the way.

I do not consider myself a writer. It is out of a sense of necessity that I have put this little volume together. My experience shows me that Seventh-day Adventists are people who want to do what is right. They want to follow the instructions of God. Often they just need to be informed as to what those instructions are. This is especially true with regard to the subject of this study. How many families with children will find themselves in great difficulty because they have not heeded the warning that God has blessed us with. How many could even be lost because they missed the spiritual blessings that a relocation might have afforded them.

I know by experience that entering the process of disentangling oneself from the systems of this world isn't easy. As a matter of fact, it can try your patience and faith. Don't give up! God will help you. "As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity. The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them, as Christ has promised." *Desire of Ages*, p. 668 Here's a little promise that has been very meaningful to me: "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 to take the place of flesh meat, which is so corrupting to the life blood coursing through the veins. On such places the children will not be surrounded with the corrupting influences of city life. God will help His people to find such homes outside the cities." *Medical Ministry*, p. 310. (1902)

May God bless you in your quest.

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