

Harry John Wilmot- Buxton - The Wintery Flight (1876)

"All who believed in Jesus Christ remembered what He had said, and left their homes hurriedly, and fled to a little town called Pella, on the other side of the river Jordan. Not one Christian perished in the siege of Jerusalem. The Jews who had refused to believe in Jesus, trusted to their strong walls, and their weapons, and stayed in the city.. **But those who were signed with the Cross in their foreheads, that is, those who were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,** were safe at Pella. Now, my children, I have not told you these things only as a chapter of history. I want you to learn some very important lessons from these words, "pray that your flight be not in the winter." For us there is an escape, a flight, to be undertaken, and for us there is a place of refuge like Pella. "

SERMON II.

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*THE WINTRY FLIGHT.*

(ADVENT.)

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S. MATTHEW XXIV. 20.

“Pray that your flight be not in the winter.”

WHEN Jesus Christ spoke thus to His disciples He was near the end of His life on earth ; the Cross, and the grave in the garden were close at hand. These words, “ pray that your flight be not “ in the winter,” meant much more than the disciples understood. Jesus, who knows all things, could read the future, and He was looking forward to a time when her enemies should cast a trench round about Jerusalem, and compass her, and keep her in on every side. When Sion, which had been called the joy of the whole earth, should be left desolate, when her people should no more sit under the shadow of their vines and fig-trees, but should see Jerusalem a heap of stones. He looked forward to a time when the blood of her

sons and daughters should stain the holy altar of the God of Abraham, when fierce hands should break down the carved work with axes and hammers ; when, instead of the sacred songs of the Levites, there should be heard the laughter of rough soldiers, and instead of the holy instruments of music, there should be heard the cries of cruel men whose swords were red with the blood of their brethren. Jesus knew that all these things would take place in the siege of Jerusalem. He knew that the city would be crowded with people, met together to keep the Feast of the Passover, the last great public Passover which the Jews would ever keep—and He knew that the door-posts would not only be sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, but also with the blood of murdered men and women and little children. Well, Jesus foresaw that all this was coming, so He told His disciples that they must escape from Jerusalem when that time of trouble came. He told them that their flight would be sudden, that they would have no time to collect their property, not even their clothes ; and He told them to pray that their flight might not be in the winter. My children, you can understand what a terrible thing such a flight would be in

the hard winter time. You can imagine how the weak women and the little children would suffer, hurrying away suddenly from their homes, along bad roads covered with snow, with only the short winter day for their journey, and a fierce enemy pursuing them.

When the Emperor Napoleon I. was obliged to retreat with his army from Moscow, the snow was very deep, and hundreds fell down and died by the road side. When the city of Paris was last besieged, the winter was very severe, and the people, especially the women and children, suffered most terribly. Well might the disciples pray that their flight might not be in the winter. And they did pray, and their prayer was heard, and their flight was not in the winter. Forty years later the City of Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans. The siege began at the Feast of the Passover, in April, and the city was burned in August. So the winter was passed, and the flowers were coming on the earth, when the Christians escaped from the city. All who believed in Jesus Christ remembered what He had said, and left their homes hurriedly, and fled to a little town called Pella, on the other side of the river Jordan. Not one Christian perished

in the siege of Jerusalem. The Jews who had refused to believe in Jesus, trusted to their strong walls, and their weapons, and stayed in the city. The place was crowded with people from all parts who had come to keep the Passover. This made the siege all the more dreadful, as soon there was no food for them to eat. For four months and a half the siege continued. One million, one hundred thousand people, men, women, and children, died in Jerusalem. In the neighbouring country, two hundred and fifty thousand perished, and ninety-five thousand were led away captive, of whom great numbers were starved. But those who were signed with the Cross in their foreheads, that is, those who were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, were safe at Pella.

Now, my children, I have not told you these things only as a chapter of history. I want you to learn some very important lessons from these words, "pray that your flight be not in the "winter." For us there is an escape, a flight, to be undertaken, and for us there is a place of refuge like Pella. Jerusalem was not a safe home for God's people, it was a doomed city, a city of destruction because of its sin, and its unbelief. So God's people were told to escape, and they

did so. In the old days Lot was bidden to flee away from Sodom, because of its wickedness, and he escaped to Zoar and was safe. Your first flight from sin, dear children, was at your Baptism.