

# PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

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## WHAT DO YOU EXPECT?

Picture the girls in the parable of the ten virgins, (see Matthew 25:1-13). Imagine what they were saying as they were getting ready to leave their homes for the wedding—you know, the ‘girl talk.’ What do you suppose the different ones said about whether or not they should take along some extra oil. ... “Do you think we should take along some extra oil?” ... “No, my lamp is full. It should be enough.” ... “But you know how weddings go. They *never* start on time. I’m going to take along some extra oil, just in case.”

Did the ‘foolish virgins’ expect that they would need any extra oil?—obviously not, otherwise they would have taken some. But the next question isn’t quite so easy. Did the ‘wise virgins’ expect that they would need extra oil? Maybe they did, or maybe they thought they probably wouldn’t ... but ... ‘just in case’ they took some anyway. At any rate, they must have at least thought there was a good chance they might need some extra oil, and so they took it along.

To help sort this out, let’s look at the parable of the two builders that also contrasts the ‘wise’ and the ‘foolish,’ and ask these same questions. (See Matthew 7:24-27). Did the ‘foolish man,’ who built his house on the sand, expect that there would be a flood?—evidently not. On the other hand, did the ‘wise man,’ who built his house on the rock, expect that there would be a flood? He must have, because he was willing to go the extra distance, and spend the extra time and energy that it took to build on the rock.

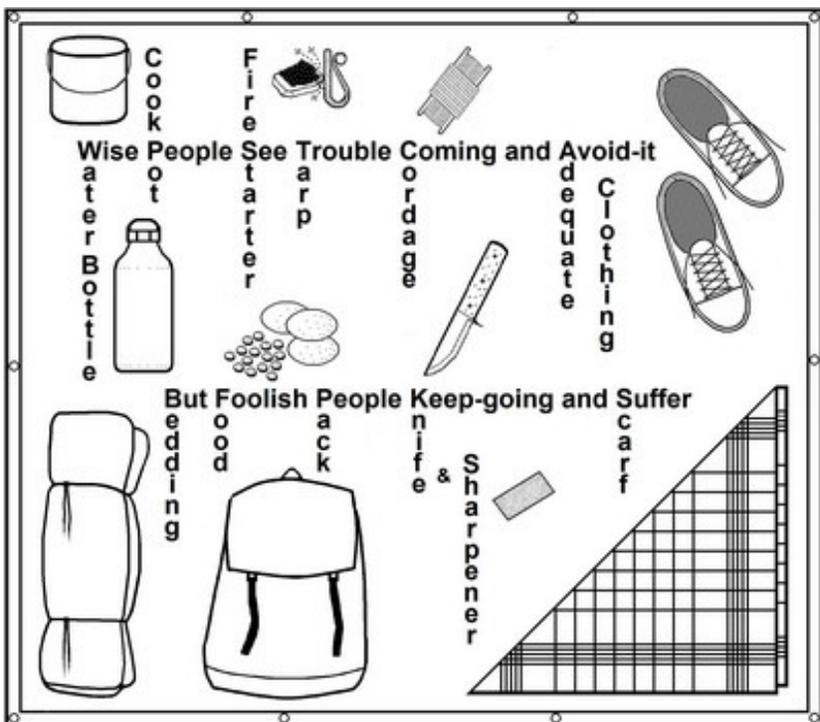
These thoughts all began when I had the opportunity recently to see a couple survival kits. One was ‘in storage,’ it was all covered with dust and spider webs. The other was a ‘commercial kit,’ (one that you can buy already made at the store). It was in a box about 3 in/8 cm by 9 in/23 cm by 12 in/30 cm, still encased with the original plastic wrapping, sitting in the back of a car. Now, I am always curious about what they put into these ‘commercial kits,’ so when I got the chance, I picked it up to examine it more closely. It contained only three things: some water packets, some nutrition bars, and one of those mylar reflective ‘space blanket.’ Now, please don’t misunderstand me here. I am glad these people had ‘survival kits’—it is more than what most do. But, in both cases my thoughts were, “They must not really *expect* to actually have to use these kits in an survival situation—having a kit probably just makes them ‘feel secure.’”

Sort of as a side note, and in contrast with the three items in the above 'commercial kit,' I recently read that according to Mors Kochanski, (a Canadian bushcraft and wilderness survival instructor, naturalist and author), the three most essential items would be: (1) adequate clothing, (2) an axe, and (3) a kettle. Please note that he is able to get by with only these minimal items because of his skill level. For example: he would use the axe to cut brush and make a shelter, and to 'carve' a fire-drill set to make fire; also, in addition to using the kettle to cook wild edibles, he could also use it to boil and purify water, use it as a container for gathering the wild edibles, and if need be, he could use it like a water bottle.

If we assume we are *wearing* adequate clothing, (so our clothing would not be *in* the kit), based on my own research and experience, for a three item minimal kit I would definitely want to add a good thick wool blanket to Mors Kochanski's list. This would give us an axe or machete, a cook-pot and a blanket —which by the way, would simply *not fit* into a 3 in/8 cm by 9 in/23 cm by 12 in/30 cm box. (By the way, the principles here should also be applied to the 'altoids box' kits that are popular in some circles.)

Also, keep in mind that to effectively use a minimum kit like this *it would require some skills*, and that these skills simply *cannot* be gained by leaving the kit wrapped in its original packaging —even if you could buy a kit that consisted of an axe, a cook-pot, and a blanket.

Now, if you never anticipate actually having to use a survival kit, and you just want something so you can 'feel secure,' I suppose it doesn't matter what is in it. But if you actually expect to use the kit, you may as well add a few more items, and you would *definitely* also want to invest some time and effort to learn some skills to go with it! The accompanying graphic, based on Proverb 22:3 might be a good place to start.



One day not too long ago, while many of these thoughts were rolling around in my head, we were driving down the highway. On the outskirts of a city we passed through, we came to one of those long bridges that cross the flood plain of a river. At the beginning of this bridge, off to the right, down below on the flood plain, was a mobile home park! Although we had been this way many times, I never really thought about it before. But this time it struck me —these people have built their houses on the sand! Did they expect there would be a flood? —Of course not. There was a dam upstream, and for many years now the river has been 'under control.' In the same way as I hadn't thought of it before, the possibility of a flood probably never entered the minds of most

of the people living there. 'Riverfront Property' may have even been a selling point in their choice to live there!

Proverbs 22:3 tells us, "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." But, how can we "foresee" what is coming so we can know how to "hide" ourselves? Fortunately God has promised, "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.) In the prophecies, He has revealed what will happen. By faith, we can study these prophecies and learn how to avoid the sufferings that those who simply "pass on" in life will go through.

But, as significant as the practical application of these ideas are, the spiritual implications are even stronger! —especially when we consider what the 'oil' represents in the parable. "The oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit." (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 407, see also Zechariah 4:1-6.)

So what are we expecting? Let's be honest —and not just say, "Yes," because we know that's the right answer. Are we expecting that the things foretold in the prophecies will *actually happen*? Do we expect that we will really *need* an adequately stocked survival kit and a set of skills to go with it in the days ahead? And more importantly, do we expect that we *absolutely must have an extra portion of the Holy Spirit to make it through what's coming*?

May we not be like the foolish virgins and think that what we have, or that what we are already doing is 'enough.' May we not be content, and 'feel secure' with an unwrapped 'spiritual package' someone else has put together for us. May we realize our individual need of an extra amount of the Holy Spirit, and therefore continually be seeking a deeper spiritual experience, constantly gaining more 'skills' in spiritual things as we actively invest our time, effort, and resources preparing to stand in the Day of the Lord.

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*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411

The class represented by the foolish virgins are not hypocrites. They have a regard for the truth, they have advocated the truth, they are attracted to those who believe the truth; but they have not yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit's working. They have not fallen upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, and permitted their old nature to be broken up. This class are represented also by the stony-ground hearers. They receive the word with readiness, but they fail of assimilating its principles. Its influence is not abiding. The Spirit works upon man's heart, according to his desire and consent implanting in him a new nature; but the class represented by the foolish virgins have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form. "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Eze. 33:31. The apostle Paul points out that this will be the special characteristic of those who live just before Christ's second coming. He says, "In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves; . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE STRUGGLE**

### **Selected Bible Verses and Ellen White Quotations Regarding Our Individual Involvement In the Great Controversy**

*Great Controversy*, page 572

A prayerful study of the Bible would show Protestants the real character of the papacy and would cause them to abhor and to shun it; but many are so wise in their own conceit that they feel no need of humbly seeking God that they may be led into the truth. Although priding themselves on their enlightenment, they are ignorant both of the Scriptures and of the power of God. They must have some means of quieting their consciences, and they seek that which is least spiritual and humiliating. What they desire is a method of forgetting God which shall pass as a method of remembering Him. The papacy is well adapted to meet the wants of all these. It is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world— those who would be saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins. Here is the secret of its power.

*Education*, page 190

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the word as a whole, and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme, of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.

*Review and Herald*, July 11, 1899

Christ is our example. He gave his life as a sacrifice for us, and he asks us to give our lives as a sacrifice for others. Thus we may cast out the selfishness which Satan is constantly striving to implant in our hearts. This selfishness is death to all piety, and can be overcome only by manifesting love to God and to our fellow men. Christ will not permit one selfish person to enter the courts of heaven. No covetous person can pass through the pearly gates; for all covetousness is idolatry.

Nahum 1:9

... He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.

*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 159

No outward observances can take the place of simple faith and entire renunciation of self. But no man can empty himself of self. We can only consent for Christ to accomplish the work. Then the language of the soul will be, Lord, take my heart; for I cannot give it. It is Thy property. Keep it pure, for I cannot keep it for Thee. Save me in spite of myself, my weak, unchristlike self. Mold me, fashion me, raise me into a pure and holy atmosphere, where the rich current of Thy love can flow through my soul.

*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 2, pages 328-332*

From what was shown me, Sabbathkeeping Adventists have but a feeble sense of how large a place the world and selfishness hold in their hearts. If you have a desire to do good and glorify God, there are many ways in which you can do it. But you have not felt that this was the result of true religion. This is the fruit which every good tree will produce. You have not felt that it was required of you to be interested in others, to make their cases your own, and to manifest an unselfish interest for the very ones who stand most in need of help. You have not reached out to help the most needy, the most helpless. Had you children of your own to call into exercise care, affection, and love, you would not be so much shut up to yourselves and to your own interests. If those who have no children, and whom God has made stewards of means, would expand their hearts to care for children who need love, care, and affection, and assistance with this world's goods, they would be far happier than they are today. So long as youth who have not a father's pitying care nor a mother's tender love are exposed to the corrupting influences of these last days, it is somebody's duty to supply the place of father and mother to some of them. Learn to give them love, affection, and sympathy. All who profess to have a Father in heaven, who they hope will care for them and finally take them to the home He has prepared for them, ought to feel a solemn obligation resting upon them to be friends to the friendless and fathers to the orphans, to aid the widows, and be of some practical use in this world by benefitting humanity. Many have not viewed these things in a right light. If they live merely for themselves, they will have no greater strength than this calls for.

The youth who are growing up among us are not cared for as they should be. Some of the brethren must have duties which they are not willing and ready to see and perform. The fear of inconveniencing themselves is a sufficient excuse for many. The day of God will reveal unfulfilled duties—souls lost because the selfish would not take pains to interest themselves in their behalf.

I was shown that should professed Christians cultivate more affection and kind regard in caring for others, they would be repaid fourfold. God marks. He knows for what object we live, and whether our living is put to the very best account for poor, fallen humanity, or whether our eyes are eclipsed to everything but our own interest, and to everyone but our own poor selves. I entreat you, in behalf of Christ, in behalf of your own souls, and in behalf of the youth, not to think so lightly of this matter as many do. It is a grave, a serious thing, and affects your interest in the kingdom of Christ, inasmuch as the salvation of precious souls is involved. Why is it not a duty which God enjoins upon you who are able, to expend something for the benefit of the homeless, even though they may be ignorant and undisciplined? Shall you study to labor only in the direction where you will receive the most selfish pleasure and profit? It is not meet for you to neglect the divine favor that Heaven offers you if you will care for those who need your care, and thus let God knock in vain at your door. He stands there in the person of the poor, the homeless orphans, and the afflicted widows, who need love, sympathy, affection, and encouragement. If you do it not unto one of these, you would not do it unto Christ were He upon the earth.

Call to mind your former wretchedness, your spiritual blindness, and the darkness which enshrouded you before Christ, a tender, loving Saviour, came to your aid and reached you where you were. If you let these seasons pass without giving tangible proofs of your gratitude for this wonderful and amazing love which a

compassionate Saviour exercised toward you, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, there is reason to fear that still greater darkness and misery will come upon you. Now is your sowing time. You will reap that which you sow. Avail yourselves while you may of every privilege of doing good. These privileges improved are as a passing shower, which will water and revive you. Lay hold of every opportunity within your reach of doing good. Idle hands will reap a small harvest. For what do older persons live but to care for the young and help the helpless? God has committed them to us who are older and have experience, and He will call us to account if our duties in this direction are neglected. What though our labor may not be appreciated! what though it prove a failure many times, and a success but once! This once will outweigh all the discouragements previously borne.

But few have a true sense of what is comprised in the word Christian. It is to be Christlike, to do others good, to be divested of all selfishness, and to have our lives marked with acts of disinterested benevolence. Our Redeemer throws souls into the arms of the church, for them to care for unselfishly and train for heaven, and thus be co-workers with Him. But the church too often thrusts them away, upon the devil's battlefield. One member will say, "It is not my duty," and then bring up some trifling excuse. "Well," says another, "neither is it my duty;" and finally it is nobody's duty, and the soul is left uncared for to perish. It is the duty of every Christian to engage in this self-denying, self-sacrificing enterprise. Cannot God return into their granaries and increase their flocks, so that instead of loss there shall be increase? "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

But every man's work is to be tested, and brought into judgment, and he be rewarded as his works have been. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty." "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Read the next verse, and notice the rich reward promised to those who do this. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily." Here is an abundantly precious promise for all who will interest themselves in the cases of those who need help. How can God come in and bless and prosper those who have no special care for anyone except themselves, and who do not use that which He has entrusted to them, to glorify His name on the earth?

Matthew 25:31-46

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’

“Then they also will answer Him,[d] saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

*Desire of Ages, page 637*

"When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another." Thus Christ on the Mount of Olives pictured to His disciples the scene of the great judgment day. And He represented its decision as turning upon one point. When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.

John 3:19-21

This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. [verse 19 GNB, verses 20-21 NKJV]

John 15:5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.