



# 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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## HOW THE PROPHECIES DESCRIBE OUR END-TIME WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

by Jim Buller

“A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.” (Proverbs 22:3 NLT.) But, as humans we are not able to foresee the future, so how can we take appropriate “precautions?” Fortunately, God has promises, “Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7.) So rather than going “blindly on,” if we would be “prudent,” (or wise), we will study the prophecies to see what lies ahead. And then, based on what we have learned, we will “take precautions” in accordance with God’s word. In this chapter, we will look at some key prophecies dealing with the end-time wilderness experience of God’s loyal people so that we may know what lies ahead, and be able to make the proper preparations. With this in mind, let’s begin by reviewing, Matthew 24:15-16, and *The Great Controversy*, page 626.

Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places.

In response to Jesus’ instructions, we will be *deliberately* and *intentionally* be *going into* “the most desolate and solitary places.” This may not seem all that significant at first, but let’s contrast this idea with the way wilderness survival has been presented in the media for the last several years. The formula for many of these survival shows is to place the characters in a remote setting, with little if any gear, where they do what they can as they essentially tough it out for three or four days until they are either rescued or able to get out of the wilderness. This formula *is* based on valid statistics. People in actual survival situations typically make it out within three to four days. But

notice that the underlying *goal* in these presentations is to get *out* of the wilderness and back to civilization. Understandably, this would most likely be the goal of most people, and therefore it also reflects the basis of much of the other survival teaching being offered. However in the end-times, *our goal* will be *just the opposite*. We will deliberately be going *into* the wilderness, with the intention of *staying there* until Jesus comes.

The reason the difference between preparing for a short or long term stay is so important, is because it is quite possible to do without many things for three or four days. For example, many people who go camping for a weekend typically 'wait until they get back home' to do many things such as washing their clothes, or even taking a bath. Thus, in a survival situation, if the weather isn't too bad an average person with relatively little wilderness knowledge and skills should easily be able to last three or four days —although they will probably be quite uncomfortable, hungry and cold throughout the experience.

To put it simply, just preparing for a short term situation with a 'tough it out until you get out' approach, will not be enough to make it through what's coming! *The Great Controversy* page 626 quotation said we would be, "*dwelling* in the most desolate and solitary places." If we are going to be *living* there, sooner or later we will need, and need to do, *all* the things we have to do to stay alive and healthy. So although we may be able to learn some valuable things from some of these programs, let's not allow their underlying premise to deceive us into making inadequate preparations.

To emphasize that we *do* need to plan for a long-term wilderness experience, notice the following quotations from *Selected Messages, Book 1*, page 188, *Life Sketches*, page 221, and *S.D.A. Bible Commentary Vol. 7*, page 971. These quotations reflect what Jesus said in Matthew 24:36. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only."

There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. ... The Lord showed me that the message must go, and that it must not be hung on time; for time will never be a test again. ... The third angel's message can stand on its own foundation, and that it needs not time to strengthen it, ...

The great test on time was in 1843 and 1844; and all who have set time since these great periods marked in prophecy were deceiving and being deceived.

This time, which the angel [of Revelation 10] declares with a solemn oath, is not the end of this world's history, neither of probationary time, but of prophetic time, which should precede the advent of our Lord. That is, the people will not have another message upon definite time. After this period of time, reaching from 1842 to 1844, there can be no definite tracing of the prophetic time. The longest reckoning reaches to the autumn of 1844.

"The people will not have another message upon definite time." So, even though the "final movements will be rapid ones," (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 9*, page 11), we do not know for sure how long the time of trouble will last. Neither do we know how

long we will be in “the most desolate and solitary places.” Therefore, when we flee, we should plan, and prepare, to *stay indefinitely*.

*The Great Controversy*, page 626 reference, also tells us *where* we will be fleeing. Notice that we are not just going to “desolate and solitary places,” we will be going to the “*most* desolate and solitary places.” Let’s picture where these places might be. Suppose we were to drive way back up in the mountains, all the way to the end of the road. Would that be the “*most* desolate and solitary places?” —No. What if we get out and walk several miles down the trail. Are we there yet? —No. What do we have to do to get to the “*most* desolate and solitary places?” —We have to get off the trail, and hike way back up into the rocks! The “*most* desolate and solitary places,” are the most inaccessible areas of the deepest wilderness.

As mentioned in third chapter of this book, sometime during first part of the time of trouble, those who refuse to accept the mark of the beast will not be able to buy or sell. (See Revelation 13:17.) Among other things, this means we will not be able to buy gas for our vehicles. So realistically, the only way we will be able to get to these wilderness places, from wherever we may start out from, will be on foot. And as we just noted, there are no roads to these places anyway! To prepare, we would be wise to learn how to hike cross-country, and develop good direction finding skills —without having to rely on a GPS! It may also be a good idea to think about where the “most desolate and solitary places” in our region are, and how we might be able to get there, *on foot*. If possible, it may be advantageous to be located during the first part of the time of trouble where we can literally walk out our back door and into the wilderness when the time comes.

Next, let’s look at some promises relating to our wilderness experience. The first is in Revelation 12:6.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

From the time period mentioned here, as well as from the context of this verse, this text applies particularly to the ‘dark ages’ —which is actually another parallel to the prophetic outline in Matthew 24, (this is evident when we bring in the prophecies of Daniel, as Jesus refers to in Matthew 24:15). We are not just sent out to wander aimlessly in the wilderness. If God had places for His people back then, we can be assured that He also has places for us when our time comes to flee. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8.) The next couple of quotations from *Maranatha*, page 270, and *The Upward Look*, page 327, bring out this same idea.

During the night a very impressive scene passed before me. There seemed to be great confusion and the conflict of armies. A messenger from the Lord stood before me, and said, “Call your household. I will lead you; follow me.” He led me down a dark passage, through a forest, then through the clefts of mountains, and said, “Here you are safe.” There were others who had been led to this retreat. The heavenly messenger said. “The time of trouble has come as a thief in the night, as the Lord warned you it would come.”

He has made the strength of the everlasting hills to be a safe retreat for His people. He has prepared the mountains and the caves for His oppressed and persecuted children.

Isaiah 33:16 talks about rocky places that are difficult to get to being a refuge for God's people too, and it also contains a promise about food and water.

He will dwell on high; his place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure.

So God is already planning to provide for us and preparing places for us to flee to. "He never asks us to do anything without supplying the grace and power to do that very thing. All his biddings are enablings." (*Review & Herald*, November 9, 1897.) Notice also what *The Desire of Ages*, pages 121-122, says about this promise from Isaiah 33:16.

In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy or sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. See Rev. 13:11-17. But to the obedient is given the promise, "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Isa. 33:16. By this promise the children of God will live. When the earth shall be wasted with famine, they shall be fed. "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Ps. 37:19. To that time of distress the prophet Habakkuk looked forward, and his words express the faith of the church: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Hab. 3:17,18.

"By this promise the children of God will live." During the time of trouble, we will literally be *living by God's promises*. In other words, we wake up in our cave one morning and pray: "Lord, we are here in the wilderness because this is where You told us to go. We don't have anything left to eat, and we're hungry. You promised that, 'bread shall be given' us. So we claim that promise this morning. You also said, 'seek and you will find.' So we are going to go out looking for something to eat, knowing that You will 'supply all [our] needs.'" (Isaiah 33:16, Matthew 7:7, Philippians 4:19.) In preparation, we should learn *now*, from our own experience, that God and His promises can indeed be trusted to see us through. It would also be a good idea to learn to recognize wild edibles, so we don't overlook the very thing God may provide for us. Another important promise to keep in mind is in 1 Corinthians 10:13. It says,

God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

As difficult and intense as the trials of the final end-times will be, God has promised that it will not be more than what we are able to handle in His strength. However, even with these promises, there are many of us who still consider the wilderness a scary place. We find an example of this fear in the story of Lot and his family in Genesis chapter 19. This story is also especially significant as Jesus said the end-times would be like the days of Lot. (See Luke 17:28.) Let's pick up the story in verse 15, and read through to verse 19.

When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed." Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die."

"Escape to the mountains!" They were told the same thing we have been told. But, did you notice Lot's response? He begs the angels, "*Please*, no, my lords! ... I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die." He was afraid something bad would happen to him in the mountains and that he would die. He and his family had lived so long in the city that they were totally unprepared to go to the wilderness. Let's not be like them. Since we *know* we will be going there, let's become familiar with natural areas by going hiking and camping, so we can learn from our own experience that we can indeed be safe there.

"But, what about the wild animals?" This question keeps coming up when we talk about being safe in the wilderness. The problem is, we've all seen too many movies. The formula for a typical plot is there is a 'good guy,' and a 'bad guy.' The story revolves about some conflict between the two. However, there really isn't anything in nature that is 'out to get you' —except for mosquitos and their likes. But people like scary stories. And since most people are unfamiliar with nature, movie makers play on our fear of the unknown and cast a plot in a wilderness setting. Because they need a 'bad guy' for the story, they have a coyote, bear, cougar, or snake fill the part. It's the 'big bad wolf' all over again.

However in reality, these animals are afraid of *us*. That's one of the results of sin. (See Genesis 9:2.) All of these 'scary' animals which we have encountered in the wilderness were trying to get away from us! Of course, it is important that we respect these animals. We need to give them their space, and be careful not to make foolish mistakes —such as 'getting between a mother bear and her cubs.' It is definitely a good

idea to study these animals, learning as much as we can about them —especially their ‘body language,’ which is common to most animals, even cats and dogs. But we don’t need to be *afraid* of them. The wild animals are God’s creatures, and if we are God’s people, we are on the same side! Notice the following verses from Job 5:22-23.

You shall laugh at destruction and famine,  
And you shall not be afraid of the beasts of the earth.  
For you shall have a covenant with the stones of the field,  
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.

Think about it a minute. Natural areas, and wilderness in particular, have frequently been called ‘God’s country’ —and for good reason. But if nature really is scary and hostile, what does that say about the Creator? Doesn’t it imply that He too must be scary and hostile? Let’s not be deceived by this false message designed to keep us away from the rich blessings God has for us in His natural world, and cause us to be unprepared to endure to the end.

For what it’s worth, the only way I know to overcome these fears is by actual personal experience. Please don’t wait like Lot and his family did, until it is time to flee to start experiencing nature. Plan, and go on outings into natural areas. Take time to observe what’s happening there. Get to know the local plants and animals and their habits. Don’t let the fear of the unknown cause you to be reluctant to obey *our* command to “Escape to the mountains!”

Before we get too far away from Lot’s story, there’s one other idea we need to touch on. Jesus reminds us that we should, “Remember Lot’s wife.” (Luke 17:32.) Even though she was moving out physically, she wasn’t prepared to leave it all behind mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. And so she turned back and became a pillar of salt. Let’s not be like her. Let’s not be so attached to the things of this world that we will be unprepared to leave them.

We also need to note another point before we go any further that is based on some of the quotations we have already looked at. *The Great Controversy*, page 626 said we will, “associate together in companies,” and *Maranatha*, page 270 said, “there were others who had been led to this retreat.” Both of these references let us know that during our end-time wilderness experience we will be in groups. So we don’t have to do this alone.

However, being in groups has some interesting implications. Our association with others will provide welcome support and encouragement. By joint effort, and the ability to divide up tasks that need to be done, groups are usually able to accomplish things more efficiently. There is also the possibility of one person being able to do something that will benefit the entire group. For example, if only one person in the group has the knowledge and the equipment to be able to make a fire, the whole group can have light and heat. Or, if only one person knows that a certain plant is good to eat, the entire group can benefit. On the other hand, simply because there are more people involved, *more* of certain things will be needed. For example, each person will need his or her own spot in a shelter —especially during a storm! And, everyone is going to want their own portion of food at meal time. Unfortunately, much of the survival teaching that’s available is aimed at the individual, teaching people how they can survive in the

wilderness on their own. We need to recognize these differences, and learn group solutions to our survival needs.

There is another aspect of being in groups that might easily be overlooked. Jesus said, in John 13:35, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love *one another*.” (Emphasis supplied). The type of love Jesus is talking about here can only occur in a group setting. It simply cannot happen with just one individual by him or herself. Thus, being able to ‘get along,’ and to work together in a loving way, even when under stress, is an important witness, and part of our training for the rest of eternity.

Before we make the next point, we need to introduce a term called, ‘naked survival.’ Please don’t misunderstand, ‘naked survival’ really has nothing to do with taking off our clothes and running around naked in the woods. It uses the word ‘naked’ in exactly the same way as it is used in Job 1:21 and 1 Timothy 6:7. These texts essentially say that we were ‘naked’ when we came into this world and we will be ‘naked’ when we leave it. The word, ‘naked,’ is used both in these verses and in the term ‘naked survival’ because it is as far as we can go in the direction of *having nothing*. So modesty is not the issue at all. ‘Naked survival’ refers to being in a survival situation with essentially nothing. For our purposes, it means having to survive with just the ‘clothes on your back,’ so to speak —where the clothing that we do have may not exactly be adequate for the weather.

In general, there are two types of people who actually do ‘naked survival.’ One type, is people who are *highly skilled*. They go into the wilderness without ‘anything’ to develop their skills even further. They already know how to make just about everything they need from what is available in nature. They *also* know, and *expect*, that they will be uncomfortable, hungry and cold until they are able to get a few things made. The other type of people who do ‘naked survival’ are those who have essentially *no wilderness skills*. They end up doing so quite unintentionally, usually as a result of poor planning and/or a lack of preparation. They are even more uncomfortable, hungry and cold. Some even end up dying.

With this in mind, let’s carefully read Matthew 24:17-18. Remember, these verses come right after the place where Jesus tells us that when we see the ‘abomination that causes desolation,’ to “flee to the mountains.”

Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Is Jesus telling us here, that when we flee we should, “Drop everything and run?” It may seem like this is what He is saying. Notice also the following comment on these verses from *The Great Controversy*, page 25.

When the warning sign should be seen, those who would escape must make no delay. Throughout the land of Judea, as well as in Jerusalem itself, the signal for flight must be immediately obeyed. He who chanced to be upon the housetop must not go down into his house, even to save his most valued treasures. Those who were working in the fields or vineyards must not take time to return for the outer garment laid aside while they

should be toiling in the heat of the day. They must not hesitate a moment, lest they be involved in the general destruction.

To illustrate the point here, let's picture a Christian who lived in Jerusalem back just before it was destroyed in the first century. One morning he goes out to work in his field. As the day wears on, it gets hot. So he takes off his cloak, and lays it at the side of the field where he can easily pick it up on his way back home at the end of the day. However a little later, he hears some noises up by the city, and looking up, he sees it surrounded by the Roman army. Immediately he remembers Jesus' words in Luke 21:20-21, "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, ..." But as he turns to flee, he pauses just a moment as he thinks, 'It's going to get *cold* tonight! I'm going to need my cloak!' But then he also remembers that Jesus said, "let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes," and his cloak is over on the side of the field closest to the city. So obediently, he flees without it. He just set himself up for 'naked survival!' Although he may have escaped the "general destruction" of the city, he is going to be very cold, hungry, and uncomfortable for a while —especially if he doesn't have any wilderness skills.

But let's consider a couple other possibilities. Suppose the army came *before* he took off his cloak? Based on Jesus' words in these verses, would it be OK for him to flee with it? Or should he take it off, and leave it behind as he fled? Or, what if he *happened* to place his cloak where he could pick it up as he ran past. Would it be OK to do that? Let's re-read these verses and note what Jesus *did* say.

Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

Jesus just said, *don't "go back"* to get anything. So it *would* have been OK for him to take his cloak if he still had it with him, or if he could pick it up as he ran past. It would also have been OK to take along anything else he might have had with him that would be helpful, such as the tool he was working with. However, if Jesus had truly intended for us to 'drop everything and run!' then all these things would have to be left behind.

There is a very important difference between Jesus saying 'drop everything and run,' and Him saying don't "go back." If we *are* supposed to 'drop everything and run,' then we should not take anything when we flee. On the other hand, if we are just not supposed to "go back" to get anything, then it *is* OK to take things along when we flee —as long as we already have them with us, or, if we are able to easily pick them up on our way out. Therefore, *it is not necessary to do 'naked survival'* to obey Jesus instructions.

In fact, as we study the history of this parallel to the end-times, we realize that there was really no reason for any Christian who was "watching," (see Matthew 24:42), to be suddenly surprised by "Jerusalem surrounded by armies," and end up having to flee without even his cloak. If they had been studying the prophecies, they could have had known what would happen months before the army actually showed up. In the prophecies of Daniel, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece are named as the succession of superpowers. These empires were to be followed by a "fourth beast," which from the

obvious history could only be Rome. The 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter 9, gave the time of the Messiah's coming and death. This is what Jesus was referring to when He began preaching, "The *time is fulfilled*, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15, emphasis supplied.) So the Christians back then knew about this prophecy. Verse 26 of Daniel 9 states, "And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." So, when the Jews revolted against Rome in the spring of A.D. 66, it wasn't at all hard to figure out that it would only be a matter of time before the Romans came to re-conquer Judea and Jerusalem it's capital. And that autumn, they came.

Unfortunately, some have assumed that in these verses in Matthew 24:17-18 Jesus *has* told us that when we flee we *are* supposed to 'drop everything and run.' As a result, they feel we are not supposed to take anything along with us. The common notion that if you have anything, then you really aren't doing 'wilderness survival' anyway, adds to this perception —this notion, by the way, is perpetuated by the image portrayed in the survival shows in the media. These ideas are put together with the promises that God will provide for us at that time as we trust *wholly* in Him. So it seems that there is really no point in doing any physical preparation for our end-time wilderness experience, and that the only preparation we need to concern ourselves with is spiritual preparation. Some even conclude that we *should not* prepare physically, as that would show a *lack of faith*. I'm not sure how they reconcile this view with verses like Hebrews 11:7 which say, "By faith Noah, ... prepared an ark." Remember, Noah has been given as an example for us in the end-times, (see Matthew 24:37), and also note that this verse *is* talking about *physical* preparations —which were done "*by faith*."

Unfortunately, those who hold these views are setting themselves up for 'naked survival.' Like our Christian friend back in the first century, their lack of readiness will cause them to be unnecessarily cold, hungry, and uncomfortable. Or worse yet, when the time comes, they may be overwhelmed at the reality of the situation like Lot's wife, and end up *not* fleeing as we have been instructed to do. So let me repeat: *It is not necessary to do 'naked survival' to obey Jesus' instructions!* God does not require this of us. But we must be prepared.

Brothers and sisters, things are going to be hard enough at that time without having to do 'naked survival' on top of it all! For those who have not prepared, it will be *especially* difficult! If we put ourselves through extra suffering because of our lack of preparation, will it be God's fault, or our own? Notice the following quotation from The Great Controversy, page 622. Although this reference is talking about faith in particular, the principle of making things more difficult for ourselves in the time of trouble due to our lack of preparation is the same.

Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.

When the crisis hits there will be no time to get ready. So if we are going to prepare, we *must* do so ahead of time. Like the Christian mentioned earlier who fled from Jerusalem's destruction, when our time comes to flee, we will have to just go! —whether we are ready or not, or whether we have an escape route planned or not! Let's have faith like Noah, that it *is* worth it to spend our time and energy taking "precautions" ahead of time, and prepare both spiritually and physically, for what is coming.

But, before we start thinking about all the things we would like to put in our 'grab and go' packs, let's remember that the word "flee" means to *move fast and travel light*. Whatever we take, in total, will need to be light-weight and low-bulk. With this in mind, let's take another look at the *Early Writings*, pages 56-57 quotation we discussed extensively in the second chapter of this book. We won't repeat all that was said there, but we do need to consider this quotation here because it tells us some important things about when we will leave it all behind and flee to the wilderness. It also emphasizes some of the points we have already made in this chapter such as trusting wholly in God as we live by His promises. Let's re-read the quotation for review.

The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites. Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth.

...

Some of us will "flee before infuriated mobs." So, if an angry mob is coming, what would happen if we were trying to carry a heavy backpack full of "provisions?" —It would get left behind! In spite of the preparations we had made, we would have just set ourselves up for 'naked survival.' This possibility also illustrates the point made in the first chapter of this book about the importance of our preparations being made according to God's word. And at this point, it may seem like maybe we shouldn't take anything. But we need to look at this issue as a whole, and not base everything on one idea.

It will probably be helpful to understand the difference between 'equipment,' and 'supplies' or "provisions." Supplies or provisions refer to things that we need to stay alive, but that get used up as we use them. Food, to use the example from this quotation, would be a supply or "provision." Once we've eaten it, it's gone. It can not be re-used, and to stay alive we would have to get more. Equipment, on the other hand, refers primarily to 'tools,' in an anthropological sense. These are things that, although they can't be consumed directly, can be used to help obtain and process provisions. For

example, we can not eat a knife, or a cook-pot, but these ‘tools’ can help us gather and prepare the food, and even make it more edible. With proper care, these ‘tools’ can be used over and over for many years, possibly even for lifetimes.

Notice that the second sentence in the first paragraph of this quotation says, “I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields.” So we should not try to store up, either at home, or stash out in the wilderness, enough food for this time. *In the same way* we should not try to carry enough food in our packs to keep us throughout our wilderness experience. The possibility of having to flee from an angry mob emphasizes this idea. Not only would it be an enormous load, but since God has promised to “spread a table for us in the wilderness,” it *would* also show a lack of faith. The same thing goes for other provisions like water, and toilet paper. So we shouldn’t try to take along enough toilet paper to last until Jesus comes either!

On the other hand, a simple knife and cook-pot could easily fit into a light-weight low-bulk ‘grab and go pack,’ that we *could* flee with. These items would also definitely be helpful for gathering and preparing the food that God provides for us in nature. Therefore, our ‘grab and go’ packs should primarily be just basic ‘tool kits,’ containing these types of equipment items that will help us make use of the raw materials available in nature.

Without violating the instructions in this quotation our packs may also contain a few initial supplies of provisions like food and toilet paper—a three days supply seems appropriate. (See the comment on Joshua 1:11 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 483.) These initial supplies give us something to eat and use while on our journey into the wilderness, and hold us until we are able to get more provisions from nature.

Putting these ideas together with what we discussed earlier about planning to stay indefinitely has several interesting and significant implications: (1) Any equipment we do carry, will need to be *durable*. It would *not* be wise to rely on some of the flimsy “survival gadgets” on the market. Some ‘field testing’ might definitely be in order here. (2) We must also be able to *maintain* any equipment we carry in the wilderness. For example: battery operated devices will be useless after the batteries have died, a propane backpacking stove will no longer burn once the gas canisters are empty, and water filters will eventually clog. (3) We will need to *know* how to replenish our supplies of provisions from nature. Sooner or later we will eat the last bit of food we brought, strike that last match, and use that last sheet of toilet paper—then what?

We have also found that: (1) When we flee it *is* OK to take a basic equipment pack with a limited initial supply of provisions. And (2) It *would* have been OK for a Christian back at the time of Jerusalem’s destruction to pick up his cloak as he ran past, as long as it was positioned along his escape route. Therefore, in certain situations it may be OK to stash some of these things along anticipated escape routes. These stashes would particularly come in handy if something were to happen that forced us to flee without anything, or maybe more importantly, to help equip those whom God sends to flee with us who may not have had a chance to prepare.

Please don’t get carried away though. These stashes must *not* become a stock of provisions, or they will fall into the same category as what the *Early Writings*, pages 56-57 quotation tells us *not* to do. It will probably be a greater temptation to make these stashes a stock of provisions if we don’t know how to get our provisions directly from

nature. For example, if we don't know about the wild edible plants in our area, we will probably be more inclined to want to stash a bunch of food somewhere simply so we will have something to eat. However this quotation clearly states that we should not do this. Thus, rather than preparing by making stashes, we should prepare by learning how to get the provisions we need directly from nature, and by finding out what equipment items we need to be able to do this. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, God will evidently be using this wilderness experience as an opportunity to teach us to be producers not just consumers.

There is one other point we need to consider before we leave the ideas connected with the meaning of the word 'flee.' If you are lost, why do they tell you to stay in one spot, rather than keep trying to find your way out? —Because you will be easier to find if you stay in one place. So, . . . if you don't want to be found, . . . should you remain in one place or move around? Therefore, unless an angel takes us somewhere, (as in the *Maranatha*, page 270 quotation mentioned earlier), and tells us to stay there, we should probably plan on moving our camp every so often, probably at least every couple weeks.

For our next point we need to look at Matthew 24:42-44. Notice the two things we are told to do in these verses because we don't know *when* all these things will happen.

Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

We need to "watch" and "be ready." In the middle of these verses is the idea of things happening suddenly and unexpectedly like a thief in the night. This idea is also found in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6, and Revelation 3:3. In these verses we find that, although these things *will* happen unexpectedly to the rest of the world, if we are watching and ready, as we have been told to be, they should not be unexpected *to us*. Revelation 16:15 expands on this idea even more. It says,

Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

In stead of saying "watch" and "be ready," this verse says, "watch" and "*keep [your] garments.*" So there must be a definite connection between 'being ready' and 'keeping our garments.' Although there are some obvious spiritual implications here, let's not overlook the practical physical applications either. So, . . . how do we "keep" our "garments," or clothing, so that we are not "naked?" —We keep them *on*. Thus, our spiritual and physical readiness needs to be *on*. *On*, both in the sense of being *turned on* —as opposed to being *turned off*— as well as in the sense of being *on us* —as opposed to being *kept someplace else*, such as being stored away in a closet someplace. This idea goes together with what was mentioned earlier about 'naked survival,' and Christ's words from Matthew 24:17-18, about not having to *go back* to get anything. Our Christian friend back in the first century, for example, didn't "keep his

garments” when he laid them at the side of the field, and set himself up for ‘naked survival’ when he had to flee without them. In other words, both spiritually *and* physically, we need to *be* in a continual state of *readiness*.

Our readiness needs to be a part of *who we are*. It is not something we do, and then, ‘now that we’re ready,’ we can return to whatever we were doing with our lives. For example, the ark wasn’t something Noah built while attending a preparation seminar, or something he bought and put in his backyard, and then went back to whatever he was doing with his life. No, getting ready for the next world *was* what he was doing with his life—for a hundred and twenty years! In the same way, having a survival kit buried away in a closet somewhere isn’t being any more ready for what’s coming than the servant who buried his talent was ready for his master’s return! To help make readiness be what we are doing with our lives, make it a goal to do something, however small it might be, each day to either be more prepared ourselves, or to help others be more prepared.

It is my prayer that this study has given a better idea of *what* to prepare for, and as a result of knowing these things, we may know *how* to prepare more effectively. In closing, let’s summarize:

1. We will be deliberately and intentionally going into the “most desolate & solitary places,” planning to stay there indefinitely. Thankfully, God has places prepared for us in the wilderness where He has promised to provide for us.
2. Let’s not be like Lot and his family, and be prepared spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically to leave it all behind. We would be wise to learn to be comfortable in wild places, and to *feel safe* there. Remember, the wild animals are on our side.
3. Since we will be fleeing after we are not able to buy or sell, we will be traveling on foot. So we would be wise to think about where we might be when the time comes for our final flight, and how we might get to “the most desolate and solitary places” in our region on foot.
4. We will be living by God’s promises. We would be wise to learn how to trust wholly in Him *now*, so we will not have to deal with the uncertainty that frequently goes with learning new things at that time. Although God has promised to “spread a table for us in the wilderness,” He is not going to drop the food in our mouths. Since we will need to *replenish our supplies of provisions from nature*, we will need to know how to identify, gather, prepare, and craft the things we need from what God has provided in nature.
5. It is not necessary to do ‘naked survival’ to obey Jesus’ instructions when we flee. So it *is* OK to take along survival equipment. However, the word “flee” means to move fast and travel light. Therefore the equipment we take must be light-weight and low-bulk. And, as we will be staying indefinitely, any equipment we bring should be *durable* and *maintainable* in the wilderness.
6. We will “associate together in companies.” Besides providing support and encouragement, groups can frequently do things more efficiently. However we will need to have “group” solutions for our survival needs. It will also be important for the group to “get along” in a loving manner.
7. If we are going to prepare, we must do so ahead of time. Jesus said “watch” and “be ready.” So our readiness needs to be a part of who we are. Just having a survival kit stashed in a closet and going on with our lives isn’t ‘being ready.’ Therefore, it would be a good idea to do something each day to be more prepared, or to help others prepare.

God has revealed what is going to happen to His servants the prophets. (See Amos 3:7.) Let's be a "prudent person" who "takes precautions" and prepares. In itself, the time of trouble will be bad enough, so let's not make things even more difficult for ourselves by going "blindly on" and suffering "the consequences." (Proverbs 22:3.)

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"Preparing to Stand"

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