



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

EXPOSING A COMMON DECEPTION AMONG GOD’S PEOPLE

—that is unknowingly passed on, and even defended by those who should know better!
by Jim Buller

I just love it when apparent inconsistencies in Scripture get cleared up by a deeper study into the Word! Until recently, I thought the subject of this study was just a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of Scripture. However due to some further discussion and study, I have come to realize that it is fully a deception! Unfortunately, this deception is believed, passed on, and even defended by those who should know better. The worst part is, it’s going to cause God’s people a lot of problems in the near future. So instead of perpetuating this deception, we need to reveal the truth!

At the beginning of Matthew 24, Jesus’ disciples are eagerly asking Him about end-time events. But the first thing He says as He begins the ‘Olivet Discourse,’ is, “Take heed that no one deceives you.” (Verse 4.) And, as James 1:22 points out, it is even possible to deceive ourselves! So we need to be *extra careful*, and be sure we are trusting in, and basing our thinking on what God has actually said in His Word, and not just leaning on our own understanding! (See Proverbs 3:5-6.)

After warning us about deception in Matthew 24:4, Jesus goes on talk about false christs and false prophets. As a result, we tend to look for ‘individuals.’ However, one of the main problems with false christs and prophets is their *false teachings*. Unfortunately, there are several other ways these false teachings can work their way into the church. Because we are not able to identify these false ideas with any ‘individual’ whom we consider to be a false teacher, and because they *sound* scriptural, we may tend to let our guard down and accept them. And then, these ideas are unintentionally and unknowingly passed on among us. However, even if these teachings have become common in the church, they are still false! and they need to be exposed. So let’s begin by looking at ‘presumption’ —what it is, and how Satan uses it. Notice the following quotation from *Lift Him Up*, page 80.

Presumption is a common temptation, and as Satan assails men with this, he obtains the victory nine times out of ten.

Did you catch that? When Satan tempts us with presumption he is able to get us to fall “nine times out of ten!” So, why is this temptation so successful?

The sin of presumption lies close beside the virtue of perfect faith and confidence in God.” (*Confrontation*, page 48.)

You see, there is a fine line separating true faith from presumption, and Satan knows we will frequently have difficulty discerning exactly just where that line is. Since Jesus’ second ‘temptation in the wilderness’ was to be presumptuous, (see *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 4*, page 44), let’s take a look at Matthew 4:5-6.

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you,’ and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Is it true that God *has* promised to send His angels to take care of us? —Yes of course. So why shouldn’t we throw ourselves off of some high pinnacle and have them catch us?

Satan urges men into places where God does not require them to go, and presents scripture to justify his suggestions. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 3*, page 482.)

Please re-read this last quotation, and let the ideas here sink in as they figure heavily into the rest of this study. Notice that just as he quoted scripture to Jesus in an attempt to get Him to sin, Satan gives us reasons that will *appear to be scriptural* to tempt us to go “where God does not require [us] to go!”

To present these apparently scriptural reasons, Satan sometimes appears as an angel of light, like he did when he was tempting Jesus. (See 2 Corinthians 11:14, and *Desire of Ages*, page 118.) However, he knows that we are aware that he sometimes does this, and that if an angel were to appear and tell us something, we would be at least a little suspicious, and therefore thoroughly test what the angel said. So it suits him better to have someone in the church, especially a leader in the church, pass on these apparently scriptural reasons to go “where God does not require [us] to go.” Then we might accept these false idea more readily.

But, notice what will be the result of us “needlessly” going where “God does not require [us] to go” in the following quotations from *Confrontation*, pages 84-86, and *Christ Triumphant*, page 212.

The promises of God are not for us to claim rashly, to protect us while we rush on recklessly into danger, violating the laws of nature, or disregarding prudence and the judgment God has given us to use. This would not be genuine faith but presumption.

There are many who fail to distinguish between the rashness of presumption and the intelligent confidence of faith. ...

God has given man precious promises upon conditions of faith and obedience; but they are not to sustain him in any rash act. If men needlessly place themselves in peril, and go where God does not require them to go, and self-confidently expose themselves to danger, disregarding the dictates of reason, God will not work a miracle to relieve them. He will not send His angels to preserve any from being burned if they choose to place themselves in the fire.

So even though we are 'claiming God's promises,' if we "*needlessly*" expose ourselves to danger, and go where "God does not require [us] to go," such as jumping off some high pinnacle, it would be presumption, and not true faith.

As noted earlier, Jesus began the 'Olivet Discourse' by expressing His concern about His people being deceived. This concern continues to be a theme throughout the discourse. And so it should be no surprise that the discourse ends with four parables that expose common deceptions among God's people in the end-times. (See Matthew 24:45-25:46.) There are a lot of similarities between these four parables. Each of them has a 'Master' or 'Bridegroom' who goes away, and then returns. The other characters in each of these parables all consider themselves to be 'servants' of the Master /Bridegroom, and all are expecting to 'enter the kingdom' when the Master/Bridegroom returns. However, as the stories unwind only one group is praised, rewarded, and 'enters the kingdom.' The other group is rejected, and even *cast* out. No wonder there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth!" They *thought* they were serving the Master, and they *expected* to get into the kingdom. Yet when the Master returns, they were kicked out! *They were deceived!* We should be sure to study all of these parables to be sure that this does not happen to us! However, we only have time and space to touch on one aspect of one of these parables here.

The following quotation from *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 411 is about the Parable the Ten Virgins. Note what it says about *why* the 'foolish virgins' are rejected and cast out.

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.

The ‘foolish’ virgins were “content with a superficial work.” Let’s be sure we are not content with a shallow spirituality, and challenge ourselves to ‘go deep’ with God. Let’s be very deliberate and intentional about our relationship with Him! And so that we are not deceived, let’s also be sure we are not content with “superficial” readings and shallow interpretations of Scripture.

The early church leaders thoroughly studied out and tested everything by the Word of God. Probably one reason they did this was because of their experience during the ‘Great Disappointment’ in 1844, which was caused by letting a preconceived opinion influence their interpretation of Scripture.

In order to share what they found in their studies, these leaders put together various types of presentations. However, simply due to time and space, these presentations had to be much shorter than their original studies. But because these early church leaders were trusted, and because their presentations were soundly Scriptural, they were accepted by the ‘next generation.’ Unfortunately, we are now several ‘generations’ removed from the original studies. In our Laodicean laziness many of us prefer listening to these presentations made by others, rather than studying things out for ourselves. As a result, we easily fall into the same trap as the foolish virgins. By being “content with a superficial work,” and a shallow study and understanding of the Word, we have set ourselves up to be deceived, and left out of the kingdom.

Before we go on, let’s note a few things so that we are clear on what we are going to be talking about next:

(1) Our “promised sign” that the time of trouble is “about” to begin is a national Sunday law in the U.S.A.. (See Matthew 24:15-16, 21, Luke 21:7, 20-21, *Testimonies for the Church Vol. 5*, page 464-465, *Great Controversy*, page 30-31.) Hopefully before this national Sunday law is passed, (see *Country Living*, pages 9-10), but definitely at the time this law is passed, we are to flee from the cities.

(2) The time of trouble is divided into two parts. The first part is sometimes also referred to as the ‘little time of trouble,’ and the second part has also been called the ‘big time of trouble’ or ‘Jacob’s time of trouble.’

(2a) Among other things, during the first part of the time of trouble those who do not receive the ‘mark of the beast’ will not be able to buy or sell. (See Revelation 13:16-17.) We have been counseled to be set up on country properties where we can raise our own provisions in preparation for this time. (See *Country Living*, page 9-10.)

(2b) During this second part of the time of trouble, the seven last plagues will be poured out, and in response to these plagues, a 'death decree' will be issued. (See Revelation 13:15, and *Early Writings*, page 36-37.) As this decree is issued, God's loyal people will flee to the "most desolate and solitary places" in the wilderness. (*Great Controversy*, page 626.)

(3) Since probation closes just before the plagues are poured out, (see Revelation 15:8), the close of probation is roughly the 'dividing line' between the first and second parts of the time of trouble.

So here's the apparent, (or not so apparent), problem: There is a multitude of verses, quotations, and Bible stories that strongly encourage us, and even command us, to prepare for the first part of the time of trouble, such as the following quotation from *Country Living*, pages 9-10.

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

On the other hand, there are essentially only two references that have been interpreted to tell us *not* to prepare for when we will flee to the wilderness during the second part of the time of trouble —Matthew 24:17-18 and the corresponding verse in Mark 13:15-16; and *Early Writings* page 56 and a similar quotation on Maranatha page 181.

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. (Matthew 24:17-18.)

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. ... Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. (*Early Writings* page 56.)

Based on the typical interpretation of these two references it appears that the 'rules' change at the close of probation. In other words, presently we still have to 'do our part' as we work to get what we need, even though God has promised to take care of us and provide all our necessities. "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) In the same way, we will continue to have to 'do our part' as we work to 'raise our own provisions' during the first part of the time of trouble. However after the close of probation, during the second part of the time of trouble when we flee to the wilderness, it appears from these references that we no longer have to 'do our

part.' In fact we are *not* supposed to “make *any* provisions,” we are just to “trust wholly in God” instead.

Now, I have never heard anyone say outright that the ‘rules’ change at the close of probation. But I have heard them say things like: ‘We *have* been counseled to prepare for when we will not be able to buy or sell by getting set up in the country where we can raise our own provisions. But when we flee to the wilderness, *then* we are just supposed to “trust wholly in God” and the angels will take care of all our needs.’ And, ‘Yes, we are supposed to prepare for the little time of trouble. But we’ve been told *not* to prepare for when we flee to the wilderness. God has promised to take care of us then’

So do the ‘rules’ really change at the close of probation? Or is God the same yesterday, today and forever? (See Malachi 3:6 and Hebrews 13:8.) If we are really not supposed to make any preparations for after the close of probation, what about Noah’s example that Jesus refers us to as an example for the end-times? (See Matthew 24:37.) Noah essentially made *all* of his *extensive* physical preparations for *after* the close of probation in his day —when the door on the ark was shut.

But before we make the next point, we need to introduce a term. It’s called ‘naked survival.’ Don’t worry, it doesn’t have anything to do with taking our clothes off and running around naked in the woods. This term uses the word ‘naked’ in the same way as it is used in Job 1:21 and 1 Timothy 6:7, where the Bible writers essentially say, ‘naked we came into the world, and naked we are going out of it.’ In both this term and these verses, it simply refers to being as far in the direction of having nothing as we can go. For our purposes here, it simply means being in a wilderness survival situation without *any* survival equipment —just having ‘the clothes on our back,’ so to speak.

Please note that there are essentially only two groups of people who actually do ‘naked survival:’ (1) Those who are highly skilled, and want to develop their skills even further. And (2) those with little to no skills, who end up doing ‘naked survival’ as a result of poor planning. Keep in mind that when those who are highly skilled go out to practice, they also *know* and *expect* that they will be cold, hungry, and uncomfortable until they have had the time to gather and make a few things —possibly for several days. Those with few skills end up being cold, hungry, and uncomfortable for much longer —some even die!

So, now let’s take a deeper look at the Matthew 24:17-18 reference. These verses are a part of Jesus’ great end-time prophecy in Matthew chapter 24:1-31. This prophecy is a ‘parallel prophecy’ that deals with both the time when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in the first century AD, and also with the end-times. Luke’s version of this same prophecy is in Luke 21:5-36. In Luke 21:20-21, Jesus gave His disciples their “promised sign,” (see *Great Controversy*, page 30-31), so that they would know when Jerusalem and the Temple were about to be destroyed. This “promised sign” was also their signal to flee.

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, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her.

Matthew 24:16, the verse just before the Matthew 24:17-18 reference above, is the where Jesus says, “flee to the mountains,” in Matthew. Although these verses deal specifically with the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century, they also have a definite parallel for us in the end-times. So in Matthew 24:17-18, Jesus is giving instructions for when we “flee to the mountains.” As we read these verses again, let’s ask, ‘Is Jesus telling us here to “Drop everything and run!” when we flee?’ In other words, is it necessary to do ‘naked survival’ in order to obey His instructions?

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.

If we just superficially read these verses, it may seem that we *are* supposed to ‘Drop everything and run!’ when we flee. But let’s dig a little deeper, and explore the parallel here a little further. Suppose that we are a Christian living in Jerusalem at that time, and we are out working in our field. As the day becomes hot, we take off our cloak and lay it at the side of the field where we can easily pick it up on our way back home, then we continue working. A little later, we hear some noises coming from up by the city. The Roman armies are surrounding it!

What are we going to do? —We are going to obey Jesus’ instructions and flee! But . . . it’s going to get cold tonight . . . and we are going to want our cloak! (See Exodus 22:26-27.) Too bad! It’s on the other side of the field. If we are going to follow Jesus instructions, in Matthew 24:18, we’ll have to flee without it. We just set ourselves up for ‘naked survival!’

However, let’s suppose the armies showed up a bit earlier, before we had taken off our cloak. According to Jesus instructions would it be OK to flee with it? —Yes. And if we happened to be working with some tool that would be useful for survival, such as our knife, would it also be OK to take that too? —Yes.

So let’s re-read Matthew 24:17-18 and note that Jesus did *not* say ‘Drop everything and run,’ or ‘Leave everything behind when you flee.’ He just said, ‘*Don’t go back.*’

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.

There is a *big* difference between leaving *everything* behind, and just not going back to get anything! In other words, it is *not* necessary to do ‘naked survival’ to obey Jesus instructions! Satan would like to get us to think that in this Scripture we *are* being told not to take anything with us when we flee. He would like us to be hungry, cold, and uncomfortable, and endanger our lives. But, “God does not require” us to do this. Therefore it would be “needlessly [placing ourselves] in peril.” To unnecessarily set ourselves up for ‘naked survival’ even though we are claiming to “trust wholly in God” would indeed be presumption, not true faith.

What’s more, a few verses down in Matthew 24:42-44, Jesus tells us to “*Watch*” and “*Be Ready.*” And if we look at the history of what happened leading up to Jerusalem being surrounded by the Roman armies, we find that there was really no reason why anyone who was ‘watching’ and ‘ready,’ would have to leave without taking anything.

During Christ's time and for many years afterward the Romans were in charge of the Jerusalem. There was really no reason for them to surround and attack it. However, in the spring of AD 66 the Jews revolted! And it wouldn't have taken a proverbial 'rocket scientist' to figure out what would happen next. *Everyone* knew that Rome 'ruled with an iron hand,' and that it would just be a matter of time until "the people of the prince who is to come," (the Romans), would lay siege and "destroy the city and the sanctuary." (Daniel 9:26.) And sure enough, that fall the Roman armies came and surrounded the city.

So, those who were obediently 'watching' and 'ready' essentially had half a year's warning that the city would be destroyed, and that they would have to flee. They could have left months before, and taken anything they wanted. Jesus' words in Matthew 24:15-18, and Luke 21:20-21, are therefore more of a 'last chance to get out with at least with your life' type warning, rather than instructions about how things should be for everyone.

Isn't the shallow interpretation of these verses that we are not to take anything when we "flee to the mountains," an attempt to deceive us into rushing "recklessly into danger, violating the laws of nature," and "disregarding prudence and the judgment God has given us to use?" Our own experience has demonstrated the truth of this. We have found that when we take people on an afternoon hike, where we are not planning to spend the night, a lot of people don't bring anything —not even a bottle of water on a hot summer afternoon! On the other hand, when we take them on their first overnight hike, they want to bring *everything*! "Prudence" and "judgment" tell them that they are going to need some things! —even if their lack of experience causes them to bring what they really don't need, and to not bring the things they really do need. Yet, there are people planning to flee to the wilderness and stay there until Jesus comes, who are not planning to take anything, and just "trust wholly in God!?" [sigh!] I also find it very interesting that not one of those who is planning to do this whom I have talked with is preparing themselves by learning the skills to be able to do 'naked survival!' [Hm-m-m.]

Please read 'Kaywaykla's Story.'

(<http://www.preparingtostand.org/documents/other/kaywayklasStory.pdf>) This is a story about the Apache, a Native American tribe who lived in what is now Arizona, New Mexico, and the surrounding area. Back in 1878, because the living conditions on the reservation were so bad, the Warm Springs band escaped and went back to their ancestral homeland. By doing so, they knew it would be just a matter of time before the calvary located and attacked them.

Even though they were *masters of desert survival*, (they were doing it every day!) pay particular attention to what they did to prepare for when they knew they would have to flee: They taught their children games so they would know what to do when they were fleeing. They trained themselves and their children that if they were attacked at night they should take their blankets with them. For months they wore tubular bags with food around their waists '24/7' so they would have something to eat when they fled. And when the attack came, even though they were being shot at, they stopped by the spring to fill their water jug on their way out of the village!

This story also goes together with something else I saw a few years ago on TV. I was walking through a room where someone was watching a program about one of those courses you can go to and experience training similar to what the military special forces go through. This particular program was featuring the British SAS desert survival

training in North Africa. As I stopped to watch a bit, they staged a simulated night attack on the participants camp. They all fled into the desert, then regrouped at their prearranged rendezvous point. As one of the participants came into the rendezvous area, an instructor asked her where her equipment pack was. She said she had left it behind as she was being shot at! and 'fleeing for her life!' The instructor responded, "Without your equipment, if the bullets don't kill you, the desert will!" Notice again the quotation we looked at earlier from *Confrontation*, pages 85-86.

God has given man precious promises upon conditions of faith and obedience; but they are not to sustain him in any rash act. If men needlessly place themselves in peril, and go where God does not require them to go, and self-confidently expose themselves to danger, disregarding the dictates of reason, God will not work a miracle to relieve them. He will not send His angels to preserve any from being burned if they choose to place themselves in the fire.

Eden-like environments, where it never gets too hot or too cold, where the water is so pure you can drink right out of the streams without fear of parasites or amoeba, and where there is an abundance of fruits and nuts 'just growing on the trees,' are very rare on this polluted, worn out old earth—if they even exist at all. "The earth is waxing old, like a garment." (*Ministry of Healing*, page 200.) Therefore the reality is, we *do* need certain equipment to stay alive—especially if we live in a desert region, or in the cold 'north country,' or in any of the other areas around the world that have at least one harsh season. Attempting to do 'naked survival,' especially without a highly developed skill-set, would indeed be "needlessly" placing ourselves "in peril" and exposing ourselves to "danger." Since God does not require us to go into the wilderness without any survival equipment, shouldn't we all prepare by making plans to take some basic survival equipment when we flee to the "most desolate and solitary places?" And shouldn't we also develop at least some basic wilderness skills to go with it?

But, . . . haven't we been *told, not* to prepare? Didn't the quotation from *Early Writings*, page 56 that we looked at earlier in this study say, "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." OK, let's take a look at this quotation. As you read through it, notice: (1) The wilderness context—that this is referring to the second part of the time of trouble. And, (2) that the main *issue* here is 'trusting wholly in God.'

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.

If you want an excuse not to prepare, apparently here you have it. But, is it ever safe to take one verse by itself, or one quote by itself, and then build your whole case on that? —Of course not. So let's dig deeper, and balance this quote with what is said in *Steps to Christ*, page 123. Note that this quotation is *also* talking about "the necessity of trusting in God," and that "these lessons" are for "*all* ages." (The 'rules' *don't* change at the close of probation).

In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught His disciples precious lessons in regard to the necessity of trusting in God. These lessons were designed to encourage the children of God through all ages, and they have come down to our time full of instruction and comfort. The Saviour pointed His followers to the birds of the air as they warbled their carols of praise, unencumbered with thoughts of care, for 'they sow not, neither do they reap.' And yet the great Father provides for their needs. The Saviour asks, 'Are ye not much better than they?' Matthew 6:26. The great Provider for man and beast opens His hand and supplies all His creatures. The birds of the air are not beneath His notice. He does not drop the food into their bills, but He makes provision for their needs. They must gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests. They must feed their young.

So, God *is* going to take care of us and provide for us. But, He is *not* going to drop the food in our mouths! Just like the birds, "The Lord expects us to work in order that we may obtain food." (Medical Ministry, page 230.)

Notice also the following quotation from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 290, about the Israelites at the Red Sea. In this experience God also wanted to teach them a lesson about 'trusting wholly in God,' and note that this lesson is "for all time." (Again, the 'rules' don't change at the close of probation.) Notice also that "He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method." In the same way, God is quite able to save us without us having to "flee to the mountains," (as some have suggested), but it is important that we trust *His* wisdom, and cooperate with the method *He* has chosen.

God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. 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.

Note that from God's perspective, 'trusting wholly in God' *includes* 'doing *all* that is in our power to do.' The human reasoning that says, 'If we do *any* part of it, then it is not *wholly* God's doing,' and then sits back essentially expecting God to 'drop the food into our mouths,' is just that —human reasoning. It is not the way God thinks about things, nor is it the way He does things. (See Isaiah 55:8-9.)

But haven't we been told that,

In the time of trouble none will labor with their hands. Their sufferings will be mental, and God will provide food for them. (*Last Day Events*, page 265.)

This phrase "labor with their hand" comes from several Bible references such as Ephesians 4:28.

Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

These Bible verses refer to working at a job to earn a living. Obviously, after we have fled to the wilderness we will not be working at some job! So let's not use this quotation as an excuse to be lazy and expect God to do everything for us.

So then, what *does* that first sentence in the *Early Writings*, pages 56 quotation mean? —"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." The quotation goes on to explain. "I saw that if the saints had food laid up ... it would be taken from them by violent hands." So, we are clearly not to try to 'stockpile' enough food, and toilet paper, to last until Jesus comes. And therefore, by extension, when we flee, we are not to try to pack enough food and toilet paper to last until Jesus comes either.

A big part of the problem is we have become a 'consumer' society. The average person is no longer a 'producer,' and therefore doesn't *think* like a 'producer.' As a result, the typical response to a coming time of scarcity is, 'I'd better store up enough provisions to last until I can get some more.' However, as pointed out in the *Early Writings*, page 56 quotation, this would be trusting in our own ability not 'trusting wholly in God,' and accordingly, it is the very thing we have been told *not* to do. [Please note that the instructions in this quotation are not a prohibition against storing up enough of this year's harvest to last until next year's harvest —which we will need to do during the first part of the time of trouble when we are 'raising our own provisions.' What it is talking about, is trying to stock up enough provisions to last all the way through the time of trouble until Jesus comes.]

Interestingly enough, the other typical approach to a coming time of scarcity, the 'ditch on the other side of the road' so to speak, is to presumptuously claim God's promises to provide for us while we basically do nothing to prepare, and essentially expect that God will 'drop the food into our mouths,' and keep us warm and comfortable. Although this may *appear* to be 'trusting *wholly* in God,' as we have seen, it is really presumption. Neither would it be using our God-given ability to 'do all that is in our power to do.' Notice again a couple of the quotations we have looked at earlier.

Satan urges men into places where God does not require them to go, and presents scripture to justify his suggestions.

God's precious promises are not given to strengthen man in a presumptuous course or for him to rely upon when he rushes needlessly into danger. (*Testimonies for the Church Vol. 3*, page 482.)

The promises of God are not for us rashly to claim while we rush on recklessly into danger, violating the laws of nature and disregarding prudence and the judgment with which God has endowed us. This is the most flagrant presumption. (*Lift Him Up*, page 80.)

Neither of these two typical approaches to a coming time of scarcity are what God wants us to do. Who, nowadays says, 'We'd better get set up so we can raise and/or make what we need?' Yet, this is the very thing we *have* been counseled to do! God wants His people "not to be merely consumers, but producers." (*General Conference Bulletin*, 4/5/1901, see also Jn 15:8.) And, since the rules don't change at the close of probation, this same principle applies to when we will flee to the "most desolate and solitary places." Sounds like we are going to need to learn some plant identification and primitive skills in preparation —and that we could also use a few tools.

Another related problem is that most people nowadays haven't thought about the difference between 'provisions' or 'supplies' on the one hand and 'tools' or 'equipment' on the other. We tend to just lump them all together. 'Provisions' are things that get used up as we use them. For example water, after we drink it, is gone, and we have to get some more. The same thing is true about food, certain hygiene items, and fuel. 'Tools,' on the other hand, aside from possibly needing a little maintenance now and then, can be used over and over again.

'Tools' or 'equipment' also aren't necessarily 'necessities,' but they can help us get the things we need. For example, we can't eat a knife, or a cook-pot, but we can use both the knife and the cook-pot to prepare food, in order to make it more edible. With care, the knife and cook-pot are 'equipment' that can be used over and over again.

Of course, if for whatever reason we are not able to bring any survival equipment with us, we could claim God's promises to take care of us, and He would provide everything we need. But if we neglect to prepare, He will probably let us be cold, hungry, and uncomfortable for a while to teach us a lesson!

But, before we start loading up our 'grab and go' pack, let's balance all this by noting that the word "flee" means to 'move fast,' and therefore 'travel light.' The paragraph just after the *Early Writings*, page 56 quote we have been studying, talks

about fleeing from angry mobs! If we are trying to carry too much, and our pack is heavy and/or bulky, when that angry mob shows up, that pack would probably get dumped! —and then we would have just set ourselves up for ‘naked survival!’

So, in preparation we should put together a pack with just the most important ‘equipment’ items needed for surviving in the wilderness. This pack may also contain an initial supply of ‘provisions’ such as food. Three days worth seems appropriate, (see the *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 483 comment on Joshua 1:11), this much would definitely not be considered a ‘stockpile.’ The most important basic ‘equipment’ items would be: a knife, a folding camp saw or small axe or about a 10 in./25 cm machete/bush knife, some way to start a fire, a 1 qt/lit water bottle, a cook pot, a light-weight shelter tarp, some cordage, and some type of warm bedding. Aim for a pack weight under 20 lbs / 10 kg. —something that you could ‘flee’ with. As we get closer to the time, we would either be wearing this pack, or keeping it at ‘arms length’ at all times, so we would not have to “go back” to get it when we fled. We should also be sure to develop the skills we need to be able to use this equipment, as well as developing wilderness skills in general.

Most importantly though, we need to be sure to learn to “trust wholly in God” now. Let’s learn how to balance ‘doing all that is in our power to do,’ as we claim His promises and co-operate with what He is doing for us. This is a most important lesson, both physically and spiritually.

The shallow interpretation of Matthew 24:17-18, and *Early Writings*, page 56, which would lead us to believe that we are not supposed to take anything with us, or do anything to prepare for when we will flee to the wilderness, fits the lazy, superficial, Laodicean mind-set. This interpretation is an attempt to deceive us to presume upon God’s promises, and to cause us to be unprepared and turn back just before the end. The time of trouble will be trouble enough! Since God does not require us to go into the wilderness with out any survival equipment, we would be foolish indeed to make things worse on ourselves!

As we have seen, the ‘rules’ don’t change at the close of probation. God really is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore we have just as much responsibility to prepare for our end-time wilderness experience as we do to prepare for our day to day existence now, as well as for being able to ‘raise our own provisions’ during the first part of the time of trouble. In His love, God has told us what is going to happen in the end-times so we can know how we are to respond these events and what we should do to prepare for them. Let’s not cling to these pleasing deceptions, shallowly claim His promises, and set ourselves up to be unready.