

Should Christians Prepare for Hard Times

SHOULD CHRISTIANS PREPARE FOR FUTURE HARD TIMES?

By Steven M. Collins

PO Box 88735

Sioux Falls, SD 57109-8735

As this is written, the USA is in the worst recession since the Great Depression and the global economy almost collapsed in Autumn, 2008. Debt creation by the US Congress and the Federal Reserve Board (and other foreign nations and central banks) has reached unprecedented levels. Many Christians look at the “signs of the times” and wonder if they should be preparing for future hard times. This article will examine this subject from a biblical viewpoint, and offer readers clear biblical guidance on this issue.

Two Opposing Viewpoints:

Christians tend to have two differing opinions on the answer to the question: “Should Christians prepare for hard times?” One camp holds to the view that Christians should simply “trust God” and it cites the command God gave the Israelites in Exodus 14:13 to “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” The other camp believes Christians should prepare for trying times in the future and it cites the example of Joseph storing up quantities of grain in Egypt when Pharaoh’s dream warned there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Which approach is the right one for our modern times? While I am no one’s judge and I respect anyone’s personal decision as a believer, I believe the Bible strongly supports the viewpoint that the Bible warns Christians to make preparations when God warns us about approaching dangers.

I suspect any Christian would make sensible preparations if they lived on a coastline and knew that a strong hurricane was approaching. If Christians live in tornado country (as I do) anyone would logically head for a basement or shelter if you knew a tornado was heading for your city. While we hope that our homes will be safe from such hazards as fire, hailstorms, etc., we buy homeowners insurance to guard against such hazards. Many renters buy renters’ insurance policies to safeguard their investment in their possessions. If you were on a coastline and heard a tsunami warning for your city, you would surely “head for high ground” as quickly as possible! If Christians and non-Christians alike would take such reasonable measures to prepare for any impending *natural* disaster, why should they not also make reasonable preparations for a *prophesied* danger that is imminent? I think the Bible indicates they certainly should do so. However, before examining biblical evidence to support that assertion, let’s first examine the viewpoint that Christians should not prepare for prophesied dangers and simply “trust God.” Such Christians sometimes believe that it is a lack of faith in God’s promised protection if they prepare for dangers. They

regard this as “relying on one’s own strength” rather than relying on God. However, let’s examine the Exodus 14:13 account which they cite and see that Christians who do not make any preparations are mistakenly taking that scriptural account out of context.

Examining the “Stand Still and Let God Do It All” Approach:

When God led the Israelites out of Egypt, he did mighty wonders and miracles to punish and plague the Egyptians to compel them into finally letting the Israelites leave Egypt. The Israelites were slaves and there was nothing that they could do to prepare for any threats. They had no choice but to wait until God provided a way out of Egypt. However, when the Passover night approached during which God was going to send a death angel to kill all the first-born in Egypt, God *did* tell the Israelites to make *advance* preparations to save their first-born as well as to prepare to leave Egypt in haste (Exodus 12). God told them to put lamb’s blood on the doorways, eat the Passover meal, get dressed, have shoes on their feet and their staffs in hand to be ready to march the instant they received word to do so. To put it in modern terms, God told the Israelites to “have their bug-out bags” ready because their departure was imminent. This is an example that when God *does* give warning about something that is about to happen, he expects his people to “get ready” and make advance preparations. If any Israelites had failed to make these commanded advance preparations, their first-born would have died and they risked being left behind.

After the Israelites left Egypt, they had *no warning from God* that Pharaoh’s army would pursue them and would overtake them when they were boxed in by the Red Sea and had no way of escape or retreat. Indeed, it was God who put them in this situation because he intended to show his power to deliver them from Pharaoh’s army so that they would grow in their faith in his power to protect them (Exodus 14:1-1-4, 9). This is a biblical example of how to rely on God when sudden dangers come upon you *for which you have no advance warning*. Since there was nothing the Israelites could do about their circumstances, *they had no choice* but to rely on God and God alone. It is in such a context that Moses told the Israelites in Exodus 14:13: “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” He told the Israelites this to reassure them because the Israelites had lost faith and thought they were about to be slaughtered (verses 10-12).

God Divinely held back Pharaoh’s army (verse 19-20) that night and miraculously opened a way through the Red Sea for them to march across “dry ground” as they walked through the Red Sea’s seabed (Exodus 14:21-22). They didn’t even get their shoes muddy. God took care of every detail! When the Egyptians tried to follow them, they were drowned as God allowed the Red Sea to crash down upon them. When God led the Israelites through 40 years of wandering through a dry wilderness, they again had no choice but to rely on God for everything. There was no arable land, no supermarkets, restaurants, etc. They were forced to rely on God for food, water and their needs. God miraculously provided manna on a daily basis (Exodus 16:4) which Psalm 78:24-25 calls “angels’ food.” God led them to locations with water supplies or he miraculously caused it to gush out of the desert rocks (Exodus 17:1-7). Again, all these instances are

examples that one should have faith and rely on God when there is nothing you can do for yourself or *when God commands you to do nothing for yourself and simply rely on Him* (as he did in Exodus 14:13). However, even after the Israelites' escape from Egypt, God did not always do everything for the Israelites on his own. When the Israelites were faced with a battle against the attacking Amalekites, God did not do their fighting for them. The Israelites *had to do their own fighting* against the Amalekites and God blessed their fighting skills when Moses' hands were held high and God withdrew that blessing when Moses' arms were weary and he lowered them. Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms so victory would be assured. Do I believe this actually happened? Absolutely!

In another case, Elijah was divinely protected from a severe drought which he himself had caused to fall on the ancient kingdom of Israel. In this case, Elijah *was told by God in advance* what to do to save himself during this drought. First Elijah was told to go to a particular river where he was fed by ravens until it dried up after which God told him to go to Zarephath, a suburb of the Phoenician city of Sidon (I Kings 17:1-9). As I note in my book, *Israel's Lost Empires*, God purposely directed Elijah to a place his enemies would least expect him to go. Ahab and Jezebel searched all over the earth for Elijah via caravan routes and via the globe-girdling capacity of the extensive Phoenician fleets (I Kings 18:10). Zarephath was a suburb of Sidon, Jezebel's hometown, a place she and Ahab would never think Elijah would be hiding (I Kings 16:31). In these cases, Elijah obeyed God's specific instructions re: where he was to go in order to be protected. If God gives such directions to Christians through a powerful prophet like Elijah (such as might occur during the ministry of the Two Witnesses during the reign of the beast power in the end of this age—Revelation 11), then one should obey such instructions. However, the Two Witnesses have not yet been revealed by any deeds and Jesus Christ warned in Matthew 24:11, 24 that “many false prophets” would appear in the latter days and you risk following a false prophet into danger or death unless God has already demonstrated with very powerful miracles that they are Divinely-ordained prophets like Moses and Elijah were. Now let's examine biblical examples where God did give his people advance warnings about looming disasters and what their response proved to be.

The Biblical “Prepare in Advance” Option:

One of the first times God gave advance warning of an impending disaster was when he warned Noah that a global deluge was going to destroy all life on earth. God told Noah to make preparations for that event by building an Ark (Genesis 6). Noah obeyed God and built the Ark. When the Deluge came, Noah and his family (along with species of animals, birds, etc.) were spared because Noah made advance preparations. If Noah and his family had not made advance preparations by building and provisioning the Ark, all flesh would have extinct.

A second major example of the necessity of making advance preparations when God warns about future events is the example of Joseph preparing for a great drought in Egypt. Pharaoh received a dream from

God which he did not understand. Joseph, known to be an interpreter of dreams by one of Pharaoh's staff who had temporarily been in prison with Joseph, was called into Pharaoh's presence to interpret the dream. Joseph revealed that the dream warned that seven years of tremendous surpluses would be followed by seven years of terrible crop failures, and Joseph was exalted to become Regent of Egypt to supervise the food storage program for Egypt so the nation could survive the years of crop failures (Genesis 41). The Bible devotes many chapters to Joseph's life so this is an important example for us to understand. If Joseph and Egypt had not prepared for the extended drought by storing immense stockpiles of food, the Egyptians and Israelites would have starved.

In both the above cases, it would have been a severe *lack of faith* to refuse to make necessary preparations when God gives an advance warning about a looming danger. Choosing not to make advance preparations when God has warned of an impending disaster is to place your own life and your family's lives in great jeopardy.

A New Testament example in the same vein is given in Acts 11:28-30. A prophet named Agabus received a warning from God that a "great dearth" (a food shortage) was imminent. The early Christian Church took the warning seriously and made such advance preparations as they could. The elders gathered up food supplies and sent Barnabas and Saul (later named "Paul") to deliver the food to the brethren in Judea so they could survive the prophesied food shortage. The word received by Agabus must have specified that Judea was to be particularly hard hit by the food shortage for the Christians to direct their main food storage effort to that location. Again, we see the believers took the warning seriously and made advance preparations. There was no hint in any of these three examples that anyone thought the right approach was to "stand still and do nothing." Both Old and New Testaments are consistent that when God warns his people about an impending danger, he expects them to show faith by acting on his warning and preparing for it.

Propheesied Warnings about the Latter Days:

What about our modern times? Christians in many denominations and with many differing doctrinal concepts can see that our modern times are fulfilling the prophecies about the "latter days" to occur at the end of our age. To examine much evidence that we do, indeed, live in the latter days, please read my article, *Are We Living in the Latter Days?*, available at the articles link at my website, .

The Bible has many warnings that the end of our age will witness many traumas and hardships. I do not want to be a scaremonger so I'll state very clearly that I do not know how soon these events will occur. Will the entire globe suffer each prophesied disaster or will various plagues and disasters strike various regions of the earth in different ways? Again, I claim no foreknowledge on this matter. However, the Bible's prophecies to date have *always* come true (as my books document in many ways), so the end-time

prophesied dangers will befall the earth sometime in the future.

Because God has given latter-day believers many advance warnings about the looming dangers and disasters coming upon the earth in the latter days, we are in a situation where God would logically expect us to heed his warnings and make advance preparations for the dangers as best we can. Latter days Christians are in the same situation that faced Noah, Joseph and the early Christians in the time of Paul and Agabus. They *all* took God's warning seriously and made necessary advance preparations. That is the response that modern believers should also take today because we have also been told in advance via God's Word that many dangers are certain to occur in the latter days.

What are the specific dangers that are prophesied in the Bible to occur in the time between now and the return of Jesus Christ?

Specific Threats Prophesied for the Latter Days:

As I know from my reader emails, people in a wide variety of nations visit my website and read my materials. Some of the prophesied dangers in the latter days have already happened (or are happening now) in various nations on earth. However, in many western nations, large parts of our populations live in such a personal "comfort zone" that they scarcely realize that these dangers could threaten them as well. Here are some of the dangers and traumas which the Bible specifically warns us will occur in the latter days.

Wars

Jesus warned in Matthew 24:7 that "wars and rumors of wars" will occur in the latter days. Revelation 6:4 and 8 warn that wars will be widespread during the end of this age, and prophecies that "the fourth part" of the earth will be slain with war and the other plagues personified by the "four horsemen of the apocalypse." If there are eight billion people on earth by the time this prophecy is fulfilled, a literal application of the Bible's math indicates 2 billion people will die of these plagues. Joel 2 and Ezekiel 38 prophesy that the nations of the ten tribes of "Israel" will be invaded at the end of this age with horrific casualties all over the earth in a global World War III. Zechariah 14 warns that modern Judah (the Israelis) will also be invaded at the end of this age.

Famines and Pestilences

Whenever there are famines, pestilences (disease epidemics) inevitably follow as malnourished people have weakened immune systems. Matthew 24:7 prophecies "famines and pestilences" will befall the earth in the latter days, and Revelation 6:5-6, 8 offer the same warning. The wording of Revelation 6:6 infers that food will be rationed in the latter days due to food shortages. Such food shortages can come from

drought, premature frosts in temperate growing zones, locust and grasshopper plagues, floods, plant viruses, natural disasters, etc. The die-off of bees due to Colony Collapse Disorder threatens many crops which need bees as pollinators. Famines and pestilences can easily also strike refugee populations that are dislocated due to warfare.

Earthquakes

Matthew 24:7 also prophesies that there will be “earthquakes in various places” in the latter days. Since there have always been earthquakes throughout history, this prophecy must indicate that there will be greater tectonic activity in the latter days to make this period of time unique. Volcanoes could also fit in this category. Other “latter day” prophecies in Isaiah 2:19, Ezekiel 38:20, Joel 2:10 and Revelation 6:12 and 11:13 also warn about earthquakes of historic intensity occurring at the end of our age. There have been many damaging earthquakes around the world in recent decades. The phrase “in various places” means earthquakes will occur in many different regions of the globe in the latter days. Whenever California does experience the “Big One” that is eventually expected, it will cause incredible dislocations within the USA.

Hurricanes and Tsunamis

Luke 21:25 includes a warning about “the sea and waves roaring” in the latter days. When the seas and waves “roar,” we call them hurricanes and tsunamis. Hurricane Katrina (with immense property damage) and the Indian Ocean Tsunami (with immense loss of life as well as property damage) are prime examples of the fulfillment of this prophecy. In Revelation 8:8, the Apostle John described a vision of the latter days in which he saw “a great mountain burning with fire...cast into the sea.” If this prophecy is fulfilled by a meteor striking the earth (it would look like a “burning mountain” as it fell through the earth’s atmosphere), can you imagine the size of the tsunami that will strike the coastlands of every continent which borders the ocean in which it hits?

Planetary Disasters/Earth Changes

Isaiah 24:19-20 warns the earth itself will be “utterly broken down,” “moved exceedingly,” and that it will “reel to and fro like a drunkard” in the end times. This language indicates the earth will wobble on its axis as it orbits the sun. If the earth is hit by a meteor (Revelation 8:8), it would certainly cause the earth to wobble on its axis. A severe wobble in the earth’s rotation would also cause instability in the earth’s weather and tectonic plates (causing some of the the prophesied earthquakes in the latter days). Isaiah 24:1 prophesies “the Lord...turns [the earth] upside down.” This language could be fulfilled by a magnetic pole reversal or dislocation of continents, jets streams, ocean currents, climate patterns, etc. The earth changes that will occur will affect everyone on the planet. Some may be greater than our ability to foresee. Mankind will learn that it lives on a planet made and designed by a Creator we call “God.” The Creator will

prove to mankind that its empires and politics are to God like the activities of ants in an ant hill are to a man who walks by and shuffles his feet through the anthill. The glory of the Living God will be made known to mankind in awesome fashion in the latter days.

The Two Witnesses

This heading might surprise some readers. However, Revelation 11:6 warns that all kinds of plagues will be caused by the Two Witnesses who will afflict and affect wide swaths of the earth. Imagine the hardship caused upon lands which have their “waters turned to blood.” The Two Witnesses will have divinely-delegated powers to “shut heaven,” thereby causing drought and famine wherever their plagues are directed. This verse prophesies that these Two Witnesses will even be empowered by God to “smite the earth with *all plagues as often as they will.*” Their plagues will be designed to bear witness to the earth that the Creator of the earth, the great God of the Bible, is very real and that he is about to return to the earth to rule all nations, and that mankind needs to repent and yield to its Creator’s authority. For more information about the extraordinary ministry of the Two Witnesses, please read my article, *The Two Witnesses*, available at my website, .

Global Panic

As if the above listing of traumas isn’t enough, Luke 21:11 adds that there will be “fearful sights and great signs...from heaven” at the climax of the latter days. Is it predicting near-misses by comets, a super-nova in a nearby star or divinely-caused miraculous signs in the heavens? I don’t know, but something big is prophesied to occur in the skies that will cause “fearful” responses among the nations. These heavenly signs will likely trigger a mass of false prophets trying to capitalize on what is occurring (false prophets are also prophesied in Matthew 24:24 to be common in the latter days). All the above factors will generate panics among the people of the earth, and panics have widespread effects in public health, food distribution, crime rates, economic activity, etc.

The above are a general listing of the plagues, dangers and woes that are prophesied in the Bible to occur on this earth just before its Creator returns. The earth will experience paroxysms of events that will be unprecedented. Luke 21:26 prophesies that many will die of heart attacks because they will be overwhelmed by events befalling the earth. I want to reiterate that I do not know how soon these events will occur. However, biblical prophecies prove we are already living in the latter days, and Matthew 24:44 and Matthew 25:1-13 warn that Jesus Christ/Yahshua will return unexpectedly and sooner than even his believers anticipate.

What Should Christians Do to Prepare?

Spiritual Preparation:

To endure future prophesied events, there is no substitute for developing as close a relationship as you can with God via prayer, Bible Study, fasting, meditation, fellowship with other believers, etc. James 4:8 promises that if anyone draws near to him, God will draw nearer to them in return. Luke 21:36 tells us to “watch” world events to understand the end times and to “pray...that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” God promises protections to those who repent of their sins and turn to him. Revelation 12:13-17 prophesies that believers who are close to God will be divinely-protected in the end times while those who are not close to God will not be protected. I want to stress that I am no one’s judge, and do not want to be one. A person’s relationship with their Maker is a very individual thing, and God alone will judge the quality and closeness of each believer’s relationship to him. However, no one should wait too long to seek God. Isaiah 55:6-9 tells us that God’s mercies are so great to those who repent that they are beyond our ability to fathom them, but it also warns that he should be sought “while he may be found.”

Physical Preparation:

The above listing of traumas to come upon the earth in the latter days warns that food and water will be in short supply in various places, food will be rationed, diseases will be rampant, earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis will be experienced, etc. Obviously, where you live logically determines what specific threat that you might have to face. Those who live near oceans need to prepare for hurricanes or tsunamis. Those living inland are more likely to be affected by drought, floods or tornadoes. Anyone could experience food and water shortages wherever they live depending on what occurs in the future. People who live in regions of the earth where wars are occurring or are possible make preparations for shelter and the necessities of life in a time of war. Keep in mind future warfare may involve more than military combat. It may also include electronic hacking attacks to shut down power grids and essential infrastructures. People who live in northern climates need to have back-up plans for emergency shelter and warmth in the event electricity or gas supplies are interrupted during cold weather. People in some regions hit by ice storms have already had to go weeks before electricity was restored.

All preparations should be made in a common-sense manner. No one can prepare for every possible kind of event. Please don’t become a survivalist who heads for a cave or compound with your canned goods and guns! God can protect you wherever you are! Also, God knows what you can or can’t do to prepare for future traumas. Those who have many financial resources should prepare to help not just their own families, but others who will be in need. Matthew 25:31-46 makes that very clear.

I found the following link via the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) website which offers a common sense listing of essential preparations everyone should make for any emergency. It advises storing enough food (and other essentials) for “at least three days.” See [ready.gov/make-a-plan](https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan). A three-day supply of essential supplies may be enough to enable one to cope with a very local disaster. However,

Americans who witnessed the slow response of governmental agencies in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina realize that a three day supply of essentials wouldn't be nearly enough to survive a disaster that affects several states at once. When the scale of biblically-prophesied events to befall the earth happens in the latter days, it is clear government responses will be inadequate to help so many in need. I recall seeing media coverage of people in the USA last winter who had to live weeks without electricity in the aftermath of an ice storm. Are you prepared to cope with such an emergency? The advice in the FEMA link above is valuable advice to follow even if no biblical traumas were prophesied. Local disasters can happen anywhere. You need to be prepared.

Ultimate Reliance on God:

In conclusion, believers of the Bible face a situation in the latter days like that faced by Joseph in ancient Egypt or Noah before the Flood. Just as these men were warned of an impending regional drought and a global Flood, we have been warned of many specific traumas that will affect the earth at the conclusion of our latter-day period of time. Even as Joseph and Noah were expected by God to show faith by preparing for imminent divinely-revealed dangers, people in the latter days should show faith by preparing as best as we can for the divinely-revealed dangers to come. The extent to which you prepare depends on your relationship with God, the means you have to prepare, the location in which you live, etc. As I said above, no one can prepare for everything.

The biblical prophecies are so apocalyptic that it may well be that no matter what preparations you make, you may eventually find yourself dependent on God for physical protection and the necessities of life. Psalm 91 contains many promises of God's protections for those who obey him. Claim these promises in prayer. At the very end of this age, it is likely that we will all need to rely on God for our needs no matter what preparations we make. However, biblical precedents confirm that God does expect us to make preparations when he gives us advance warnings about impending dangers. Biblical prophecies about the latter days have *many* warnings about the dangers that will come to pass in the latter days. You should be making such reasonable preparations as you can.

Joseph and Noah were told by God about imminent dangers and they prepared for those dangers. Latter-day believers have been warned as well about dangers to befall mankind at the end of our age. As Jesus said in Matthew 24:25: "behold I have told you before [the latter day events occur]." Have you started to make your preparations to provide for your family and for others who will be in need? Those who help others in times of need are promised God's favor, but those who hoard things for themselves and harden their hearts to the needy in a time of trouble are promised God's punishment (Matthew 25:31-46). As you make your preparations for the future, remember that it is always better to be able to give than to have to receive (Acts 20:35). If you can do so, prepare to have enough to be a giver to those who will be in need.