

THE BELIEVER IN JESUS AND DISASTERS. Arnold Kennedy.

What should the believers do in the face of predicted disasters particularly in regard to things like cyber terrorism, financial melt-down, extreme weather patterns, famine, germ warfare, loss of personal freedoms, persecution, etc.? There are some 81 references using the word "prepare" in the KJV. Is this a matter of attitude, a matter of action, or both?

How do we adopt a lifestyle and trust God and none other, for health, finances, safety and my family? Should we avoid "safety nets" like the plague, feeling that these may be interpreted by God as evidence of our diminishing confidence in His well-documented faithfulness and ability to deliver from all harm? We are told:

Matthew 6:33-34 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

But, does this mean that we do nothing? Or are we to be "workers together with Him"? In the verses above we have something we do and something that God does as a consequence of what we have done. In the matter of the loaves and fishes, as in the case of the widow's barrel of oil, there is something there to start with. God does not multiply nothing. One thing is sure, those who have made preparations do not have "anxious thought" about the morrow. And God does warn through His prophets.

I am aware that caution and foresight are a function of wisdom. The Bible says (twice): "**A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished**" (Prov.22:3/27:12). Please keep this verse in mind as this article is read, and please note the following:

- The ant is commended for anticipating the winter and making appropriate preparations (Prov.6:6-8).
- Jesus instructed the believers in Jerusalem to watch for the signal of foreign armies coming against the city indicating that they should hastily escape (Luke 21:20-23).
- Jesus warned His disciples to see themselves as living in a precarious world ("*as sheep among wolves*"—Matt.10:16) and to exercise wisdom with harmlessness. Some think that this means that the purchase of guns for self-defence is denied, but the context is evangelism, not selling what we have to buy a sword to protect ourselves against criminal robbers.

While preparedness seems to be a fruit of godly wisdom (unpreparedness would thus be a function of foolishness), yet the believer is denied the self-destructive and God-dishonouring luxury of worrying. The command of Christ to have done with all anxiety about future contingencies (Matt.6:34; cf.Phil.4:6-7) is one of the greatest struggles in the lives of many believers—even when no obvious crisis is looming—and yet is one of the principal attitudes that is to distinguish between believers and others (Matt.6:31-32). The believer's faith in a faithful God sets the manner in which he anticipates the future apart from the way pagans do. We are told that we are much more the objects of God's care than are the birds of the air, whom He feeds day by day. If a cynic would observe that the birds of the air sometimes starve, or succumb to the elements or to predators, the believer's response is "*not without the will of my Father*"-(Matt.10:29). The object of the believer's existence is not to survive as long as possible, but to live or die according as the Father wills. To die faithful is to be preferred over the option of surviving through compromise. Resignation to the sovereign disposition of Providence replaces fretfulness and anxiety for the instructed disciple of Jesus.

If, in the Providence of God, a believer receives advance notice of impending dangers, the appropriate response is first to ascertain the will of God ("Does God wish for me to face the danger head-on at the risk of my life, or has He forewarned me in order to prepare an ark to the saving of my household?" - Heb.11:7). Next, the believer must consider what legitimate measures may be open to him for the fulfilment of God's perceived will.

There is a real possibility that God may call some believers to remain or run straight into the danger zones in order to minister to the many unprepared people who will then be in desperate need. I would personally expect this call, when genuine, to be given primarily to single and childless adults and to others who have no other vulnerable parties dependent upon them for support.

Parents with small children or people with other helpless people under their care should probably not anticipate the same call. Pastors particularly, may feel that they (like the loyal captain), must stay at their posts regardless of danger and "go down with the ship." Such sentiments might well be strengthened by consideration of Jesus' statement that it is the "hireling," not the legitimate shepherd, who runs away when the wolf appears (John 10:12). One should observe, however, that the hireling "leaves the sheep" in order to procure his own safety. Would he not be a more wise and responsible shepherd were he to make

preparation to take the sheep with him to a place of safety when he sees a storm approaching which is about to transform the peaceful valley where his sheep have been grazing securely, into disaster zone? Noah was a preacher of righteousness *until* the flood was imminent. He did not stay out preaching in the rain, but joined the remnant (his family) in the ark seven days before the windows of heaven were opened. When judgement fell, Noah's calling as a preacher of righteousness was exchanged for a career in nurturing his family in a safe place. But Noah had done his part in preparing the ark first. Then God looked after him.

Remember, the safest place for the family of the righteous is not necessarily in a mountain cave while Sodom is being reduced to a smouldering crater. The safest place for the family is in the centre of the will of God, wherever that may be. Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that the place of God's will for the believer is necessarily along the trajectory of His terrible swift sword. In Scripture, more often than not, God called His informed followers to get out of the "line of fire" to a more sensible venue.

We can run—and we can try to hide.

Matt 10:23 When they persecute you in one city, flee to the next.

There have always been some martyrs, who, seeing the approach of danger, have felt called of God to face it and to absorb its worst. Polycarp is said to have escaped initially when he heard that soldiers were coming to arrest him, but in his second hiding place he dreamed a dream which he interpreted as a call to martyrdom. Therefore, he refused to escape a second time when his hide-out was discovered. Jesus Himself refused to escape from the Garden of Gethsemane, when His hour had come to be taken. However, until His hour came, He spent much of His time escaping and moving about in secrecy (Luke 4:28-30/John 8:59/10:39/12:36).

Peter, when released from prison by an angel, fled from the place of persecution and danger "*to another place*"-(Acts 12:17). Paul also did a lot of escaping by night and out of windows in city walls, though he was in no sense averse to dying and going to be with the Lord (Phil.1:21-23). He simply exercised reasonable caution so as not to shorten his tenure in ministry unnecessarily.

Flight from perilous circumstance has a noble history in the Old Testament as well, whether it be Lot's flight from Sodom on "the eve of destruction," or David's early career of wilderness escapes from Saul. In the history of Christianity, Christians have frequently fled *en masse* from dangerous places to safer ones. Christians rarely think in terms of flight from domestic dangers if they live in a place of relative safety – but the times they are a-changin'.

Flight, can be very inconvenient and generally involves the leaving behind of cherished possessions and relationships (ask Lot's wife!). Many people would prefer to take their chances in the danger zone, so long as they have an AK-47 for every able-bodied male in the home, plenty of ammunition, sandbags and MREs (*Meals Ready to Eat* packaged for long-term storage). In my opinion, this "Alamo Model" of survival is not ideal for Christians. Those who die trying to kill others in a dispute over a loaf of bread are not to be classed among the martyrs, who die for the glory of God alone.

This author can think of no reason to object to the idea of storing food. The ant is commended for storing enough food for the short-range future (Prov.6:8), and Joseph stored enough for seven years. In fact, if you currently visit the supermarket only once or twice a week, you are already practising "food storage" beyond the amount demanded for "immediate" needs. However, there are two factors that prevent the believer from finding any real security in freeze-dried calories stockpiled in the pantry, or hidden elsewhere.

One can not be sure how long a general food shortage may last—and can, therefore, never be sure that the amount stored will not run out; and

Jesus commanded: "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth*" (Matt.6:19). In times of starvation, what is "treasured" more than food? The functional phrase here, I think, is *for yourselves*. Neither Joseph nor the ant laid up a personal store just for himself or herself. In both cases, the accumulation is intended for the general survival of the community. If you have seven-years' worth of dried foods in your garage, are you going to sit down complacently with your family for a meal while your neighbour's children starve fifty yards from your door? That would seem to be "unchristian", but consider the Parable of the Ten Virgins. The whole ten had the same warning but five ran out of oil for their lamps. When the unwise virgins asked for oil from the wise virgins, they were not given any. Why not? "*But the wise answered, saying, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you*". God is just and fair. When we do not heed His warnings, we have to bear the consequences! There is an important lesson here. Do we see Jesus helping or healing those in difficulty whose injury, blindness, and such things were the consequence of their own neglect or disobedience? No, we do not! Neither should we! This includes those within our own families. The law of God is that we all must reap what we have sown.

Faith and wisdom would dictate that a family store some reasonable amount of goods against temporary shortages (along with some non-hybrid vegetable seeds for the spring garden), fully intending to share with others in need, and trusting that God, if necessary, can perform another miracle of the loaves.

Better still, relocate somewhere (like out of the city) where food shortages will not be so severe, and persuade as many people as possible to do the same!

Options for Christian Families

There are a number of ways that believers might legitimately respond to news such as that I am presenting about the possibilities of a societal melt down. The first is to do some first-hand research on the subject in order to determine whether this is just much ado about nothing. If you do this, let me recommend that you not accept the first opinion you hear without further inquiry. You might think that your friend who works for Microsoft ought to know a great deal about this "*tekkie computer stuff*." He might. But there is no guarantee that he has studied the question or has access to better sources of information than are available to you. If he has heard of a possible sabotage of the Internet, his supervisors may have told him, "*Don't sweat it. Your job is secure because it will never happen.*" But some who have researched the matter are much more alarmed. It has been claimed that Y2K fixers were the greatest stock-pilers of supplies against a possible Y2K breakdown.

Some claim that a satisfactory quick-fix of an Internet crash may be impossible, and most people who stand to lose a lot in a disaster tend to retreat to denial when confronted by the enormity of the problem. The *Newsweek* story about y2k in 1999 should have triggered a significant general panic—but it didn't. Most people don't even remember seeing that cover story. Few, apparently read it. In a book entitled *The Sovereign Individual*, authors Davidson and Rees-Mogg wrote:

A recent psychological study disguised as an opinion poll showed that members of individual occupational groups were almost uniformly unwilling to accept any conclusion that implied a loss of income for them, no matter how airtight the logic supporting it. (page 339)

If your research leads you to conclude that we are facing a mid-to-cataclysmic disaster, you should begin to consider some responsible response options. Some of those that I am about to suggest may seem far-fetched, but each of them has been chosen by persons who have no history of clinical mental illness. Here are some of the factors which I would encourage you to consider:

Location.

In any crisis, a family's location can literally be the most important variable determining survival. Some people simply find themselves "*in the wrong place at the wrong time*". Some of you are already in about the best possible place a person can be during a societal meltdown. Others are arguably in the very worst of possible locations. Please consider the following alternatives:

Option One—Stay where you are.

The Psalmist wrote: "*In the Lord I put my trust; how can you say to my soul, 'Flee as a bird to your mountain?'"*(Psalm 11:1). You may already be where God wants you to station yourself for a long time, where, you are confident, you should take your stand by faith and let the chips fall where they may. Some of those reading this may even already be in the ideal situation optimally to ride out such a disaster as was envisaged by some for y2k. The ability to produce your own food on your property, coupled with close, positive relationships with your neighbours are important factors in determining the desirability of staying where you already live.

If, however, you have a family and live in an urban or suburban centre, you may wish to consider whether relocation may be the better part of valour. If even 50% of the worst-case scenarios actually materialise, then cities will possibly be without predictable replenishment of groceries and other shipped-in commodities. With phone service and the power grid on the fritz, and the police force disabled or disoriented, the only element in the cities that stands to gain from this scenario is the criminal gangs, whose predatory lifestyles would require the least readjustment of anyone's. God is able to keep His people unblistered in the fiery furnace, if that is where they must be, though choosing to make one's home in a burning brick kiln might well qualify as "tempting the Lord." For sure, knowing you were in a location that gave access to clean drinking water would be comforting. Without electricity water pumps may fail. Without electricity, sewerage pumps and cities would quickly become unclean and full of disease.

Option Two — Buy or lease farmland

This would seem to be a more sensible option than that of staying in the city. The first major city was built by Cain in rebellion against God, and its successors have generally been worthy reincarnations of the

same spirit. The line from Cain and Nimrod are recorded as being city builders, whereas the record shows the line from Abel/Seth as God's line, are shown as farmers, fishermen and herdsmen tending to live outside the cities. When Lot went into the city of Sodom he *vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*—[2 Peter 2:8]. City-dwelling brought him troubles and he only just escaped by leaving the city of Sodom.

Some might question the difference between a small town and a city. The difference is that a small town is a community, whereas in a city that sense of community is lost.

Believers are often called to the city for outreach purposes (that's where the lost may be found in large concentrations, as Paul found them), though I suspect that most Christian city dwellers are there for the purpose of convenience or prosperity more than to be in the will of God. In the recent past, movement of the population into metropolitan areas facilitated an increase in such convenience and prosperity, though a serious economic meltdown would transform cities into anything but convenient or prosperous places to be caught. There is already a noticeable trend of population movement from urban and suburban properties to more rural alternatives, especially by the older folk. If the masses get wind of the impending crash, this movement may become a stampede. Properties for sale in the cities will be unsaleable, while the value of rural acreage could soar, due to the increased demand of the homeless refugees from cities (sounds like a Godzilla movie, without Godzilla). That of course depends upon whether or not financial services are still available.

If you have been thinking seriously about moving to a small farm property, it would be wise to do so now. There may not be enough available towards the end of 2005 to 2007 especially if financial controls disallow it. If you move to the country, and the disaster bomb proves to be nothing but a firecracker, what have you lost? You now have a more self-sufficient life much more like the one you have long desired. It may be the life-style God desires you to have. We need to keep in mind that there are natural disasters probable in the view of scientists, as well as those created by man. In fact, scientific reviews give cause to fear with information about increasing sun-spot activity, changes in the earth's magnetic field and that sort of thing.

In view of millions of welfare recipients whose payments may not be in the mail, some watchers suggest that it would not be wise to be living within a half-hour's drive of a city with a population above 20,000—nor within 100 miles of a city of more than 100,000. This may be over-cautious, but the rule of thumb would be to provide as large a buffer between your family and urban violence as your calling in God allows. We need to think about what a large city would be like to be in if the sewer pumps failed through a power failure of even one day!

A move to the country involves some possibly difficult adjustments for those accustomed to the convenience of supermarkets and the stimulation provided by flashing neon lights, those microcosmic universes called "malls" and perennially congested traffic arteries (to say nothing of the excitement of violent home invasions, schoolyard agro, and police teams besieging the drug house next door). The difficulties of such adjustment, however, may not be so great as the benefits. City life is artificial and is sustained by an artificial infrastructure over which the individual has no control, but upon which his life depends whilst he is there.

The Bible affirms the desirability of farming your own land, not only in times of crisis, but as a Biblical way of life:

Proverbs 27:23-27 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens.

Proverbs 28:19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

Note here the inference about ownership of farming land. This is not about city life!

If any are not in a financial position to buy rural acreage, there may be the option of renting, leasing or sharecropping five or ten acres on the edge of a larger farm. For a few thousand dollars, a used mobile home could be put there for a scaled-down, but more self-sufficient lifestyle for your family. Alternately, several families might combine their resources and purchase large acreage in some area where building restrictions are minimal or non-existent and then build homes there.

Option Three— Live on the road (or on the sea).

To avoid the defilement of society, in obedience to their patriarch Jonadab, the Rechabites adopted a nomadic lifestyle—neither dwelling in cities nor settling long enough to raise crops—which they maintained for at least five generations. Though they are not particularly commended for their homelessness, God had nothing but good things to say about the Rechabites' loyalty to their ancestor's standards of purity (Jer.35:6-11). A recent movement (not particularly among Christians) called "PT" is gaining tremendous interest in America and the United Kingdom. "PT" stands for "permanent traveller" (or "passing through," or "prior taxpayer," depending on who you talk to). Books for such persons (published by Scope International Ltd., in Great Britain, at a cost of \$100 per volume!) actually give instructions on how to legally obtain multiple citizenship, disappear from government computer files, and be regarded as a visitor by all nations and the possession of none! This movement, needless to say, makes its appeal primarily to the rich, who can afford to pay \$35,000 to \$50,000 for second passports from obscure countries like Grenada and Cape Verde. For the less rich, books like one called *Freedom Road* (published by Loompanics 2) give detailed practical instructions for making a living and enjoying unparalleled freedom and privacy by living in an Recreational Vehicle with no permanent address (this, too, is legal). Other freedom seekers have opted for life on family-sized sailing vessels on the high seas. Few of these people, as far as I know, are believers, and the lack of adequate fellowship that would seem necessarily to result from such a lifestyle may not bother them much. At the same time such people may well be wiser than the children of light!

Jesus described Himself as a permanent traveller when He told a would-be follower: "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head*" (Luke 9:58), and Peter described God's people generally as "strangers and pilgrims"(1 Pet.2:11), though he was speaking of our relationship to the world generally, rather than of a nomadic lifestyle. While nothing in Scripture forbids such a "PT" lifestyle, and it presents certain advantages of anonymity for those who can afford it, I suspect that few families would find it ideal for the meeting of the social needs of themselves or their children. Also, a breakdown or financial collapse would almost certainly interrupt all regular air transportation as well as the availability of motor vehicle fuel. This would presumably seriously cramp the style of the free-wheeling "PT."

Option Four—Relocate to a less-industrialised area.

You know, the first believers were scattered from Jerusalem in order to escape the new dangers that arose in Jerusalem. It is possible that a disaster may become the greatest boon to evangelism. That is if the 'ark' door has not been shut by that time. If devoted believing families stage a mass exodus from industrialised nations to those regions less dependent upon technology. Common sense would suggest that, if mainframe computers or the Internet crashes, the societies least affected will be those least dependent upon a high-tech infrastructure. We could exist well by never have dealings with money, but survive by subsistence farming and bartering (the alleged "cashless society" expected by many prophecy buffs would not affect them in the least).

Option Five—Escape to the woods.

The prospect of fleeing to and surviving in the wilderness holds a mystique and attraction for many people. This option has appealed especially to those who link an impending crisis with an expected eschatological scenario, like the supposed three-and-one-half year or seven-year tribulation, or whatever. There are people who have made elaborate preparations for an escape into a particular wilderness area, where they have been storing food and supplies for several years now. This option is a necessary one if those people are correct in believing that we are about to see the emergence of a great one-world government under antichrist. If such were to materialise, then no town, city or foreign country would be safe for believers. There would be nothing for it but to go underground. Such wilderness survival has scriptural warrant.

- David fled into the wilderness to escape Saul's persecution (1 Sam.21:5).
- Jesus instructed His disciples in Jerusalem to flee to the mountains (get out of the cities) at the approach of the Roman armies (Luke 21:20-21).
- The sun-clad woman in Revelation flees to the wilderness to be sustained by God for 1260 days (Rev.12:6, 14).

The extreme inconvenience associated with this option would render it undesirable to most families except in the case of absolute necessity. The conviction that the popular tribulation scenario is about to be realised provides the best motivation for planning for this wilderness survival experience. If the Great Tribulation is not in fact around the corner, and if remaining above ground in a situation that allows one to raise crops and livestock is an actual option, I would expect most families to opt for the beef over the wild game and for their garden vegetables over a bowl of acorns. However, acorns are better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick. And even a poke in the eye with a sharp stick is to be preferred over police-motorcycle-mounted mini-guillotines such as one sees depicted in Jack Chick's tract, *The Beast*.

New Agers believe that the Lord Maitreya, (the god of the New Age) will appear the day after financial collapse, and this may refer to, "*And all men wondered after the beast*". They believe that the New Age will arise after chaos. Indeed, just before the turn of the century, the ANZ bank in New Zealand had an investment brochure with the cover showing y2k as the door into the New Age. I suppose that one's eschatology (view of end times events) will necessarily play a large role in shaping his perception of and response to and similar possibility. If there is a one-world government of the Antichrist predicted in Scripture and about to appear in our time (neither of which is certain), then a collapse could be engineered for this purpose and for total control purposes. The ensign of the New Age is "Order out of chaos", and the chaos being designed to this end.

Though seldom mentioned, such a tribulation scenario may possibly be absent from Scripture, when rightly interpreted. Wouldn't it be nice if the ominous New World Order, with its welfare state and cashless, electronic economy proved only to be another case of mistaken identity by prophecy speculators, who have already in this century misidentified the antichrist with the Pope, Hitler's Third Reich, Soviet Stalinism, Henry Kissinger, the European Economic Community, and the Masonic Lodge and many others? If there is no prophetic inevitability of these things (a very realistic possibility), then a disaster would look more like the end of the New World Order than its next developmental stage. How, for example, could the much-discussed computer chips planted in the hand be monitored without the cellular infrastructure of our computer-dependent telecommunications systems? Or for that matter, how could any leader control people even on a state-wide (to say nothing of nation-wide or international) scale without modern mainframe computers? It would seem impossible. And the conviction that such a one-world society must come as a fulfilment of prophecy may be some people's only reason for discounting the likelihood of a disaster. It is the only threatened global crisis that doesn't fit anybody's prophetic timetable!

Fellowship.

There is little to be gained by individual believers scattering into isolated survival bunkers, other than escaping the city chaos. A great earthly resource that God has given believers is the Body of Christ. Whichever of the above options is chosen, it would work best if believing families would choose them corporately. Families could flee into the wilderness together. Flight would be much easier to adjust to if there were several likeminded families relocating to the same target location. Even staying city-side and above ground, churches as we have known them may cease to exist, and communities of clustered believers' families may replace them, either temporarily or permanently. Some friends of mine have thought of and some have purchased a large acreage together or else several smaller nearby or adjacent acreages individually. If I had a million dollars (which, I expect, will never happen), I would buy several hundred acres in a rural area to serve as something of a "hiding place" for desperate believing families to flee to and to farm co-operatively in the event of a crisis.

Isaiah 26:200 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

If the normal supply of services and the delivery systems of the whole western world become unreliable, it would be very convenient for a believing family that raised chickens to have access to nearby Christian grain growers, vegetable gardeners and dairy farmers—as well as builders and mechanics. This would be a great blessing, and I would hope that, whatever happens and wherever we might end up, we will still be a part of a believing community. In this case the evil of usury would not be available.

Skills and Physical Condition.

If the cities are evacuated, former city dwellers will be uniquely unequipped and unskilled for the task of isolated survival. Most have never raised a crop or livestock, and many have never hunted (these are the ways all humans used to survive in pre-industrial times. If we find ourselves living in post-industrial times, these may again become the primary means of providing for our families). The modern urban norm of extreme specialisation has left few of us knowing how to do very many things for ourselves. If you have little knowledge of basic survival skills, and cannot find the time to learn them in the short time left, I would suggest that you at least pick up a book or two about such things (*Back To Basics*, published by *Reader's Digest*, is an excellent book of this type). If you find yourself out of a job in the year 2006, you may at that time have time on your hands to study the essential skills that will either produce your family's needs or which will render you indispensable and thus capable of bartering labour for food, housing, etc. There is very good reason for you and your children to develop the highest degree of physical fitness that you are capable of achieving. This way, you and your older children can possibly take strenuous unskilled-labour jobs to provide necessities. Good physical conditioning has the added benefit of enhancing general health, endurance, speed and agility, in circumstances wherein such factors confer an advantage.

Supplies.

There are many theories as to what will become of banks, reserve bank systems, cash, etc. if there is a major recession. It is doubtful that there will be a total money crash unless the Banking System allows it,

or engineers it. The time of traditional economics has passed, and in theory, the whole money system should have failed long ago. We are in the age of money manipulation and figures in computers are not real money.

The general feeling among those writing about and discussing the issue of preparedness seems to be that life after an economic disaster will be greatly enhanced by the ability to barter goods for goods. If you already produce a surplus of food or other essential products, or are skilled in some essential service that everyone needs, then you may already be prepared for a system of barter. Also, many are advising that gold or silver coins represent a safer form in which to keep your savings than are cash and electronic transfer records. While gold and silver could always be traded for food and other necessities, gold together with fiat paper currency sometimes becomes essentially worthless. Have we not read something about a bag of gold not being able to buy a loaf of bread?

If you have no religious or biblical scruples against saving money in the bank, then there can be no reasonable objection to saving (additionally or instead) barterable commodities. Gold, silver, food and fuel are better than money in a crisis, but the latter two can be used in a practical way, whereas one would not get fat on trying to eat gold and silver! Values will only increase in a situation where everybody wants them and few have them. You can buy a year or more's supply of foods packaged in air-tight, pest-proof containers which can either be eaten by your family or else bartered for toilet paper when the market shelves are bare. If there is no toilet paper, then there are heaps of books pages that could be torn out of!

The great thing about turning your symbolic assets (money in the bank) into real goods is that you never have to regret your investment—even if the crisis never occurs. If there is no crisis in the years to come, then you will spend (as usual) a certain amount of money for groceries that year. What harm is done by taking the same money and pre-buying the groceries for that year in air-tight buckets or drums? If we are talking about rice, wheat, beans, peas, salt, sugar, maybe some powdered milk, etc., these can be eaten by electric light or by candle light. I know that some of these precautions cost more money than many people have. Some families do not have enough money at this time to do many of the things I am suggesting. But I am hoping to raise your awareness of where the money you would normally spend on luxuries or entertainment might better be spent. A year's supply of plain, wholesome, packaged food might run you, perhaps \$600—\$1,000 per person in the family. A basement accumulating these containers probably makes more sense than a family room with a new home theatre system. Perhaps a late-model car can be sold for the price of an older car and a year's supply of food for a family of six. The most painless way to accumulate a buffer food supply would be to simply buy a few extra cans of food every time you shop for groceries, and put the surplus aside for a rainy day. When stores run sales involving deep price cuts on certain non-perishable items, it might be the time to pick-up a case or several extra gallons at significant savings.

Ask yourself what things you would wish to have on hand if there were no stores open for, say, a month. You would probably wish to have a first aid kit, flashlights with batteries, extra toothpaste, soap and cleansers, contact lens solutions, any prescription drugs that you might be dependent upon, etc. Toilet paper has already been mentioned. It is advisable also to have some bottled water on hand for drinking, cooking and cleaning. To be sure, a carton of matches would be of greater practical value than a bar of gold! The thought of rubbing sticks together to light a fire might be too much for some people.

Also, if you can back-up your home heating with wood heat and keep sufficient fuel wood on hand to make it from May 1st to the spring, you will not need to be concerned about staying warm. A wood stove with a flat top can also double as a cooking surface if your gas or electric range is not working. If wood heat is not an option where you live, you may want to put out the minimal investment for enough "space blankets" for the whole family. These extremely compact items, which look like a sheet of aluminium foil and retain an extraordinary percentage of your body's heat, can usually be purchased for less than \$10 each from many outdoor supply sources.

It also would make very good sense to obtain some way of generating electricity for basic uses. I'm sure that our readers are aware of various alternative energy options, such as wind generators, solar panels, and bicycle-driven generators—though a good old Coleman generator would prove more versatile and portable. If a family had more than one option available for electricity, it would make the adjustment to the loss of the power grid much smoother.

At the midnight hour those who have not provided enough oil for their lamps might not find the merchants who sell oil open for business. It is better to have enough beforehand. But remember that there are saints who barely survive on their meagre incomes already, and who have no ability to provide a buffer for their family against future crises. It would seem good for churches to develop (as Joseph did in Egypt) a food bank for their members who are unable to afford the luxury of surplus food storage. The ideal of

Scripture is: "*Those who gathered much had no extra, and those who gathered little had no lack*" (Ex.16:18/2 Cor.8:13-15).

Circumstances Beyond Disaster

Decisions with reference to some of the above options must be partially affected by consideration of precisely what kind of society can be expected to emerge from an end-time crisis. Will things get better quickly, or only after years of chaos—or will they get worse instead? What kind of challenges will the post-crisis civilisation present to Christian families? Will there be local government, federal government, world government—or what? Will society turn back to God, or further away from Him? Will Christians be sought out for their counsel—or for their heads? Will the worst problems for Christians be shortages of food, marauding criminal gangs, or official government persecution? In my view, persecution for one's belief is certain. Please note here that my use of the word "Christian" is used only in the sense of God's people who believe in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

On the bright side, a technological cave-in might prevent the Prime Minister, President or anyone else, from being able to exert any control whatsoever over the populace. Some 'experts' think that nothing broader than local or county government could function. They believe there will be perhaps seven to ten years of economic chaos, followed a resemblance of the 1890s than that of the 2,000s. This would mean the end of the Welfare State, of the Department of Education, of the Inland Revenue Service or equivalent, and of all the grandiose Big Brother-esque plans of the New World Order. This is very encouraging. But is it what the future holds? Only time will tell.

There is still the threat of China and maverick nations or terrorists with nuclear weapons. If the NATO weapons systems go haywire, only the hand of God is powerful enough to prevent China or anyone else from pursuing an unstoppable course of aggression. China is said to have the Biblical number of 200,000 horsemen with the bows and arrows (British made) as we can read about in prophecy. I fully believe that the hand of God alone is more than adequate to protect the God's people where ever they are from any designs anyone may have against us. But then we must ask why God would want to save people who have spit in His face and turned their backs to Him. One might well reason that economic collapse is itself a form of God's judgement upon industrialised civilisation. History and Scripture portray a pattern of God's sending wave after wave of disaster upon nations upon whom He has decided to vent His wrath (e.g. Lev.26:18, 21, 24, 28/Isa.5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4/Ezek. 26:3/Rev.9:12).

We must confess not to know for sure

- If there will be a crisis, or whether troubles will start some time after say 2006.
- How the matter will resolve itself, or if it will;
- What society will look like a decade from now.

This ignorance should not paralyse us, but should lead us to take precautions with the broadest spectrum of possible scenarios in mind, and leave the rest to God. The one thing that is certain is that the faithfulness of God to those who cast themselves wholly upon Him and who do His bidding. One thing for sure is that slackness in knowing and doing God's will a luxury no one can afford. To be sure, God has not sent his warnings for no purpose. Our place is to believe God and act accordingly.

Some Suggested Points for Prayer or Meditation

The greatest form of preparation that parents can make for the safety of their families is to commit them to God and to commit all concerns to Him by believing, submissive prayer. It is possible to "have not" because we "ask not" (James 4:2). Some things may occur with or without our prayers, but if we neglect to pray, we will never know whether a given disaster might have been averted had we only prevailed to lay hold on God.

If Sodom had been spared, it would not have been so much because of the ten (non-existent) righteous, but because of Abraham's intercession (Gen.18:23-33). If Abraham had prayed that God would spare the city for one righteous inhabitant, Sodom might have been spared to this day. We will never know, but it could have possibly postponed a gruesome judgement that came upon thousands of men, women and children. One reason that our world has come to its present crisis is, doubtless that "*there is none that calleth upon [God's] name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of [God]: for [He] hast hid [His] face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.*" (Isa.64:7).

With reference to any indicated threat, what might informed Christians pray for? Let me make some suggestions. First, pray the prime (but seldom prayed with understanding) prayer that God's kingdom may come and His will be done. That God would send a reformation of the church and a revival of pure Christianity is a request that can always be counted on to fall within the category of "things God wills." If the prayer of the apostles (Acts 4:23-30) serves as a model of appropriate prayer, then to pray for boldness,

faithfulness and fruitfulness would take priority over prayer for personal safety, but there is nothing inappropriate about prayer for personal safety either (2 Thes.3:2). Additionally, you might consider praying for the following:

1. That Christian families the world over might be spiritually prepared for whatever may come;
2. That Christian parents might not be separated from their children by "protective" governmental measures;
3. That God would clearly inform Christian parents of any course of action that He knows will better prepare them for whatever He knows is coming;
4. That you and your children might be faithful even to death.
5. For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour – 1 Tim. 2:2-3.

Child Preparation

On this final point, I should think it obvious that Christian parents make it their top priority to see to it that their children genuinely know God, and are prepared to meet the Lord triumphantly, if they were to face mortal danger during their childhood years. I realise that such thoughts are unpleasant to parents, but what do you think Christian parents in persecuted lands teach their children? Do you think it can't happen here? And, happen very quickly!

When our children reached the age of being able to understand the English language, we made a point of acquainting them with the following, unfrighting facts:

1. We are eternal spiritual persons dwelling in temporary bodies;
2. We will someday shed these bodies, but this presents no terrors to those who love God;
3. To die in the will of God and to be taken immediately into His presence is a great privilege to be looked forward to.

Since eternity is endless, and life is short, it doesn't matter whether we enter that eternal bliss after a "long" life, or after a relatively "short" life. All lives are short compared to eternity. Since we have no fear of death, and have re-enforced these truths to our children by scripture and by missionary/martyr biographies, our children do not exhibit any fear of death. I do believe that they are prepared for that inevitable, universal human event, for which only neglectful parents would fail to prepare their children.

However, we do not only wish to prepare our children to die, but also to survive and to live. Remember, if we do not provide for our children we are worse than infidels. We think it more valuable for them to know how to produce food and clothing and to function as redemptive parts of human society. In the education of our children, even if we foresaw no impending crisis, Christians ought to foresee the coming crisis of adult life as sufficient cause to weight their children's education heavily on the side of character strengths like courage, industry, integrity, compassion, humility and piety (not necessarily in that order). An education such as that commonly afforded in the modern educational system is more likely to prepare children to "make a living" than to "live." Children who are well taught in the latter will have little difficulty with the former. In fact, they will find that "all these things" shall be added unto them, while they concentrate their energies upon the pursuit of God's kingdom and His righteousness -(Matt.6:33). Those who know how to live find that making a living is thrown in with the deal.

If your children have become accustomed to a rather affluent standard of living, one of the biggest favours you can do them (whether there is a catastrophe or not) would be to wean them of such lifestyle expectations as soon as possible. Many Christian families, amazingly, have so pampered their children as to make it exceedingly difficult for them to be content "having food and raiment"-(1 Tim.6:8). Though well-intentioned, parents who make materialists of their children, are doing them great spiritual harm, whereas those children who are taught early-on to "*let your lifestyle be without covetousness, but be content with such things as you have*" -(Heb.13:5-6) will be spiritually fitted for any circumstance that the future may hold (it's hard to teach these lessons to children unless the parents have learned lessons themselves).

Teaching children to ignore their own denials and to have compassion on others who are suffering will render them of great value to God and to society. In any disaster, there will never be a surplus of selfless young people pouring themselves out for those less fortunate. Taking the children to rest homes to read to, talk to or pray with the abandoned elderly, or having them do housework or gardening for some single mom in the church or the neighbourhood, will help develop this concern for others in your children today. It will serve them well—and humanity as well—to get their attention off of themselves for a while.

Promises of God to the Faithful.

Note the words, "the children" which are emphasised.

Deuteronomy 12:28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with **THY CHILDREN** after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

Isaiah 49:25 But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will **save THY CHILDREN**.

Isaiah 54:13 And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of **THY CHILDREN**.

Isaiah 41:10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Psalms 33:16-22 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalms 37:34-40 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. 38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Psalms 72:11-14 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Psalms 91:1-16 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. 16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

The Destruction of the "City" of Babylon.

Rev 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Before the Second Advent Babylon is going to fall. The present economic system will crash. What should God's people be doing at that time?

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Warnings are coming frequently, especially on the Internet, that "the end is nigh". This man-made city (economic system) will be destroyed. The present economic/financial system will go. Read Revelation 18, noting that this will occur before the second coming. *Jesus tells us, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching".*

This paper started by referring to warnings! Noah was a person who took heed to a warning.

Heb 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Note here that Noah made preparations before the disaster struck. But none outside his family did! Jesus said, "As in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be". Few will even consider the warnings.

Look at the following warnings. Are you taking heed?

Matt 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Matt 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Jer 30:7 Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

This is no "fun time". There is no "rapture" Scofield-style out of this! It is a case of the "wicked" being separated from amongst the just. As Jesus said:

Matt 13:49 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Consider again the days of Noah.

Mat 24:37 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Noah had a different lifestyle. Noah took heed! He made preparations!

After the crisis was over, where was Noah found? He was found on earth, not in an outer space "heaven".

Where will the Kingdom of Heaven be found? It will be found on earth!

We live in an age where the whole fabric of civilization could crumble very quickly. Jesus warns us of coming time of trouble

Matt 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

And He told us about the signs of the times!

Before the Second Advent we are advised of great fear in earth.

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Matt 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

We have the earthquakes, H-bugs, wars and all these things in sight. We have the threat of an Internet crash; a crash that could bring down all world trade. In effect, the latter would bring down that "great city" called Babylon.

What then for God's people. Revelation 18:20 tells us to rejoice. In the interval there is a tough time. Knowing something of what is coming warns us to be prepared. Only the righteous shall inherit the earth!

The greatest disaster of all for God's people will be to be found taking heed to warnings, and to be not walking with God.

So when is the time we should be heeding all these warnings? It is before the sun and moon are darkened, a time Jesus said is coming.

Eccl 12:2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.