

# But, Haven't We Been Told *Not* to Do Anything Physically to Prepare for the Time of Trouble?

Below is the quotation most often used to show that we shouldn't do anything physically to prepare for our wilderness experience during the Time of Trouble. The first sentence states, "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." And, if someone wants an excuse not to prepare, apparently here it is. But, is it ever safe to build a case on just one verse from the Bible, or just one sentence from Ellen White's writings? —of course not. So we need to read on. As we read the whole paragraph from *Early Writings*, pages 56, let's consider two questions. ① What is the *main issue*, or concern in this paragraph? And, ② How *is* God planning to take care of us and feed us during the final part of the Time of Trouble?

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.

What is the main issue here? —our need to "trust wholly in God." And how is God planning to feed us? At first glance it may look like He is going to "send ravens" or "rain manna." But, did you notice the first two words of that sentence? They are, "If necessary" —this is *back-up plan* language. So, if the ravens and manna are His back-up plan, what is His *main plan*? We find it in the previous sentence, where it says, "God is able to *spread a table for us in the wilderness.*"

Spreading a table for us may seem like all we have to do is come, sit down and eat. However, to fill out the meaning of this phrase, we need to look at another quotation from *The Ministry of Healing*, page 200, which says, "The mountains and hills are changing; the earth is waxing old like a garment; but *the blessing of God*, which spreads for His people a table in the wilderness, *will never cease.*" What does, "will never cease" mean? —besides, meaning that it will always be there. (We may have to "think outside the box" a little here.) When did, "will never cease," begin? —at least as far back as Noah coming out of the Ark, and probably even all the way back to the Garden of Eden? Are there any examples in scripture of people for whom God has "spread a table" in the wilderness? —yes, there are a few. But what about the hunter-gather peoples who have "lived of the land" for thousands of years? Aren't they also God's children? And haven't His blessings also spread a table in the wilderness for them?

Part of the problem is we have "lost" the hunter-gather's skills. People nowadays go out into the wilderness and get into trouble because they don't have these skills. We've heard their stories, and as a result most of us no longer believe that God *is* able to spread a table in the wilderness for *us*. Our need to "trust wholly in God" *is indeed* the main issue here.

Like Lot, most of God's people nowadays have spent so much time in the city, that when confronted with the need to "Escape to the mountains!" their reaction is to beg for an alternative destination and exclaim, "Please, no! ... I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me



and I die.” (See Genesis 19:15-19.) But, notice the following comment from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 290 about the Israelites at the Red Sea, and what it says about this.

God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance ... 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.

God could also provide for us by a different method. (Indeed, some have suggested that we will be raptured before we have to “flee to the mountains,” and others are stockpiling provisions.) But the sure word of prophecy tells us He has chosen to, “*spread a table for us* in the wilderness.” Evidently He wants to strengthen *our* trust in Him by personally providing for us from the things He has created. He also wants us to learn that, “He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be sustained.” (*Ministry of Healing*, page 482.)

So, as we read the following from *Steps to Christ*, page 123, let's consider “the means He employs” to “spread a table for us in the wilderness” Notice that this quotation is also about “the necessity of trusting in God,” and that these lessons are for us, as they have “come down to *our time* full of instruction and comfort.”

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. They go forth singing to their labor, for “your heavenly Father feedeth them.” And “are ye not much better than they?” Are not you, as intelligent, spiritual worshipers, of more value than the birds of the air? Will not the Author of our being, the Preserver of our life, the One who formed us in His own divine image, provide for our necessities if we but trust in Him?

Here, Jesus points us to the bird as an example of how God would like to provide for us. But, “He does not drop the food into their bills!” “They must gather the grains He has scattered for them. They must prepare the material for their little nests.” Trusting wholly in God *includes* gathering and preparing! Works *is* a part of faith! It's just very important that our actions be according to the Word of God. (See James 2:14-26, and Romans 10:17.)

Thus, if we would “respect the means He employs,” it seems we should learn some plant identification and primitive wilderness living skills—even the birds and animals have to learn skills to survive. Otherwise, whose fault would it be if we were to go hungry, or cold, or unsheltered when God “spreads a table for *us* in the wilderness.”



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~ “to prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord” ~