

Women & More

Our Lord Protector

April 4, 2013

The National Geographic channel now has a show on called *Doomsday Preppers*, highlighting men, women and whole families who are preparing for the end—for the rest of us! They build fortified bunkers and underground living quarters with complicated entrances and exits—to keep the unwelcome out and themselves safe within. They buy up food items and construct massive storage areas for all their supplies. They bring in specialized water tanks and heating and cooling systems and pipes of every sort to conduct it all. They amass military-grade prep gear like weaponry, ammo and gas masks; and everything else they will need to live in their protective shelters for so many months after a cataclysmic catastrophe, without coming up for so much as ‘air’.

With slogans like, “Prepare Today for Tomorrow’s Trouble”, these survivalists plan for the end of civilization by hoarding-with-purpose: water, food, shelter and security. “If the grocery shelves are empty, you’re only nine meals away from anarchy,” warned Mike; while Chris claimed, “Food is not in short supply, it is ‘brains’ that are in short supply.” And the somewhat sensible Megan said simply, “I still love high heels and fashion, but I am also thinking...is there anything I can conceal a weapon in?” Are these ‘bunker-stew’ mixing people among the smart and informed—living in a ‘Christian’ nation—for nothing?

These seemingly sincere people are preparing for what they truly believe to be the worst-case scenario. But the Bible describes the worst to be failure to prepare to meet God—the Lord! Amos in 4:12 warned Israel: “*Prepare to meet your God, O Israel*” while synoptic gospel writers (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:3; and Luke 3:4) called out to us all: “*Prepare the way for the Lord.*” God’s word asks human beings what we will profit if we gain the whole world and lose our own soul—our very self? See, we can prepare to live through a terrorist attack or even a nuclear bombing, but if we do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we will live through whatever and then die forever in a place called hell.

And there goes security! Missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, said, “Nothing is more secure than that which is abandoned to God!” Jesus planned for the security of His followers in John 17:11-12 “*I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*” Jesus prayed to His Father for their protection: He specifically asked Him to protect by the power of His *Name*—representing authoritatively the *Person* it described.

Anywhere the Lord sends us, He is prepared to protect us with His presence—He goes ahead of us. We just have to keep ourselves **in Him**—abide, remain—to be assured of His protection. “And who is ‘he that will harm you’, when God is your protector?” asked Charles Spurgeon rhetorically, and then added: “In every trouble we should first seek to realize God’s presence with us.” Psalm 6:11-12 says about divine protection: “*But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. **Spread your protection over them**, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. ¹²For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield.*” Also Psalm 11:1 “*In the LORD I take refuge. How then can you say to me: ‘Flee like a bird to your mountain.’*” We don’t have to doomsday prep!

In the Old Testament Moses prayed for the protection of God’s people: Numbers 10:34-36 “***The cloud of the LORD was over them by day** when they set out from the camp. ³⁵Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, ‘Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.’ ³⁶Whenever it came to rest, he said, ‘Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel.’*” Just as the cloud of the LORD was **God’s presence and protection by day**, the pillar of fire was so by night!

► **Ruth is promised protection** in the fields of Boaz—Ruth 2:5-9 “*Boaz asked the foreman of the harvesters, ‘Whose young woman is that?’*

⁶“The foreman replied, ‘She is the Moabitess who came back from Moab with Naomi. ⁷She said, “Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the harvesters.” She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter.’

*⁸“So Boaz said to Ruth, ‘My daughter, listen to me. Don’t go and glean in another field and don’t go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. ⁹Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. **I have told the men not to touch you.** And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled.’”* Ruth had chosen to make Naomi’s people her people, yes; but more importantly, to make Naomi’s God her God. So, **protected by God**, Ruth would become the wife of Boaz—kinsman redeemer, and type of Christ—and bear a son, Obed, and they would be placed in the lineage of our Lord Jesus!

► In the book of Esther, **God protected** this beautiful Jewish queen and her people from extermination by death, and Haman was hanged on the gallows he had prepared for her cousin Mordecai. Though God’s name is not mentioned, we know that Esther was given wisdom from Him to arrange for her husband, King Xerxes—Ahasueus in Hebrew—to discover Haman’s murderous plot.

Obedience brings protection, but disobedience brings punishment—in Jeremiah 42 the remnant of Israel ask him to ask ‘the LORD your God’ where they should go and what they should do. In these verses up through five they referred to ‘**the LORD your God**’ in their request of Jeremiah.

In Jeremiah 42:5-6 the Israelites vowed to do whatever the Lord commanded—still referring to **your** God in verse 5; but **our** God in verse 6—“*Then they said to Jeremiah, ‘May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us. 6Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the LORD our God.’*” They invited the LORD to **be a true and faithful witness against them**—which He could not be other than—if they failed to do what He commanded them through Jeremiah!

So Jeremiah heard from God in ten days’ time and he called together those who had requested him to report the Almighty’s answer. Jeremiah 42:9-11 says, “*This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition, says: 10 ‘If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I am grieved over the disaster I have inflicted on you. 11Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands.’*” God promised protection if His people stayed in Babylon, but warned that if they went to Egypt and settled, that the sword they feared would overtake them there and the famine they dreaded would follow them there and they would die! So, after they had promised to obey whatever the LORD God said—*favorable or unfavorable*—**they went to Egypt and died!** Back in Joseph’s day God allowed Egypt to be a place of refuge from famine for His people, but in this day **He consigned it as a place of famine!** What God will use at one time for His protection, He’ll use in another for destruction—**we must know His word.**

► Daniel 3 tells about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thrown into a fiery furnace for not bowing to the ‘image’ of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected, and **the protection of a fourth man**—“*like a son of the gods*”—present in the fire with them. The king had asked in 3:15—“*Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?*” While the Hebrew children came out of the fire unscathed, the men who’d thrown them in were burned to death by the flames.

► Daniel 6:11 “*Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.*” Verse 15—“*Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, ‘Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.’*” Daniel is **protected by God** in the den of lions in 6:23—“*The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den.... No wound was found on him, because he trusted in his God.*” And God took care of the enemies of Daniel in verse 24—“*At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.*” And the king decreed only Daniel’s God as ‘true’ God!

Lamentations 3:25 expounds: “*The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; and 3:37-40—Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? 38Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? 39Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? 40Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.”*

In the New Testament book of Matthew 10:28-31, Jesus tells us to ‘fear’ God who values us: “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. 30And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.*” Did we hear that? We are worth more than many sparrows! Remember the last line of the song “His eye is on the sparrow, and **I know He watches me**”? We can be assured of God’s protection!

♦Peter and John are in prison, and in Acts 4:7b Jerusalem’s rulers, elders and teachers of the law questioned them—“*By what power or what name did you do this?*” The ‘do this’ referred to their preaching, teaching, and healing of a crippled man, and, more specifically, they’d proclaimed Jesus’ resurrection from the dead which the Sadducees did not believe in. Later they were released, but rearrested in Acts 5:17-19—“*Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the part of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out.” **God’s protection can involve deliverance!***

♦But God may protect us ‘through’ something horrendous, as in the case of Stephen. To remind us what kind of a believer he was, Acts 6:8-10 says, “*Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. 9Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.*” Scripture goes on to say that these men stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law and that they seized Stephen and hired liars to witness against him. But verse 15 is beautiful: “*All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*” Be **assured**, God was present with him!

God’s protection was all over Stephen as he died a martyr’s death! He was stoned to death: stoning involved very large boulders thrown by very large men surrounding the condemned person. The stoners didn’t follow rules of conduct, like ‘only getting so close’ or ‘hurling one stone at a time’. No! Stoning was brazen and brutal and bloody, and the victim’s body had no time to rest up from one ‘stone-throw’ to the next. And there was a particular ‘witness’ at this event!

Scripture says that “*Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*” This youth would be converted and carry the message of Christ to the world by writing the majority of the New Testament. But what about Stephen? Acts 7:59-60 records: “*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’* ⁶⁰*Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.*” Oh my, so like the Lord Jesus Christ: such a violent death and Stephen can pray; and he prayed for the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit, and he prayed for forgiveness for the ‘stoners’ and then he fell asleep. Assuredly, God was present with Stephen in every sense of the *Word*; and God protected this believer right into His heavenly arms!

♦**God’s personal assurance of protection to that young convert Saul—now Paul—in Corinth.** Acts 18:9-11 “*One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: ‘Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.’ ¹¹So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.*” Paul was further protected in shipwreck, snakebite, prison, beatings, the continual ‘thorn’, and in Ephesians 6:10-11 he outlined our part in **staying in God’s protection**—“*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.*” Protection against evil strategy—Isaiah 8:10—“*Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; purpose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.*”

•**There’s no protection for the ‘lost’ in Revelation 6:15-17** “*Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶They called to the mountains and the rocks. ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. ¹⁷For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand.’”*

When we think about **needing protection** and being protected—having a ‘protector’—things we **most need protection from** must include: **unbelief, the ‘evil’ one, eternal punishment**, and being **out of God’s presence forever**. And we see in 1 John 5:18-19 protection from unbelief and from the evil one: “*We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin (sin of unbelief); the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*”

Jesus posed this question to us in Mark 8:36-37 “*What good is it for a man (woman) to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Luke 9:25 adds “*...or forfeit his very self?”* Psalm 91:1 “*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.*” And our Savior and Lord prayed to the sheltering Father for us in John 17:24 “*Father, **I want those you have given me to be with me where I am**, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*”