

# Where is Your “Place of Safety”?

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into *her place*, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent” (Revelation 12:14).

This scripture obviously refers to *God’s church*. The “woman” is a *symbol* for the converted, called-out ones who comprise the spiritual *Body of Christ*. But what of the other symbols in this verse? While the “great eagle” obviously means a divine intervention from *God*, do the “wings” of this eagle represent *airplanes*? Is the church actually to take “flight” aboard *airplanes*? WHERE is this “wilderness,” called “her PLACE”? *During what time* is the church nourished and protected “from the face of the serpent” (Satan)? Tens of thousands believe there is a *place of safety*, probably in the *Jordanian desert*, awaiting God’s church. Thousands *fervently hope* they can QUALIFY to *flee* to this “place” to escape the coming *Great Tribulation*. Is this a *valid* hope? WILL the church go to such a place? Are YOU headed toward a “place of safety”?

IT IS *instinctive* for us human beings to *avoid harm*.

Sensing something is extremely hot, we instantly jerk our hand away from the heat source. Seeing a wildly careening car approaching, we scramble frantically out of the way. If someone shouts “Fore!” on the golf course, we instinctively turn away from the sound, duck our heads and probably cover the top of our heads with our hands.

No one wants to suffer pain, injury or death! Yet the “Great Tribulation” spoken of in the Bible (Matthew 24, Luke 21) promises terrible *persecution*, pain, suffering and DEATH by martyrdom for *Christians*!

*Who are these Christians?*

WHY are they *singled out to suffer* in the *Great Tribulation*? Jesus said, “But there shall not an hair of your head perish”! (Luke 21:18). WHO are those who will escape unscathed?

Jesus said *some* of those in God’s true church would be *put to death* but *others* would be spared! Why? What’s the difference?

“And ye shall be betrayed both by *parents*, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. . .” (Luke 21:6-18).

Jesus was describing the time of the GREAT TRIBULATION, just prior to the DAY OF THE LORD, and the end of this present age.

He was describing the events to take place just prior to His return to this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

*Some* of His true disciples were to be “delivered up.”

Notice. “But before all these [wars, earthquakes, famines and pestilences], they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues [churches], and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake.

“And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist” (Luke 21:10-15).

Here is a picture of true *Christians*, those who are a part of the Body of Christ in the final *generation* of this world’s civilizations, doing the *work* of God. That *work* they are accomplishing becomes such a *stench* in the nostrils of carnal-minded, God-defying human governments and religious organizations that Jesus prophesied His remnant church would be *terribly persecuted*—many of them MARTYRED for the sake of *His name*, and *His work*!

Notice the time is coming when they will be “*brought*” before kings and rulers!

*Why?* “. . . For my name’s *sake*”! For the simple reason that they unfailingly preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God IN JESUS’ NAME! NEVER Will the true servants of Jesus Christ fail to give honor, glory and credit to HIS NAME!

NEVER Will they “package” the gospel, watering it down, *secularizing* it, soft-pedaling the dynamic message of God in order to make it more palatable to pagan, despotic, carnal-minded kings, presidents, prime ministers, emperors and heads of state!

And who *are these* who will be “delivered up”?

Are they *inferior*? Have they become lukewarm? Are they the “Laodicean church,” whom Christ is going to “spew out of His mouth”? (Revelation 3:14-16).

Notice Mark’s account. “And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

“But when they shall lead you, and *deliver you up* [this means *arrested*, being ‘brought’ before officialdom], take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: For it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit” (Mark 13:10, 11).

*Obviously* these are deeply converted *Christians!* Filled with the Holy Spirit, they can confidently expect that Almighty God will put powerful, moving *witness* in their mouths by which they will *convict* their tormentors. As such, they will join the ranks of those righteous men and women cataloged in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, “of whom the world was not worthy.” They will join ranks with Stephen, who gave powerful witness as he was being murdered; with Peter, who was probably crucified upside down; with the apostle Paul, who died a martyr; with Jesus Christ of Nazareth *Himself!*

Are *these*, singled out by Almighty God and by the HEAD of His true church, Jesus Christ, “inferior,” lukewarm Christians?

Were those mentioned in Hebrews 11 inferior? Was Stephen? Was Paul? Was Jesus Christ?

WHO is better able to give a powerful witness and testimony before the highest courts, before religious conclaves, before officialdom at every level, including heads of state?

Those who are lukewarm? Those who have not been deeply *studying* their Bibles, who are not truly converted, who have not been *overcoming* by the power of God’s Spirit, who are not close to God in *prayer*?

Strangely, there are many who seem to believe that the prophecies concerning martyrs apply to “the Laodicean church.”

This supposition is as follows:

It is *assumed* each one of the seven churches which existed contemporaneously in Asia Minor in the first and second centuries portrays a special “era,” or “phase,” from the first century to the end of this modern age. Without identifying each, and its supposed “age” in history, it becomes instantly obvious, on the face of this theory, that the Ephesian “era” was that of the apostles, and that the “Laodicean era” is the *last*.

But *wait!*

Those who believe the “Laodicean church” is comprised of those “lukewarm” members of God’s true church also believe that the “Laodicean church” is more like an “attitude” in the hearts and minds of perhaps 50 *percent* of those WITHIN another *church era*.

That “era,” they say, is “Philadelphia.” This church era is called “the church of brotherly love.” That this connotation is completely unscriptural is lost on many. While it is true that the *Greek word philadelphia* means “brotherly love,” there is nothing which leads us to apply the *meaning of the Greek names of all* of the churches to each “era” (so-called) which they identify. Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamos and Laodicea are merely *names*.

According to this belief, at some moment in time (expected continually, reinforced by excited, speculative sermons repeatedly), the “Philadelphia era” will be whisked away to a “PLACE OF SAFETY”!

Perhaps they will be taken up by the grounded fleet of DC-10s—Almighty God supplying “a 10-inch angel” for each so-called defective “10-inch bolt”! You may laugh at this, but this supposition was PREACHED before nodding, agreeing, believing people!

Of course, the DC-10s are no longer grounded, but perhaps some inventive preachers have found other methods and means to keep the faithful looking confidently over the horizon at that moment of their “*great escape!*”

As the supposition goes, those who are “lukewarm” (of the “Laodicean attitude”) will be SHOCKED when this pseudo-rapture occurs, and their own beloved friends, perhaps family members, even husband or wife, are suddenly GONE, but they are “*left behind*” to suffer the pangs and horrors of the GREAT Tribulation!

Is this scenario true?

For, if it is Not, then literally *tens of thousands* of the members of God's church are being completely DECEIVED; are banking on a FALSE HOPE, and are doomed to great disappointment, and perhaps some will *stumble*, spiritually, and simply *give up* when they discover they have believed in a completely FALSE doctrine!

## Church Eras—True or False?

What about the concept of "church eras"? Did God foreordain that His church would pass through specific, different "eras," or "phases," down through history each "era," or "phase," of His church having distinctive characteristics, strengths and/or weaknesses which would *clearly identify* that particular era?

Certainly there can be no argument against the obvious fact that the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are symbolic of the *entire Church of God*, both during that apostolic age, and down through all history!

Why?

Simply because *Christ* is represented as standing in the midst of but SEVEN golden candlesticks. *Seven* is the number of completion or perfection. Christ is represented as a *whole person*, standing in the midst of a complete, or *perfect*, number of churches.

Obviously the big churches at Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, Colossae and others are not mentioned.

*However*, the Bible does single out seven *contemporaneous* churches which existed along the old Roman mail route in Asia Minor, which began at Ephesus, and ended at Laodicea.

Repeatedly the Scripture warns that *all members* of God's church are to hear what the Spirit says to *all the churches!*

*None* of the supposed "eras" is told to *ignore* what the Spirit said to all the other "eras" (so called), paying attention only to the message directed toward *themselves*.

Certainly it is obvious that this section of the book of Revelation was indicative of the general trials, persecutions, tribulations and difficulties affecting the *whole church* at that time!

Further, it is very likely indicative of the general type of trials, troubles and persecutions which would afflict the whole church *throughout history*, and which *does* afflict the church NOW!

But are we to understand that each of these seven contemporaneous churches represented a completely separate, different “era” or “phase” through which God’s true church would pass from the time of the apostles until the final remnant spoken of in Revelation 12?

There are some grave *difficulties* with this view.

For perhaps 40 years, my father, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, taught the church that the Church of God (Seventh Day), through whom he had learned a great deal of *truth*, and which church he had acknowledged was “*that one body*,” and which church *ordained* my father, had become the “Sardis church.”

He said, dozens if not hundreds of times, that they had become spiritually “DEAD.”

For literally *decades* the “Radio Church of God,” and, later, the “Worldwide Church of God,” has taught its members they represent the “Philadelphia era” of the church, and that “Sardis” was the Church of God (Seventh Day).

For *many years* I myself believed this concept, taught it, preached it very powerfully, wrote about it—and I can find *numerous* sermon notes still in my possession in which I preached powerful sermons resupporting this doctrine, warning the brethren in the church against the final emergence of “the Laodicean church.”

While some *few* have believed the Laodicean church was to become a completely “different organization,” the *bulk* of the ministry, including my father himself, believed it would *emerge* FROM the Worldwide Church of God—that, when the Worldwide Church of God (identified as “the Philadelphia era”) was taken *to a place of safety*, those who would be LEFT BEHIND would comprise the “Laodicean church.”

During many, many years it was supposed that those who are taken to a “place of safety” are those who are WORTHY (Luke 21:36), while those who are *left behind* are obviously UNWORTHY, and must suffer the pangs of torment, torture and martyrdom in order to cleanse and *purify* their minds and hearts through physical *torture*.

THEY, those “left behind” when the “Philadelphian era” FLEES, would be that part of the church which would be “lukewarm,” almost sound asleep, like the sleepy virgins who beg those who were alert, awake and watching to borrow some of their oil (Matthew 25:1-13), and who would *richly deserve* the terrible torments coming upon them!

IS THIS SCENARIO TRUE?

First, take a look at what this doctrine presupposes.

It *assumes* that at least THREE of the so-called “eras” are *extant* NOW!

My father freely admitted that the members of the Church of God (Seventh Day) were members of *God’s true church*. After all, many of those early pioneers are *still alive today*, including some who were *in the ministry* with my father, and including at least one gentleman with whom I have spoken who shared campaigns with my father, and whose preaching I remember from my boyhood.

After all, the Bible DOES plainly say that “Sardis” is a part of GOD’S TRUE CHURCH! The Bible promises that “thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: For they are *worthy* ... and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my father, and before the angels” (Revelation 3:4,5).

There are only *seven* churches.

Therefore, by written, oral and tacit admission, the “era” theory presupposes that THREE out of the SEVEN are EXTANT NOW!

But why?

If the remainder of the theory presupposes that each *era supersedes* the other, and emerges and becomes extant only after the *passing* of the other (even if it admitted there is a transitional period), WHY should more than *one third* of the

number be presupposed to remain *extant contemporaneously, during the last days?*

For, if Sardis is yet alive, and there be those who will “walk with Christ in white”; if “Philadelphia” comprises another, separate organization; if “Laodicea” either comprises lukewarm members WITHIN that organization, or another organization, you have THREE of the SEVEN existing side by side, contemporaneously! Then why not FOUR or six, or all *seven?*

## **What About “PREDESTINATION”?**

Dire warnings of having their “candlestick removed out of its place” were made against the Ephesus church.

What choice did those people have?

Do you understand?

In other words, if you had the misfortune to be born, grow up and come into the truth of God, becoming *converted* and a member of God’s church at some given “era”; if that “era” fulfilled a part of the prophecies of Revelation 2 and 3, and the church leaders of that “era” caused it to have the peculiar character or nature as revealed in Revelation 2 and 3, *what chance did you have?* Did FATE determine what would happen to you?

Or would you reason there could have been *exceptions?*

IF you reason there could be “exceptions” to the rule; if you reason that just because the “leaders” became corrupt, allowed the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, or “that woman Jezebel,” to teach the members of the church to eat unclean meats and commit fornication, but that there were *exceptions*, meaning some scattered individuals *within the church* who did not go along with these false teachings; then *what are you saying?*

You are saying what is probably the *obvious truth* concerning ALL SEVEN of the “eras” or so-called “phases” of God’s church!

Before summarizing this obvious conclusion, ponder that question of “predestination.”



Was it mere blind FATE that anyone converted and becoming a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day), whether third or fourth generation *family member*, or new convert, just *automatically* was consigned to the “Sardis era,” and therefore was (and is) looked upon by Almighty God as spiritually “DEAD”?

If, on the other hand, you had the fortune to be born into a family that was members of the Worldwide Church of God—you grew up, came to Ambassador College and became a dutiful church member—was it your “good fortune” to end up as a member of the “Philadelphian era”?

Or, if you are a member of that church but are not really studying, praying, overcoming—if you are not *watching* world events, and not truly *close to* God—are you one of the “Laodiceans” who will be *left behind* when the day of the “great escape” comes?

Confusing, isn't it?

The conclusion which you should logically have come to earlier? The conclusion is that there were (and are), no doubt, *exceptions* in EVERY church!

Consider the average local congregation for a moment.

Say you are dealing with a congregation of around 200 people in a Midwestern city.

At any given time of the year, there will be a small handful of people who have *just barely* been baptized, who are *brand new* in the truth!

If you remember how it was when you came out of this world, began to *hunger and thirst* for the truth of God, began hungrily *devouring* the Bible, and finally were baptized, had hands laid on you for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit, and went to your *very first feasts*, you remember what it means to be “in your *first love*”!

The “character” of the “Ephesian era” seems to be that of a church which is encouraged to regain its lost “first love”!

Perhaps *some few* in your congregation of 200 are powerfully attracted by some of the satanic entertainments—X-rated motion pictures, pornography and other

assorted forms of licentiousness.

Perhaps you could say *they* are like those in “Thyatira” and have similar problems.

You might find a number of people in the congregation, such as a few elderly widow ladies, who truly seem to have the spirit of “brotherly love.” Maybe they exemplify the attitude of 1 Corinthians 13.

Surely they would be thought of as exemplifying the “Philadelphian attitude.”

But would there be those who could be called “spiritually dead”? Tired, dejected, “burnt-out” old Christians who are just “waiting it out” to the end?

Would there be a number who would be adjudged by the pastor to be “lukewarm” in their faith?

Of course!

ANY average, local congregation would be made up of hundreds of DIFFERING personalities, characters and levels of spirituality.

In other words, *each local church* might well exemplify EVERY ONE of the various difficulties, trials and tribulations, strong points or character of the “seven churches” of Revelation 2 and 3!

And THAT, *most likely*, is the *true answer* to the whole question of “eras.”

Remember, God’s Word says “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the spirit saith unto the churches”! (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). All members of the church are to heed the warning to all the seven churches! None is to listen exclusively to a warning to his “era”!

## **“The Two Wings of an Eagle”**

Much has been made of the promise that “to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place. . .” (Revelation 12:14).

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might *fly* into the wilderness, into *her place*, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and

half a time, from the face of the serpent" (Revelation 12:14).

There is no doubt about it. Almighty God *plainly* says, in His Word, that He will *protect, and preserve alive*, a "remnant" of His true church!

That the "woman" is God's church is without doubt. That the symbol "wings of a great eagle" connotes God's *protection* is without doubt. However, we have learned that "the wilderness" could have included (as it did in the Middle Ages) *all of Europe*, including the deep, plunging valleys of the Swiss Alps, the French Alpine region, the provinces of Northern Italy, and the rugged terrain of Spain.

Also, we know that the "time, times and half a time" corresponds to the Great Tribulation and the *Day of the Lord!*

The ministry of the two witnesses *also* takes place during 3 1/2 years! Further, Israel is said to be suffering the pangs of the Great Tribulation for approximately the same period of time.

This is the identical time span during which "Jerusalem will be trodden down of the gentiles."

Apparently, the "CREAT TRIBULATION" (which is *Satan's wrath*) will be falling upon the Israelitish nations for approximately 2 1/2 years. This period of terrible *national punishment* will be followed immediately by the heavenly signs (Revelation 6) and the *repentance* of the 144,000 and the vast, countless *multitude* from all nations (Revelation 7). Then follows the great and terrible DAY OF THE LORD (probably one year in duration)! Apparently, the entire period of tribulation, heavenly signs and the Day of the Lord transpires over 3 1/2 years, or 42 months!

During this time, all organized preaching of the gospel will cease, and a "famine of the Word" will prevail over the whole earth. Only *two witnesses* will be actively preaching the gospel as a witness and a warning before the beast and the false prophet and high officials of those governments which have been given their power into the 10-nation combine that is called "the BEAST" in Bible prophecy.

# The Wrath of SATAN

John saw, in a vision, the *final* attempt of Satan the devil to overthrow the very throne of God!

“And there was *war in heaven*: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

“And the great dragon was *cast out*, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth *the whole world*: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9).

That this occurrence takes place just *prior* to “the Great Tribulation” is obvious from the language of verse 12, and the fact that the dragon makes war with “the remnant of her [the woman, meaning the church] seed.”

Further, it is *at this time* God offers *salvation* to countless humans who have previously heard His warning message:

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, *now* is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accuse them before our God day and night.

“And they overcame him *by the blood of the Lamb*, and by the *word of their testimony*; and they LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH”! (Revelation 12:10, 11).

Reread carefully those verses!

At the beginning of the Great Tribulation it is Not (as some have preached and written) TOO LATE for *salvation*!

Remember, the entire host of the 144,000, plus the vast, innumerable multitude (Revelation 7), are *converted as a direct result* of the calamitous events of the tribulation!

Notice the characterization of God’s true servants during this terrible persecution from Satan. How do they overcome the devil? “They overcame him *by the blood of the Lamb*”!

Further, they were involved in more than just an “organized” work, for each one of them, at some time or another, will be called upon to give his own PERSONAL testimony! They also overcome Satan “by the word of *their testimony*. . .”

What kind of people will they be?

Will they be *terribly concerned* about sustaining, extending, preserving and protecting—at practically *any cost*—this human, physical life?

No! “. . . And they loved not their lives *unto the death*”! (Revelation 12:11).

*Remember!* Those righteous men and women who were singled out to make a final *witness* before the satanic forces of this evil world, and who were MURDERED because of their righteous stand for God and His *laws*, are not the “*weak*” of God’s church!

For *years*, many ministers have taught FALSELY that Almighty God will use *physical punishment*, the GREAT TRIBULATION, *martyrdom* and *torture* before death as the final means of *expiating guilt*; the final manner in which God will *cleanse unrighteousness*, and bring about brokenhearted REPENTANCE in recalcitrant, unyielding or “Laodicean” (lukewarm) people!

Ask yourself the following question: “*Is that why* Stephen died?”

What about all the others?

Turn to and read the famous “faith” chapter, Hebrews 11!

Notice! After mentioning a *host* of the righteous patriarchs, prophets and some of the judges of Israel, including Gideon and Samuel, God’s Word *summarizes* this catalog of His holy *martyrs* by saying, “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens.

“Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds

and imprisonment:

“They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

“(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,

“And these all, having obtained a good report *through faith*, received not the promise:

“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:33-40).

Here God is dealing with *two different categories* of people!

Notice that some subdued kingdoms, obtained promises, escaped the lions’ den (as did Daniel), waxed valiant in fight, or fought alien armies. Some women received their dead raised to life again! Each of these is a “success” story!

But OTHERS were “tortured,” and others “had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings—were thrown in prison, stoned, sawn asunder,” etc.

Was it because of a *difference in their character*?

No! It was because of a difference in their CALLING!

Notice what God says!

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

“Looking unto *Jesus* the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross [Greek: stauros, a ‘stake’ or ‘tree’], despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

“For *consider Him* that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

“Ye have not yet resisted *unto blood*, striving against sin”! (Hebrews 12:1-4).

WHERE are the members of God’s true church to *look*?

Are they to get their minds and hearts on some means or method of ESCAPE?

Are they to focus upon a particular *geographical location*? Should they be thinking about ways and means of traveling to a far distant place, across seemingly boundless seas and oceans, harsh deserts, forbidding mountain ranges, and wondering what they will wear, what articles they can take with them, what foodstuffs they should provide?

Should God’s people have their minds on valid *passports*, saving seeds and cans of honey?

Should a rational, *sane*, humble minister of Jesus Christ be encouraging people to think about a physical, geographical *location* on this earth; telling them, laughingly, that, since hundreds died in a fiery crash of a DC-10, and the fleet of DC-10s was subsequently grounded, God will very likely provide that grounded fleet of DC-10s to take them to faraway PETRA? Is God *amused* by references to the failed “10-inch bolt” being replaced by a “10-inch *angel*”?

No, the Eternal God in heaven above is not amused by irresponsible blatherings or sick humor.

WHERE should we look?

Your Bible says, “Unto *Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith”! And who WAS this Jesus Christ?

He was the most important *martyr* of ALL TIME ! WHY did He die? Was there something inferior about Him? Did He “need” to suffer death in order to expunge some slight imperfection?

*A blasphemous suggestion!*

## **Petra**

Among precipitous rock cliffs, in a basin among the mountains which form the eastern flank of the Wadi-elAraba (the great rift valley running from the Dead Sea

to the Gulf of Akaba), is one of the most important tourist attractions of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Petra.

Following the loss of the tourist attractions of the Old City of Jerusalem, including Hebron, Bethlehem and Jericho, Petra represents one of the remaining few reasons why tourists from Western countries visit the desert kingdom of Jordan.

Petra has a somewhat obscure, though interesting, history.

It is mentioned by the writers Strabo and Pliny as the capital of the Nabataeans, during whose occupancy a major trading center flourished in Petra.

Archaeologists and historians are divided as to whether Petra is actually mentioned in the Old Testament. The Hebrew equivalent is "Seir," or "Sela." This Hebrew word is used in Judges 1:36, Isaiah 16:1, 42: 11 and Obadiah 3. The difficulty is obvious, for, when a specific geographical location is designated by such a term, confusion could prevail quite easily. For example, the town of "Red Bluff," Calif., is named for a nearby reddish bluff. If a historian were to write of someone hiding at "Red Bluff," he may designate a site in the Black Hills or the Rockies with similar features, and some might later *assume* he meant "Red Bluff," Calif.

There is some speculation that Amaziah, king of Judah, captured the city and renamed it. It is said that he "slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took *Selah* by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day" (2 Kings 14:7).

However, no further mention of the name "Joktheel" is found in the Bible, and authorities assume the name passed from usage with Hebrew occupation of the region. The first notice in history of Petra under the Greek name is connected with the expedition of Antigonos, one of the successors of Alexander, who sent two expeditions against the Nabataeans in Petra (Diod. Sic. XIX, 94-99).

Strabo wrote: "The metropolis of the Nabataeans is Petra, so called; for it lies in a place in other respects plain and level, but shut in by rocks round about, but within having copious fountains for the supply of water and the irrigation of gardens. Beyond the enclosure the region is mostly a desert, especially towards Judea" (Geog. XVI, page 906).



Pliny, the ancient Roman historian, described Petra as situated in a valley of less than two [Roman] miles in width, surrounded by inaccessible mountains, with a stream flowing through it. In the fourth century A.D., Petra is mentioned several times by one of the so-called "church fathers," Eusebius, and again by Jerome. The last known mention of Petra in ancient history was approximately 536 A.D., when it appeared one of the bishops present at the Council of Jerusalem (Theodorus) included Petra as a part of his metropolitan area.

## **Petra: Ancient Tradition**

The river running through the area is called "Wadi-Musa," which means "River of Moses" in Arabic. Josephus, Eusebius and Jerome all state that the "Mount Hor" where Aaron died was in the immediate vicinity of *Petra*.

Tradition still says that a mountain which rears its lonely head above the veil of "Wadi-Musa" is Mount Hor. Kitto's *Bible Encyclopedia* says: "The ruined city lies in a narrow valley surrounded by lofty, and for the most part, perfectly precipitous mountains. These natural barriers seem to have constituted the real limits of the city; and they give an extent of more than a mile in length, nearly from north to south, by a variable breadth of about half a mile. Several spurs from the surrounding mountains encroach upon this area; but, with inconsiderable exceptions, the whole is fit for building on. The sides of the valley are walled up by perpendicular rocks, from four hundred to six or seven hundred feet high. The northern and southern barriers are neither so lofty nor so steep, and they both admit of the passage of camels."

What has puzzled archaeologists for years is the plainness of the caves of Petra (many of which are completely filled with rubble and unexcavated) as contrasted with their magnificently carved facades.

This has led archaeologists and historians to conclude that there were at least three separate periods of occupancy. While some of the ancient columns cut into the solid rock of the cliffs are Ionian, and therefore quite old, others are of much later design (Corinthian), and the startlingly beautiful facade of one of the most important temples is obviously Roman.

Some evidence, both in profane records and in the Old Testament, may suggest that the "Kadesh" occupied for long periods of time by the Israelites during their

wanderings may have been Petra.

It is at least likely that “Kadesh” (from which the spies were sent into the promised land) is also the “Kadesh-barnea” mentioned in the Bible.

First mention of Kadesh occurs in the story of the capture of Sodom by the eastern kings (Genesis 14).

In Numbers 12:16, we read that “the people removed from Hazereth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.”

It was from this place the spies were sent out.

“.. . They returned from searching the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, *to Kadesh*” (Numbers 13:25, 26).

Obviously, this means that “Kadesh” was only about one day’s journey from the site of “Hazereth,” which, in turn, was only about four days’ march from Sinai. A major difficulty with connecting the two is that a close examination of Deuteronomy 1:19-21 compared with Numbers 33:18-36 proves that between these two sites there were a great many intervening stopping places. However, in Numbers the 12th chapter all of these are omitted, as Moses’ intent was, apparently, to group together the main events.

Wherever it was, we know that Kadesh was on the southern border of Canaan. Looking at the journeys of the Israelites in Numbers 33, it is obvious that the Israelites went from Ezion-Geber toward Canaan, and came to *Kadesh* (verse 36). Comparing with chapter 20 verse 16, we know that this “Kadesh” was on *the borders of Edom*, not far from Mount Hor.

By no means is this identity proved, but it is at least interesting that these important historical events took place *in the vicinity*.

For example, Moses said in his message to the Edomites: “Behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the *uttermost of thy border*”! Numbers 20:16).

Kitto points out that there was a very prominent fountain at Kadesh. Fountains, springs, artesian wells or oases were naturally very prominent landmarks in the region, for they were quite rare. Kitto says that all the local traditions which now

linger around Petra are “far too obscure to have any influence on a question of topography.

“One fact alone is final against [emphasis mine] the identification of Petra and Kadesh. The former is ten miles within the border of Edom, and in the very heart of Mount Seir; whereas Kadesh was on the border of the territory of Judah, and became apparently one of the cities of that tribe (Joshua 15:3, 23).” (Kitto’s *Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 2, page 705).

The Encyclopedia Britannica (11th edition) says: “... We have no means of telling exactly when the history of Petra began; the evidence seems to show that the city has a relatively late history though a sanctuary may have existed there from very ancient times ... The reference in Judges 1:36; Isaiah 16:1, 42: 11; Obadiah 3, is far from clear” (Vol. 21, page 309).

## **The Mystery and the Lore**

Petra has been an attractively curious, mysterious and alluring “place of safety” to various religious groups over the centuries.

The study of lost civilizations; the fables of lost “Atlantis,” abandoned desert kingdoms; supposed huge cities buried under the sands of the Sahara, or in the Gobi Desert of interior China—these have long fascinated the adventurers, discoverers, historians, or merely the mildly curious.

Who has not heard of fabled “El Dorado” in the Amazonian jungles, where it is said the buildings and streets are of solid gold?

For centuries, visiting Arabs passed on the fable that the huge urn, carved out of solid stone, adorning the top of one of the principal temples in Petra contained treasures of gold and jewels. Unfortunately, since it was completely inaccessible, they could only chip away at it with their ancient flintlock muzzle-loading guns and, consequently, the urn is badly scarred.

Is anything more fascinating than “ghost towns,” or *whole cities* left desolate, without a single occupant?

The sheer inaccessibility of Petra; the dozens of caves hewn out of solid rock, the narrow, winding defile called “the siq,” which can, in some places, virtually be

touched on both sides by outflung arms, has led to easy speculation that Petra was a formidable fortress in the midst of an uninhabited desert which could be defended by but a handful of men.

Surely it would take no great stretch of the imagination to quote the scripture of Revelation 12:16: "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth," and apply it to *Petra*.

The beast power would send his armies after them, closing the waters over the pursuing armies of Pharaoh, God would allow the last member of God's church to escape through the "siq," and then, just as a *whole army* was pursuing along behind, would perhaps allow the earth to *collapse*, thus *burying* the army under billions of tons of solid rock.

But is this scenario true?

## **Common Sense Versus Irresponsible Fantasy**

I have often related how, in 1966, standing at the top of the Roman amphitheater in Petra, I was talking into my microphone, describing the place, in the hopes of using excerpts from my recordings in radio programs when I returned to Pasadena. During my ad-libbed description of the region, I was interrupted by the loud *roar* of two big U.S.-made Jordanian army *helicopters* which came clattering over a nearby ridge, flew down into the valley and hovered around the area for some time.

Probably they were bringing dignitaries, special guests of King Hussein or his brother, to see the site from the air.

It was *then*, in 1966, as I *experienced* Petra, that I began far more *serious* thought and research into the subject as to *whether* Petra was going to be the fabled place of safety" that I had previously *assumed*.

First, let's come to understand *what is necessary* for Almighty God to *protect His people* from modern armies if those armies seek to *destroy* helpless, unarmed civilians; the elderly, men and women, and children alike.

Today we live in the age of nuclear weapons. Pinpoint accuracy can deliver

nuclear weapons to within a hundred yards or so of a target. Intercontinental ballistic missiles, intermediate-range ballistic missiles, nuclear bombs dropped by aircraft, parachute bombs, nuclear warheads in artillery shells, rocket-launched nuclear warheads from mobile, truck-mounted launchers; these and a *host* of other methods of delivering huge, multimegaton thermonuclear explosions are in the arsenals of modern armies.

Helicopter gunships, even if using the more “conventional” weapons, such as cannon, machine guns and napalm, could completely obliterate the place in a matter of moments.

Chemical warfare, *nerve gas* or biological warfare could completely exterminate ALL LIFE in this narrow, confined valley in a matter of *moments!*

“Ah,” you say, “but the people who would be there would be *supernaturally protected of God!*”

IF any of God’s true church, OR, more likely, scattered remnants of the *Jewish race* from Jerusalem are hiding in Petra, it WILL INDEED take God’s miraculous, supernatural *protection to preserve their lives!*

And THAT’S THE WHOLE POINT!

Do you see? No matter WHERE a human being may be located on the surface of this earth, if a satanically inspired, determined enemy seeks to *destroy* that individual or that group of individuals, it will *naturally* require the *supernatural* protection of God to *save him!*

The point which should finally occur to *anyone* is that, while *Petra*, or any other wilderness place featuring sheer rock walls and *caves is completely obsolete* as a “place of safety” in the face of modern weapons and methods of warfare, *God’s protection* will never be *obsolete!*

## **“The Daughters of Moab at the Fords of Arnon”**

For many years, many in God’s church have *assumed* Isaiah 16:1-5 is a *prophecy of God’s church*, being protected in PETRA.

First, *read* the entire passage as it appears in the King James version:

“Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughters of Zion.

“For it shall be, that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.

“Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; betray not him that wandereth.

“Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

“And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.”

From the very first verse, there are difficulties in translation. For example, the word “lamb” is a *totally different* word from that used to connote “lamb” elsewhere in the Old Testament!

This particular word is used only in Isaiah 16:1, and is the Hebrew word “kar,” which is used in the sense of “*plumpness*.” It is used for a “battering ram,” also “a meadow” (as for *sheep*); also a *pad* or camel’s saddle (*as puffed out*)—captain, furniture, lamb, (large) pasture, ram.

The authorities are agreed that the translation should read, “Send ye the ‘tribute lamb,’” or send “the tribute of lambs.”

This is obviously a reference to the tribute of lambs which the Moabites had previously paid to *Israel* (2 Kings 3:4, 5).

Remember, you must understand biblical prophecy in its context, and in the light of all other cogent scriptures.

Isaiah 15 and 16 are prophecies *against Moab!* Read the entire 15th chapter, and then study the entire 16th chapter *in context*.

This is a prophecy about the *Moabites*—THEY are the “wandering bird cast out of the nest,” and *they* are the ones who are “God’s outcasts,” Not members of God’s

true church!

For example, verse 4 should read: “Let *mine outcasts* [the daughters of MOAB] dwell with thee—as for Moab, be thou a covert to him from the face of the spoiler, for the extortioner is at an end...”

The *Critical and Experimental Commentary* says: “Let the outcasts of Moab *dwell with thee.*”

In the prophecy of Daniel 11:40 to the end of that chapter, we see that “Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon” escape out of the hands of “the king of the north” (the beast power) when the land of Palestine is *occupied*.

Later these nations are to be *punished of God* from the huge armies which will come into the land of Palestine out of the *north and the east!*

This prophecy found partial fulfillment when the armies of Shalmanezzer, incensed because the king of Moab had thrown in his lot with the king of Israel, sent armies in a passing campaign to obliterate some of the cities of *Moab*.

That there may be a veiled reference to “Petra” is possible. That there is reference to a *cave* is sure. Also, that there is reference to the coming *Kingdom of God* (verse 5) is *also* sure.

What is *not* SURE is that this is a prophecy concerning *God’s true church!* The following points are certain from a careful study of this passage:

1. “The lamb” does not refer to *Christ*, but to “tribute lambs” sent by the king of Moab to the king of Israel in supplication.
2. The wandering bird cast out of the nest is not “God’s people” but “the *daughters of Moab!*”
3. They are not at the “Wadi-Musa” in Petra but “at the fords of Arnon,” a river forming the southern borders of the land of Moab.
4. “Mine outcasts” are not the fleeing remnant of God’s true church, but fleeing *Moabites*.
5. The leaders of *Israel* are commanded to “be thou a covert to *them*[the daughters of Moab].”
6. They were to protect them from “the face of the spoiler” who was *Shalmanezzer* in ancient history.

## Your “Hiding Place”

Jesus Christ is continually referred to as the Rock of our salvation! (Deuteronomy 32).

David said, “... The Eternal is upright: He is *myrock*...”(Psalms 92:15).

He called God his “. . . defence; and my God is the *rock of my refuge*” (Psalms 94:22).

He spoke of God as “...as the rock of our salvation” (Psalms 95:1).

Jesus Christ is called “that ROCK” who followed the Israelites in the *wilderness* (1 Corinthians 10:4), thus combining two biblical types of God’s *protection*.

For remember that God said that He bore up the Israelites “on eagle’s wings” when He removed them from the land of Egypt, and watched over them during the 40 years’ wandering; also, He continually showed them He was their “ROCK” of *refuge*!

In each case these are biblical *types* which portray the *protection*, and, more important, the *salvation* of God!

WHERE is your “hiding place”?

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are *above* [NOT some desert cave on *this earth*], where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on *things above* [God’s soon-coming KINGDOM, and *eternal life*], not on things on the earth [including desert ‘places of safety’].

“For ye are dead, and your life is HID WITH CHRIST in God”! (Colossians 3:1-3).

Note that well!

If you are a member of God’s true church; if you have received the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:13), then your life is ALREADY HIDDEN! Does God say you are to FEAR persecution, even imprisonment, *torture* or death? Notice! “And *fear* not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul [Greek: *psuche*, meaning the life], but rather FEAR HIM who is able to *destroy* both soul [*psuche*] and body [*soma*, meaning our physical, temporary



bodies] in *Gehenna*“!

Man may be able to kill us, *physically*! Yet God says, “The spirit itself beareth witness with *our spirit*, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs WITH CHRIST: If so be that we *suffer with Him*, that we may be also glorified together”! (Romans 8:16, 17).

There is a “SPIRIT IN MAN”! When Almighty God imparts to us His Holy Spirit, His Holy Spirit *begets* that spiritual essence” which lifts our minds above the mere “brain” of human animals, and gives us our *humanity*, our personality, and our *character*.

Almighty God begets us as His CHILDREN!

We become co-HEIRS with Jesus Christ! *Notice!* It tells us, “If so be that we *suffer with Him*, that we may also be glorified together”! These tremendous promises show us that we are not to *fear* what MAN is able to do unto us. God does not promise that every Christian will *escape all suffering!*

Refer back to Matthew 10:28, and the succeeding verses. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

“*Fear ye not* therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”!

Does Jesus Christ say we are to spend a great deal of our conscious thought deeply concerned over how to “FLEE” to a physical, geographical location of PROTECTION?

*No!* “He that *findeth his life* shall LOSE IT: AND HE THAT LOSETH HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE SHALL FIND it”! (Matthew 10:39).

Your Bible says, “And the dragon was wroth with the woman [the church!] and went to make war with the *remnant of her seed* [the last generation of the true Church of God!] which *keep the commandments of God*, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”! (Revelation 12:17).

Are these “lukewarm” Christians? Christians who ARE KEEPING THE

COMMANDMENTS? Christians who HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST?

Notice! “I beheld, and the same horn *made war* with the SAINTS, AND PREVAILED AGAINST THEM; until *the Ancient of Days came*, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom”! (Daniel 7:21, 22).

Here, just as in the book of Revelation, it shows, NOT that all of the members of God’s true church are safely tucked away in some cave in the wilderness, but that Satan the devil actually “prevailed against them”! For how long “Until the Ancient of days CAME”!

In other words, just as Jesus warned (Matthew 10), there *will be* some members of the Church of God who will be specially called and chosen to give a *powerful witness* and TESTIMONY to the satanic forces of evil in this world, and who will *pay* for their loyalty and faithfulness to Almighty God and Jesus Christ their Savior *with their lives!*

Notice! “But beware of men: For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues [churches!]; and ye shall be BROUGHT [not ‘invited’ or received in a gracious manner, but DRAGGED, ‘*brought,*’ as PRISONERS] before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony *against them* and the gentiles.

“But when they DELIVER YOU up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: For it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to *death*, and the father the child: And the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

“And ye shall be hated of all men for *my name’s sake* [how can this BE, if some in the church are *ashamed* of the name of Christ?], but he that endureth *to the end* [even if it means the end *of his life*] shall be saved”!

These are powerful words.

They clearly foretell that SOME in God’s true church—NO, not the “*weak ones*” but the STRONGEST—will be “brought before governors and kings” and

will be called upon to give powerful witness and testimony!

## **To Which “Church Era” Do the Two Witnesses Belong?**

Clearly, at the time of the *great persecutions* to be brought upon God’s church during the tribulation, which is SATAN’S WRATH, all organized preaching of the gospel will cease. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord Eternal, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, *but of hearing the words of the Eternal*:

“And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even unto the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Eternal, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11, 12).

NOT because they are sitting *on the sidelines*, huddled in caves for their own *physical* protection, but because they are being “delivered up to the synagogues” and being subjected to terrible *religious persecution*, the true servants will be *unable to carry out any organized preaching of the gospel*.

But God’s work will *still go on!*

How?

God says, “And I will give power unto my *two witnesses*, and they shall prophesy [including inspired preaching and witnessing] a thousand two hundred and three score days [3 1/2 years] clothed in sackcloth.

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth [see Zechariah 4:3], and if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

“These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: And have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”

*Who are* these two witnesses? The Bible doesn’t say. Yet it is obvious they are *two human beings* who very likely are *alive right now*, and who will be used to *carry*

on God's work in the very last few years prior to the second coming of Christ!

Their ministry BEGINS when all organized preaching of the gospel by the *church* ceases.

When the Great Tribulation begins, the nations of Israel are subjugated and taken into captivity, the church scattered and persecuted, the great, end-time ministry of the TWO WITNESSES begins!

There are many biblical *types* evident here.

Just as Moses and Aaron went before *Pharaoh* (a type of Satan) and his two magicians, Jannes and Jambres (types of the beast and the false prophet), continually saying, "Let my people GO!" while the plagues fell upon rebellious Egypt; so shall the two witnesses go before the beast and the false prophet in Jerusalem, demanding that Israel be RELEASED from their captivity, and will be met with the same "hardness of heart," resulting in their calling down PLAGUES upon the beast power!

Those who believe in "church eras" have apparently completely overlooked the fact that, IF the entire so-called "Philadelphian era" is "taken to a place of safety" (meaning PETRA, in the Jordanian desert), and the *only ones* exempted are the "Laodiceans" (usually spoken of in deprecating terms, as totally and wholly unfit, lukewarm, sleepy, unconcerned, weak ones), then to which "church era" do the two witnesses supposedly belong? The only remaining choice is "LAODICEA"!

Whoever they are, they are finally *killed*, and their bodies, lying in the streets of Jerusalem, cause *great rejoicing* over the whole earth.

Later they are resurrected in what is apparently a *physical resurrection*, PRIOR to the actual second coming of Christ (Revelation 11:11).

They are the FINAL martyrs for the name of Jesus Christ. Like their Savior, Jesus Christ; like Paul, Stephen, Peter and so many others, they not only dedicate their human lives insofar as their *work* is concerned to the name and the coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, but they literally *lay down* their lives for His name's sake, and are finally MURDERED because they thunderously urge the leaders of the world to REPENT, to STOP the hellish wars they have begun, and to recognize the supreme LORD OF LORDS and KING OF KINGS, the coming King

of the Universe, Jesus Christ of Nazareth!

## God Can Protect You Where You Are

*Study the 91st Psalm!*

Here is one of the most *encouraging* of all of the Bible promises concerning a “place of safety” for You!

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

“I will say of the Eternal, 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 [disease epidemics and plagues].

“He shall cover thee with His feathers [like the analogy of ‘eagle’s wings’] 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 eye shall thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

“Because thou hast made the Eternal, which is my refuge, even the Most High, *thy habitation*,

“There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come *nigh thy dwelling*”!

Here God absolutely *promises* that people can and will be protected (if that is in God’s plan for their own personal calling) *right where they live!*

Even as the plagues fell on Egypt while the Israelites were still within their own dwellings, and God protected them RIGHT WHERE THEY WERE, so this PROMISE from God concerns protecting His people from suffering and death, if that is His perfect will, IN THEIR DWELLINGS!

And WHICH is the greater MIRACLE? Protecting countless THOUSANDS, in thousands of different locations, under thousands of different circumstances, or protecting a group of people in ONE place?

Remember, there IS NO DOUBT God *promises* SOME (not *all*) of His people *protection* (Revelation 3:10). But

WHICH?

Notice: "...Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and SOME OF You shall they cause to be put to death!

"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

"But there shall not an hair of your head perish"! (Luke 21:16-18).

Obviously, if verse 18 ("there shall not an hair of your head perish") is to be taken to mean not one of the true church will be *martyred*, then How are you to understand verse 16?

*Obviously*, Christ is saying that SOME will be *put to death*, while *others* will be delivered!

But *how does God make that choice?*

Notice! "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted *above that ye are able*; but will with the temptation [trial] also make a *way to escape*, that ye may be ABLE TO BEAR IT"! (1 Corinthians 10:13).

This scripture says a GREAT DEAL!

God absolutely *promises* that the degree of trial, trouble, pain, suffering or "temptation" placed before each individual will NOT be more than that individual is "*able to bear*"! Who, then, is weakest and who is strongest? Are not those who are *able to endure* the MOST the *stronger*? Are not those who would *very quickly* give up their faith, perhaps swear allegiance to the beast, the number of his name or his image; even *curse their God* (and this has been REQUIRED of people in the past!) under threat or the actual pain of physical torture or death, the *weaker*?

And are not those who are able to “*endure unto the end*,” even if it means the end of their own *lives*, spiritually STRONGER?

Does it not become OBVIOUS, then, that God would provide a “way of escape” and supernatural protection for those who are WEAKEST, while perhaps singling out for a last testimony and final *martyrdom* those who are STRONGEST?

Make no mistake!

God did not call you to His truth, beget you as His child whom He LOVES, only to have you live a life of *fearful concern* over the very things of which YOU REPENTED!

What were some of these?

Did they not include the mundane, daily concerns of HOW YOU WILL SURVIVE; how to feed, clothe, care for, preserve and protect yourself?

Do you see God’s people, according to the Word of God, spending decades worrying about whether they are “qualified” to GO TO PETRA, or, instead, watching world conditions, *praying*, studying God’s Word, fellowshiping together as His church, caring for and visiting the sick, helping the poor, OVERCOMING their human nature by the power of His Spirit—busily ACCOMPLISHING HIS WORK?

If YOUR LIFE is “HID” with Christ in God—cannot *you* say, with the apostle Paul, “I will not fear what man can do unto me”?

God has not given His people the spirit of FEAR, but of POWER, and of LOVE, and of a SOUND MIND”! (2 Timothy 1:7).

IF God has determined *you* are one He must supernaturally PROTECT from the terrible times ahead—and *He knows* your strengths and weaknesses—THEN HE WILL PROTECT YOU! It does NOT MATTER HOW, OR WHERE!

If He has HONORED you with the decision that you are to give powerful WITNESS for HIM and HIS ETERNAL GOVERNMENT He will soon establish on this earth—then you will join ranks with the most righteous, spiritfilled, dedicated, COURAGEOUS men and women in all history—those like Stephen, Paul, Peter and your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself!

CHRIST is your PETRA! He is your ROCK, and your hiding place!

You need no other.

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