

Where is Your Place of Safety?

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Many years ago there was a major belief in the churches of God about the church going into a place of safety. That God was going to whisk his church away to Petra in the Jordan, and we will be protected from the Great Tribulation. This is much like the Rapture except, instead of Heaven; it was Petra where the church is going to dwell. One major split group of that church still holds on to that idea of the place of safety. Let's examine this theory.

The one scripture to support this theory is found in Revelation: "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). The woman of course is the church. The serpent is Satan the devil. And the wings of the great eagle was interpreted to mean airplanes which were to take God's church to Jordan, the wilderness, in a place called Petra, meaning the Rock, and of course Jesus is called the Rock. Perfect, it all fits, right? Wrong! Does the Bible interpret the "two wings of a great eagle" as airplanes? Is the rock a place? Or is it God himself, Jesus Christ?

Now Obviously Jesus is the Rock, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). That rock that followed the Israelites was of course YHWH of the Old Testament which is of course Jesus, see Exodus 17:6. God is the rock, "Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock;" (Psalm 28:1). So the rock is not a place in the Jordan, but Jesus Christ! But how is the church supposed to fly to Jesus Christ? With airplanes? Are we supposed to fly at all? What does the "great eagle" mean? We must let the Bible interpret the Bible to understand the meaning.

Petra?

Why is the church supposed to go to Petra? What's the reason? Protection? Jesus said the time will come that if he did not intervene all of human kind would be obliterated, "And except those days should be shortened, there should *no flesh be saved* ["alive" Moffatt]" (Matthew 24:22). How can Petra save the church when man has the capacity to destroy 50 worlds like ours with the stockpiling of nuclear weapons that we possess? Petra makes no sense! Why does God have to bring his church anywhere? Can't God protect them right there where they are? Of course he can!

God protected Israel in their homes during the time of the Passover, the plagues and the death angel.

Ezekiel, when he saw the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel, God commanded Ezekiel, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, *and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men* that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof....Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity...Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: *but come not near any man upon whom is the mark...*" (Ezekiel 9:4, 5, 6). In the very destruction of the city, *in the city itself*, the people with the mark were *not* harmed, God protected them right there where they dwelt. *God doesn't have to move his church anywhere.* These people who could not flee Jerusalem, God promises protection for them.

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And why did Jesus say that at the time of the Great Tribulation, "...let *not* them that are in the *countries enter thereinto*." (Luke 21:22). Now the first part of this verse Jesus is telling people to "flee" out of Judea and Jerusalem. Then he says those in the *nations* outside of Jerusalem should NOT ENTER INTO JUDEA! Jesus is telling his people *to stay out of the area!* Yet people in the church of God are saying that the church is going to go *into* the very area Jesus said to stay out of?

The very worst of the Great Tribulation will be in the land of Israel (Palestine), and Jesus is telling people to avoid it. The best place to be, like any common sense human being would think- wherever the war is, *we go in the opposite direction!* However people in the church of God are preaching the exact opposite!

"The Great Eagle"

When Almighty God saved Israel from Egypt, he told them, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how *I bare you on eagles' wings*, and brought you unto myself." (Exodus 19:4). Now did Israel fly away from Egypt on eagle's wings? No they walked every step of the way to the Holy Mountain of God, Mt Sinai, (see Psalm 68:17). Obviously this has the same meaning as in Revelation 12, where the woman is a symbol of the Church, (see 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-27; Rev 19:7). Israel was called "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). They fled into the wilderness in Sinai, and met with God at Mt Sinai, with the blasts of the trumpets, (see Exodus 19:19).

Well the New Testament Church, the woman, will fly on the "two wings of a great eagle" into the "wilderness" to "her place." What is that place? It's the place where "she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, *from the face of the serpent*." It's a place where they are taken care of and PROTECTED from Satan the devil. This is also called "a place of refuge." In the Old Testament there were cities or places of Refuge where people were *protected* from the "avenger of the blood," (see Numbers 35). This is the same language that Revelation 12 is using here.

Notice in the Old Testament, Israel was in the wilderness and God, "fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt" (Exodus 16:32). It was a place where they "lacked nothing" for "forty years," (see Deuteronomy 2:7). It was a place where God "nourished them." It was also a place of safety, "But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

"*And he led them on safely*, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies" (Psalm 78:52). A shepherd always protects his sheep, (see John 10:11-16). So it was a place of protection, a place of safety. But it was not the wilderness that fed them, or protected them; it was *God* that did these things. He was the one that protected them and nourished them IN THE wilderness. God was their place of refuge, as the Psalmist says, "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob *is our refuge*" (Psalm 46:7). So when God told the Israelites "*I bare you on eagles' wings*, and brought you unto myself," he means he brought them to the place of Refuge which is Himself, Almighty God was their refuge *in the wilderness* of Sinai.

Before we move on to the full meaning of Revelation 12, what does the "eagle's wings" mean?

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Obviously Israel did *not* fly away, so it must mean something else. It's a symbol, a symbol of protection. The Psalmist explains, "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." (Psalm 91:1-4). Here is the meaning of the wings! *It's the wings of the Almighty!*

Jesus says the same thing about protecting Jerusalem. He used the symbol of a hen and her chicks, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a *hen gathereth her chickens under her wings*, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37).

God says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, *and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself*." (Exodus 19:4). God is telling them, "Did you see all the terrible things that happened to the Egyptians and how I PROTECTED YOU FROM ALL THE CALAMITIES!"

There is evidence of this in the book of Exodus itself!

Notice: "And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.

"And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

"*But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel*" (Exodus 11:5-7). God protected Israel from the plagues of Egypt and the killing of the firstborn.

Here are a few more scriptures that show the same thing: "And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:

"They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: *but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings*." (Exodus 10:22-23).

"And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

"*Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail*" (Exodus 9:25-26).

"Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.

"And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

"*And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be*" (Ex 8:21-23).

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“Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.

“And the LORD *shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children’s of Israel*” (Ex 9:3-4). So God bare them on eagles wings, meaning *he protected his people like an eagle protects her young*, and he protected them RIGHT THERE WHERE THEY LIVE, they did not have to go anywhere!

Now back to Revelation 12. What does this scripture mean? “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” (v.14) God is going to be a refuge for his people “a place of safety” in the wilderness which is this world, wherever God’s church is scattered, and God is going to protect his people [eagles wings] RIGHT THERE WHERE THEY LIVE, the way God protected Israel in their dwelling places!

This was fulfilled during the time of the middle Ages. God protected his church from Satan the devil. She remained pure with her doctrines and though persecuted God saved and protected them for 1260 years (Rev 12:6, 12-13).

But, there will be an end time persecution of the saints that will come. “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev 12:17).

Isaiah tells us God will repeat his protection on his people as he did in the days of Moses and Noah, “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.

“For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain” (Isaiah 26:20-21).

The Commentaries quote this scripture and agree: “When God is about to take vengeance on the ungodly, the saints shall be shut in by Him in a place of safety, as Noah and his family were in the days of the flood (Gen 7:16), and as Israel was commanded not to go out of doors on the night of the slaying of the Egyptian first-born (Exo 12:22-23; Psa 31:20; Psa 83:3). The saints are calmly and confidently to await the issue (Exo 14:13-14)” (JFB Commentary, pp.644-645, emphasis added).

“*It seems to be an allusion to the command of Moses to the Israelites, when the destroying angel was to go through the land of Egypt, ‘not to go out at the door of their houses until the morning;’* Exo 12:22. And before the passage of the Red Sea: ‘Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah. Jehovah shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace,’ Exo 14:13, Exo 14:14.” (Adam’s Clarke Commentary, emphasis added).

God will protect you *right in your own home* supernaturally the way he did the Israelites and Noah, “LORD shut him in” (Gen 7:16) and protected them from the flood and the plagues in Egypt.

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Now we can understand the full meaning in Psalm 91: “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**” (vv.4-10).

God is going to protect you during the Day of the Lord RIGHT THERE IN YOUR HOME! DIVINE PROTECTION! Just trust in him and make him your refuge and he will nourish and take care of you during the terrible day, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the **shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.**” (Psalm 57:1).

Persecuted Saints

What about the people who are killed for their faith? “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: “And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

“And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” (Rev 6:9-11).

“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.” (Rev 12:11).

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13).

“I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev 20:4).

Clearly, the Bible says that Christians will be persecuted. It is spiritual warfare that will result in deaths of true Christians. The devil is the god of this world (2 Corinth 4:4). The devil hates God’s people, “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev 12:17). Unfortunately, because of sin entering into this world, we are “made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope,” (Rom 8:20). The whole world is under the subjection of the devil, (Acts 10:38; Rev 12:9). This is why the church is under persecution. This is *not* God’s world, but the devils, and we are under his rule. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until

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now.” (Rom 8:22). When Christ comes he will rule, and set at liberty the children of God (Rom 8:21).

God promises protection for his people from HIS wrath. God’s wrath is a lot worse than the wrath of Satan. Those that overcome persecution shall in the end receive eternal life. God’s wrath on the other hand, will result in *permanent* death in Gehenna, (see Rev 14:10-11). “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end *is* it for you? the day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light.” (Amos 5:18). These are people who “mock” the coming of the lord saying “bring it on.” (Jude 18-19).

Jesus said to his church in Philadelphia, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” (Rev 3:10). Those that stay faithful to God in times of persecution in the Great Tribulation will be protected during the time of the Day of the Lord.

Paul said we are in a war. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:11-13). We must put on the armor of God. So we can be victorious in the great tribulation, and not fall from the faith.

Now God can give only as much as we can handle, “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 also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.” (I Corinth 10:13). God knows our strengths and our weakness. He knows what we can and cannot handle, it up to us to endure unto the end. God however will allow only the *strongest* of his people to be persecuted-those who can endure the persecution till the end.

We must remember, when the day comes that this world is going to persecute Christians in the great tribulation, we must remain “faithful unto death.” (Rev 2:10). We must realize that this is the door to eternal life. Jesus said if we remain faithful, “I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2:10). Our attitudes must be strong so we can resist and overcome.

The Apostles, when they were beaten, “rejoicing that they were *counted worthy to suffer* shame for his name.” (Acts 5:41; Matt 5:11; Acts 16:25). Attitudes like this will help us overcome when we realize that in, “death he [Peter and all Christians] should *glorify* God” (John 21:19). In our Zeal, like Peter, God is glorified by our zeal and courage, faith and patience, constancy and perseverance to the end.

The Pulpit Commentary says, “It is proverbial *that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.’* Even persecutors have been touched by the exhibition of constancy, fortitude, and expectation of glory which they have witnessed on the part of sufferers. And in how many instances have children traced their new and holier life to the dying confession and victory of

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their Christian parents! Christ's death was the life of the world; and the death of his followers is ever fruitful of spiritual and immortal good." (emphasis added)

Now Jesus said, "I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." (John 17:15). No, God does not want his church out of this world, as Bullinger writes, "Christians must not take themselves out of the world but remain in meaningful contact with it, trusting in God's protection while they witness for Jesus." [Note: Blum, pp. 332-3.] (The Companion Bible). Jesus asked for *protection* of his church from the "evil."

Now Vincent Word studies says, "**From the evil (του πονηρου)** Or, *the evil one*. This rendering is according to John's usage. See 1John 2:13, 1John 2:14; 1John 3:12; 1John 5:18, 1John 5:19; and compare John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11. *From* (εκ), literally, *out of*, means *out of the hands of*." So it means out of the hands of Satan the Devil. As mentioned, only the strongest will be allowed to be killed for their faith to give a "testimony against them" (Matthew 10:18). The others God will protect as Jesus prayed to the Father that he would. But it does not mean the church will go through the tribulation without being affected.

Like Israel in the days of Moses, Israel was under Tribulation. "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses.

"But the *more they afflicted them*, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel.

"And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour:

"And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, *was* with rigour." (Exodus 1:11-14). This was a type of the Great Tribulation that is to come on the nations of Israel and the Church of God. During that time in Egypt and in the wilderness, God "preserved" them through all of the hardships they *endured* till they reached the Promised Land which was a type of the Kingdom of God.

This statement by Christ promises the same for his church. Even though they suffer through the tribulation he will "Keep them from the evil one" meaning he will preserve them through it and will be victorious. "...What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they ***which came out of great tribulation***, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev 7:13-14).

The word "keep" is "Tereo." It means, "*keeping* the eye upon" (Strong's #5083). As God kept an eye, and watched Israel go through those trials and temptations in Egypt (Ex 2:25; 3:7). God will do the same for his church. He will keep his eye on his church. Preserve them, help them through the trials and tribulations that are coming, until the time when God will act, and the kingdoms will belong to God, and not Satan the devil any more. During the time of God's wrath, the church will be protected and the wicked shall receive their reward.