

Place of Safety

First we should acknowledge that we see all prophecy 'through a glass darkly', as said the apostle Paul. Nevertheless it is our duty to diligently study all of God's word, so today I want to look more closely at the scriptures that tell us about the final 3½ years before Christ establishes His Kingdom. We already have a series, which gave a good overview of the last 7 years on our web site, so I'm going to pick up the events after 'The Division of The Saints', (part 3 of the series) where Jesus Christ arrives at the 6th Seal, just as the Beast's armies are about to capture God's people who have fled from Jerusalem according to the instruction in Matthew 24:15-16, 'Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.'

It is there on the way to those mountains, while still in the wilderness of Judea, West of the Dead Sea, that the events of Revelation 12:14-17 take place.

'But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.'

It is then that Christ sends his angels to gather those who take part in the first resurrection, not just from here but from wherever they are found around the world. Matthew 24:31, 'And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'

They join Christ on the Sea of Glass in the clouds, 1 Corinthians 15:52, and Revelation 15:2. 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'

'And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.'

They have reached their place of safety!

That leaves behind the rest who did **not** make it into the 144,000 who become the Bride of Christ – (Revelation 14:1, 'Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on [the heavenly] Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.')

These are a mixed group of church people, Jews and others who were convicted by the preaching of the church to the world from Jerusalem, during the first half of the last seven years (read Part Two of the End-time Series). Nevertheless, like the mixed multitude who followed Moses out of Egypt in Exodus 12:38, all of them had enough faith to recognize the church's warning to flee to the mountains, where God promises that the Beast will not go. (for fear of losing his armies!)

Daniel 11:41, 'He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon.'

Now though, after the amazing events they have seen, the faith of this remnant is even greater, for they know that God is with them. Heading SE through the wilderness of Judea, they may even descend through the valley of Engedi towards the Dead Sea, where David long ago sheltered from King Saul's pursuit. The refreshing waterfalls and pools there will be very welcome!

Some in the church of God have understood that they would be carried by jumbo-jet on this journey, but they are mistaken. Exodus 19:4, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.' Eagle's wings here meant shanks pony!

Turning South when they emerge at the Dead Sea, they will pass the ruins at Masada, and the location of ancient Sodom, where years ago I picked up several balls of ancient brimstone, still smelling of sulphur, after being washed out of the soil by heavy snow melt at the base of a cliff.

Soon after that they will have to turn East to cross the Jordan valley, south of the Dead Sea, across the salt pans, and maybe follow the Wadi al Hasa as it climbs into the mountains of the Jordan, into what used to be called Edom. These, though, are God's people, heading for a place He has promised as we will see, and He will guide them to safety, just as He led ancient Israel through another wilderness, long ago. Throughout this journey of 4 or 5 days they are in God's hands, and He alone will determine their destination, maybe as He guided the Israelites with a pillar of cloud and fire.

God has promised His people of faith that they will not experience the last 3½ years – called the 'Great Tribulation' or 'God's wrath'.

1 Thessalonians 5:9, 'For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,' and also Revelation 3:10, 'Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.'

Instead, as we read in Revelation 12, He will nourish them in a place of safety. Isaiah 33:16, 'He will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; Bread will be given him, His water will be sure.'

This verse is a poor translation. It is better translated -stronghold or fortress of sela / the mountains. '*He will dwell in a high place. The fortress of Sela (or the mountains) will be his refuge.*'

Many people have come to believe Sela is that famous rose red city of Petra, because Sela and Petra both mean 'rock'. That is possible, but coincidentally there is a place called Sela some 30 miles north of Petra, where there was a strong fortress of the Edomites.

Lets understand something about this area that was called Edom. The Edomites were descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, whose name God changed to Israel. So, the Edomites were kin to the nation of Israel. Jordan today is made up of what used to be called Edom, Moab and Ammon. Moab and Ammon were the sons of Lot's two daughters, the nephew of Abraham, so they too were related to Israel. God became very angry with these 3 nations because several times in history they failed to go to the aid of Israel in time of need, and even joined in its invasion and slavery, despite their brotherly obligations.

At the end of this age these nations will join others in a confederation against the Jews, and will be finally almost totally destroyed until they recognize the True God, the God of Israel.

Psalm 83:4-8, and 17-18. 'They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, □ That the name of Israel may be remembered no more." For they have consulted together with one consent; □ They form a confederacy against You: □ The tents of Edom (*the dwellings of a given area – Strongs*) and the Ishmaelites; □ Moab and the Hagrites; □ Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; □ Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; □ Assyria also has joined with them; □ They have helped the children of Lot. Selah'

'Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; □ Yes, let them be put to shame and perish, □ That they may know that You, whose name alone is the Lord, □ are the Most High over all the earth.'

Now, as God's people reach the mountains, they again find themselves in need, and led by God into the land of Edom, where today also live many descendents of the Philistines.

Finally they reach their high fortress-like destination in Sela, where, with Divine protection and provision, they dwell during the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation.

Meanwhile, those who remained in Judah and Jerusalem have begun to suffer under the Beast's invasion (*which we read of in Daniel 11:40-41 'And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon'.).* – Zechariah 13:8-9, 'And it shall come to pass in all the land,' says the LORD, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, but one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, ☐ I will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'

Only this great tribulation will bring both Judah and Israel to repentance, Hosea 5:15, 'I (*said Christ*) will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.'

Along with its confederate nations, Edom had again earlier joined in the persecution of the Jews, Joel 3:19-20, 'Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land. But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.'

Not only that, but after God has established His people in Sela, other Israelites who escape and later try to join them are robbed, killed or handed over to the Beast Power. Obadiah 1:10,13-14 'For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.'

13 'You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. 14 You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress.'

Ezekiel 35: 3-5 'Behold, O Mount Seir, [Edom] I am against you; I will stretch out My hand against you, and make you most desolate; I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I am the Lord. "Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, *when their iniquity came to an end.*'

The Beast power is not content to take the nations of Israel. Daniel 11 describes his conquest of the Middle East and his venture into Africa. However his capture of the oil-rich nations brings about a response from the nations of the East.

Daniel 11:44, 'But news from the East and the North shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many.'

Eventually an army of 200 million nears – Revelation 9:14-16, 'saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.'

The nation of Jordan now comes under threat as God brings punishment on its three peoples. Zechariah 25: 9-13, 'therefore, behold, I will clear the territory of Moab of cities, of the cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kirjathaim. To the men of the East I will give it as a possession, together with the Ammonites, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. And I will execute judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the LORD.'

‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because of what Edom did against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended by avenging itself on them,’ therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom, cut off man and beast from it, and make it desolate from Teman; Dedan shall fall by the sword.’

What really angers God, is the way these Islamic nations refuse to recognize Israel’s God and His relationship with his people, considering them as heathens. Just a few God fearing Moabites, having been warned by the church’s preaching from Jerusalem, flee south across the Arnon river to reach the place God protects.

Jeremiah 48:28, ‘You who dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove which makes her nest in the sides of the cave’s mouth.’

Isaiah 16:2, ‘For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.’

Verses 3 and 4 and 5 read better in the NIV. ‘Give us counsel, render a decision. Make your shadow like night—at high noon. Hide the fugitives, do not betray the refugees. Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you; be their shelter from the destroyer.” The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land. In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it— one from the house of David— one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.’ This is clearly end-time prophecy!

Notice from where they send their offering to Christ, verse 1. ‘Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.’

These Moabites do not arrive by accident. God does nothing by accident. Nothing is more important for God’s people than to learn how to teach others God’s way of life, and these Moabites are typical of all the Islamic nations surrounding the nation of Israel.

And that, remember, will be the future role of these people in God’s Kingdom, Isaiah 66:19 ‘I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles.’

This is their chance to carry out their teaching practice, and as a teacher myself I well remember how useful that was, as a student.

In addition, the fruits of that teaching will be converted Jews and Moabite Moslems – invaluable additions to God’s family, who can play a critical role in the future, in God’s Kingdom.

Finally, when the last 3½ years ends, the two great armies meet at the battle of Armageddon, Revelation 16:16, but it is then, just as the battle is about to start, that Christ returns.

Isaiah 33:16-17, ‘He will dwell on high; His place of defense will be the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water will be sure. *Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off.*’

Those in Sela view that arrival and rejoice !

Isaiah 42:11-13 ‘Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, □ the villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare His praise in the coastlands. The LORD shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies.’

Passing over the detail of Christ’s victory in that battle, we now come to some revealing scriptures.

Isaiah 34: 5-8, ‘ For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; □ indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made overflowing with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. *For the LORD has a*

sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom. The wild oxen shall come down with them, and the young bulls with the mighty bulls; their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust saturated with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion.'

As soon as the battle of Armageddon is over, after several days, Christ has urgent business in Edom. Jeremiah 49: 13, 16, 22. 'For I have sworn by Myself,' says the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse. And all its cities shall be perpetual wastes.'

16 'Your fierceness has deceived you, the pride of your heart, O you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, who hold the height of the hill! Though you make your nest as high as the eagle, I will bring you down from there, says the Lord.'

22 'Behold, He shall come up and fly like the eagle, and spread His wings over Bozrah; the heart of the mighty men of Edom in that day shall be like the heart of a woman in birth pangs.'

Payback time has arrived for the terrorists of Edom. The hostility of years culminates in what seems to be a plan by these people to hold God's saints to ransom, and refuse to let them go.

The long awaited punishment of those who gloated over Judah and Israel's fall, who persecuted the refugees, and now prevent them joining their Saviour, has at last arrived.

Micah 2:12-13. 'I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.'

The sheep of Bozrah are Christ's sheep and he is coming to break them out of their sheepfold (Bozrah means sheepfold) and lead them to Jerusalem.

Isaiah 63:1-2, 'Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? — "I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?'

This question is asked by the Jews who helped regain Jerusalem and now guard its walls !

Verses 3-5 – 'I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered that there was no one to uphold; therefore My own arm brought salvation for Me; and My own fury, it sustained Me.'

Christ's answer is that He needed no human help in the rescue, though we find those verses an indication that His Bride, who returned with Him from heaven, did come to His assistance, and so a great company enter Jerusalem with their triumphant Saviour.

In conclusion, with this entry, the beginning of God's Kingdom has arrived, and very probably on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles ! So concludes the last 3½ years of the Great Tribulation, where 2 groups of saints were preserved in 2 separate places of safety, one at Sela or Bozrah, one on the Sea of Glass, and now begins the start of a wonderful 1000 years of the Millennium, for all of God's people !