

Is There a “Place of Safety” for the Church?—Part One

Will the church of God be given a specific place of safety in a wilderness during the troubling times that are prophesied to come upon this world before the return of the Christ?

This world is beset with many “wicked problems”—that is interconnected and evolving political and social problems that defy solutions, and where any attempted solutions seem to create more defiant and unforeseen problems—and it has been this way since the time of Adam.

Understandably, then, these types of problems still compel people to look for solutions as unsolvable problems are expected to increase in the future, and this is of concern to many peoples and nations of the world. For some professing Christians and church denominations the escalation of these problems has been in some ways a fulfilled expectation simply because of the nature of the warnings of the prophets, the apostles and also Jesus.

This has—with some unfortunate and misguided outcomes—led to the formulation of questionable beliefs and problematic doctrines within Christianity, and these teachings are sometimes offered as “solutions” or explanations as to how the “church” will weather the anticipated periods of severe tribulation that lie ahead.

Now, in regard to these formulated beliefs we find an example of a doctrine that upholds a teaching that the “true” church of God will be accorded a specific “place of safety” here on earth during a time of expected troubles before the return of Jesus. This doctrine also upholds the teaching that while the church of God is in a “place of safety,” the rest of the world—including some members of the same “true” church—will

unfortunately be excluded from this protective "place," leaving them and others behind to suffer a Great Tribulation.

Making it quite apparent that this formulated doctrine is not really a "solution" for the church of God, or for anyone else really, respective to the "wicked problems" that will eventually bring the world to a dire situation in the future according to the prophecies of the Bible. Making it additionally apparent that this doctrine only serves to ease the worries of the few while increasing the worries of the many, noting that this doctrine, and others like it, have an exclusive and inclusive nature about them, and too often they are conveniently applied to those who profess them.

Leaving it then to the perplexed individual to determine if he or she will be able to attain to this physical, yet temporary, "place of safety," which has caused some churches to think of ways to indoctrinate their members through many forms of education and activities, with the intended purpose of keeping them in their respective church organizations, while thinking that this is the same thing as keeping them in the truth of God.

However, this indoctrinating approach has for the most part only led to a continual dividing of congregations for many denominations, and it has also led to the erroneous belief that "attendance" of itself in the "right" church organization can translate into some form of "eligibility" for those wanting to "escape all these things"—that is to a place of safety—which reveals that the nature of this doctrine can cause those who embrace it to work a deliverance for themselves instead of working out their own salvation through trust in the will of God (Lk. 21:36).

Meaning that those who assume that the doctrine of a "place of safety" is biblically based are not only demonstrating that they may be indoctrinated by an individual's or church's teachings, but they are also likely proving that they are

indoctrinated to a questionable interpretive methodology that they have failed to challenge. Thereby they become unwitting perpetrators of this doctrine with little consideration of the consequences it has for the church of God. (The legitimacy of the church as a collective and cooperative fellowship, composed of the many who are called and the few who are chosen, is supported by Scripture.)

Bringing us then to take a closer look at the belief in a "place of safety," and to examine how an interpretive methodology—imposed centrally upon a vision given to the Apostle John—created such a doctrine to explain what will happen to the church of God before the return of Jesus.

Now, students of the Bible ought to consider that the events symbolized in the book of Revelation foreshadow a worldwide geopolitical upheaval on an unprecedented scale, particularly at the return and intervention of the Christ. This has led to numerous and varied interpretations of the Apostle John's visions that he received in the latter part of his ministry while on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Central to these visions was an understanding of the role of Satan who is expected to eventually influence the consolidation and configuration of a number of political and military powers that will at some time impose their political will in the Middle East. This will, by the view of biblical prophecy, begin to initiate much hardship for the current representative nations and peoples that were at one time a part of the ancient consolidated tribes of the Commonwealth of Israel.

This is depicted in part in the vision wherein John saw: "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered" (Rev. 12:1-2).

Now, we see from John's vision that this "woman" is described in rather beautiful symbolic terms because she is said to be "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," which would not have seemed unfamiliar to the Apostle John because there was an historical context to be found in the life of the patriarch Jacob. For we read in Genesis that Joseph had a dream, and this dream was understood by his parents and his brothers, and what he told them was that: "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (Gen. 37:9-11).

It is not too difficult then to realize that most biblical expositors and interested readers of the Bible could figure out how this symbolism applies to the tribes of Israel based upon what we know of Israel's history from the prophets and the historical accounts of their rulers who presided over the Commonwealth of Israel.

Notably, then, what grabs our attention next about John's vision is that he also saw a "great red dragon" that had "seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads" (Rev. 12:3). We are then told by John that this "red dragon" had the power to conscript a "third part of the stars of heaven," reasonably understood to be the demons, and this dragon that appeared in John's vision "stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (Rev. 12:4). [Author's emphasis throughout.]

Leaving little doubt that this is referring to the birth of Jesus.

In practical terms we know that Jesus was confronted by both

religious and political figures during his earthly life, and during his ministry he dealt with a great many problems that afflicted the peoples who lived in the areas of Galilee and Judea in regard to demonic possession, but at the end of his ministry we see that what was brought against Jesus was the imperial government of the expanding Roman Empire.

This was summarized somewhat in the response of those who learned of how God had delivered Peter and John from the authorities, and they agreeably stated that: "the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:26-28). (See also, Ps. 2:1-2.)


Implying, of course, that Satan has the capability of influencing human nature and the collective will of some world leaders and to steer their respective political decisions, which gives us some insight into how we may explain the spiritual nature and underlying influence behind globalized war, and the continual political upheavals and acts of violence—including terrorism—among the nation-states, which is often complicated by an uncooperative and continually reorganizing World Order.

Therefore, given this historical context it is reasonable to conclude that this symbolic woman represents the complexity and completeness of the Commonwealth of Israel, even though it was for the most part already dispersed from its homeland at the time of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and during his ministry in Galilee and at Jerusalem. Noting, importantly, that the commonwealth was not scattered and dispersed after the death of Jesus, but the remnant that was political Judah was eventually broken some years after Jesus' ascension by the might of the growing Roman Empire. (The wars of the Romans

certainly influenced the shaping of peoples and tribes in Eastern and Western Europe, and expectedly this had a later influence on how nation-states developed in this area of the world, especially in the latter half of the 19th century, which would have included some of the dispersed tribal groupings of the former Commonwealth of Israel.)

Then John tells us that this “woman” who gave birth to the child would at some time be forced to flee “into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore [1,260] days” (Rev. 12:6).

Bringing us then to one of the foundational verses used to claim that the church of God will be taken miraculously to a “place of safety” before the return of the Christ.

So, what then are we to understand from such a statement as this that this woman would be forced into the wilderness, and that by an unspecified means she would be sustained for a period of about three and one-half years?  **(Continued in part two of this series.) (andrewburdettewrites.com)**

See also: [Is There a “Place of Safety” for the Church?–Part Two](#)