

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

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?

By understanding the historical context of the Apostle John’s vision of a “woman” confronted by a “great red dragon” we would have to reasonably conclude that this vision was about the birth of Jesus and an existing Commonwealth of Israel.

However, it should be pointed out that the Commonwealth of Israel no longer functioned as a consolidated political entity at the time of Jesus’ birth, or at any time during his ministry in Galilee and in Judea.

Consequently, it would seem that the issue of the commonwealth’s existence would be irrelevant and out of time and place when John wrote that this symbolic “woman”—representing the commonwealth—would “flee to the wilderness, where she hath a place made ready from God, that there they may nourish her—days a thousand, two hundred, sixty [1,260 days]” (Rev. 12:6, YLT).

On top of this we must consider that based on the sequence of events discussed in the narrative of John’s vision we cannot associate this three and one-half year period of time with the life of Jesus, or with the demise of the political remnant of the commonwealth at Jerusalem in AD 70, some few years after the Romans began to suppress the First Jewish Revolt in the province of Judea in AD 66. (Typologies are not the same as fulfillments respective to prophetic events recorded in Scripture.)

However, there have been some attempts to explain the 1,260 days and its relevance to the ancient Commonwealth of Israel,

and particularly to the church of God, by using the erroneous "day-for-a-year principle" to arbitrarily interpret timeframes found in prophecies of the Bible. Noting, importantly, that this methodology leads to an unqualified reassessing of the value of the "days" by changing them into a fabricated 1,260 "prophetic years," which some assume can be applied to the commonwealth respective to the prophecies of Ezekiel or to the period of time that the "church" supposedly suffered a persecution at the hands of the Papacy from AD 538 to AD 1798.

(The day-for-a-year application, not principle, has a limited scriptural use in regard to specific punishments that were placed upon the people of Israel.)

Bringing us then to conclude that this interpretive methodology must be discarded and replaced with a premise and a context that we can reasonably associate with the vision given to the Apostle John.

Otherwise, given what is stated in the vision of the woman who gave birth to the child, we are brought to reckon with the fact that we have no specific information allowing us to associate this time period with any known event in history related to the church of God or to the Commonwealth of Israel.

Nonetheless, John's narrative does establish a connected series of events that point to this three and one-half year period of time and how this time period will eventually apply to the Commonwealth of Israel.

For we see in the narrative of John's vision that the child was taken to the throne of God, and following this event in the narrative we have a dramatic circumstance taking place in heaven that results in the casting out of Satan. And John tells us that: "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" (Rev. 12:7-9). (Some have supposed that this event was related to the fall of Satan as the "anointed cherub," and this casting out resulted in the earth becoming "without form and void," which required God's intervention to renew the face of the earth as stated in the book of Genesis.)

In this scenario we have an event in the angelic world that—according to the presentation of John's narrative—follows the event of Jesus' ascension into heaven, and this conflict subjugates the one called the devil and his angels to the earth with the understanding that there is no longer a "place" to be found in heaven for Satan.

Giving us then a connected series of events that are reviewed in John's presentation that have understandably already occurred—unseen in the human world—and with these events came a pronouncement from heaven that salvation has come, along with the kingdom of God and the authority of the Christ. For Satan as an accuser has been cast down, and with this event we have a warning that: "the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time [Greek, *kairon*, "season"]. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child [the preceding event]" (Rev. 12:12-13).

(Satan was persecuting the "woman" before he was cast down, but when he was cast out of heaven he had the foreknowledge of a "season" of time.)

So, here we have three points to think about in regard to the role of Satan.

The first point is that in this arrest of Satan he does not conscript the demons, but rather by the will of God they, along with Satan, are constrained to a timeframe and subjugated to a limited domain and influence—that is to say to this earth and our world.

The second point to consider is that Satan has a set amount of time, a "short time" or season, and this period of time is relative to Satan's allowed influence until the coming of the kingdom of God, and so we should also keep in mind that Satan has been a "liar" and a deceiver since before the time of Adam (Jn. 8:44). Noting also that in the Apostle Paul's day Satan was referred to as the "prince of the power of the air," who is the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," which means that the earthly work of Satan to influence world conflict has also been around since the time of Adam (Eph. 2:2; I Pt. 5:8).

The third point reveals a distinction that is made in what Satan is attempting to do, because in the earlier part of John's narrative we see that Satan was attempting to kill the child of the symbolic woman, but in this part of the narrative he is seeking to "persecute the woman," who in the narrative of the vision symbolically gave birth to the Christ.

In a relative sense, then, Satan did persecute a remnant of the commonwealth through political entities, even though it was some years after the death and ascension of Jesus. But, the specific application of the three and one-half years to this time in history is difficult given what we know of Jewish and Middle East history preceding the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman Empire in AD 70. (We do see a history of four empires, however, beginning with the Babylonian Empire and continuing through the Persian and Greek Empires and finally the Roman Empire, which focused their destruction particularly on the throne of David.)

Bringing us then to the scriptural context that is used to cultivate the doctrine of the "place of safety," which is not a statement found in the Bible.

Now, the claim that there is a singular earthly "place of safety" for the church of God has a starting point in John's vision of the persecuted woman, and he writes that: "when the

dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 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” (Rev. 12:13-16).

This is a rather chaotic series of events associated with the Commonwealth of Israel—and expectedly so for much of the developed world—which brings us then to consider the issue of a “place of safety” in regard to the vision given to the Apostle John. Because what we find within Christianity is a cultivated interpretation of John’s vision wherein some churches and denominations have taken a liberty to assign a different meaning to the symbolism of this “woman” who flees into the “wilderness” for three and one-half years.

Claiming then that this woman is now the “true church” of God, and therefore it is this exclusive church—not the commonwealth—that is driven by persecution into a so-called place of safety—not a wilderness—and there this church will be taken care of while others—including the “true church”—will become subject to the direct wrath of Satan. (It is the direct wrath of Satan that forces the “woman” and its representative peoples into the wilderness in the first place.)

This, of course, reflects an interpretive insertion into the text of the Bible.

It also reveals an erroneous interpretive methodology that is used to assign or impose unrelated meanings to specific words, or individuals, or events mentioned in the Bible.

In particular the foundation of this interpretive method assumes that those who use it have been given some form of special insight or understanding, often taken from the works of biblical expositors, and they have taken this so-called "understanding" and assigned it to a person, place or event addressed in Scripture. In the end, however, this interpretive method supplants biblical definitions and/or statements, and the result is a created or cultivated teaching or doctrine, which has in some cases led some people to place their church organization or some individuals directly into the events of Scripture.

Obviously, then, this interpretive method of "assigning or reassigning unwarranted meanings" cannot be justified from Scripture for the simple reason that it misdirects and changes the outcome and conclusion of what is stated in the Bible.

Nonetheless, it is this interpretive methodology that is used to cultivate the doctrine of a "place of safety" when it is applied to certain prophecies given to the Apostle John.

Consequently, when the Bible tells us that the woman was "given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness," it is assumed by this interpretative method that the church of God is the one who flees into the wilderness "for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent" (Rev. 12:14). Then to this is added a further cultivated belief wherein the "wilderness" to which the "woman" flees is now said to be a "place of safety," which means that such an interpretation has allowed for a reassignment of meaning to what is stated in Scripture.

Revealing, of course, that there are many difficulties with the doctrine of a "place of safety" and the erroneous methodology that cultivated this teaching within Christianity.

Realizing also that one difficulty in particular becomes apparent when those who claim that John is addressing a place of safety then attempt to explain more of John's vision

regarding the “remnant of her seed” who “keep the commandments,” and have the “testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).  (Continued in part two of this series.)
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See also: [When was Satan Cast Out?](#)

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