

Teen Bible Study Notes: Friday, January 18, 2019

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The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ – Lecture #22

Book and Chapter – Matthew – Chapter 24 (verses 1- 20)

MATTHEW 24

Introduction to Christ’s Olivet prophecy – a short history

Did the first century Christians see Christ’s Olivet prophecy and the seals of Revelation fulfilled in type? What happened concerning these prophesied events? And does the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies lie now just ahead of us?

Imagine, if you can, that you lived in the first century A.D.

In particular, imagine that you were in Jerusalem on the 11th day of the month of Abib on God’s sacred calendar, in what we call A.D. 31. And imagine you were one of four disciples of Jesus named Peter, James, John or Andrew.

Earlier that day someone had mentioned to Jesus how beautiful the Temple and its stones were. And Jesus responded: “...Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down” (**Mark 13:2**).

Later you four disciples later had opportunity, you asked Him, “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him privately, “Tell us when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?” (**Mark 13:3-4**).

Jesus’ answer, in brief, as recorded in – **Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21** – was: 1) Religious deception by those claiming to represent Him. 2) Wars and rumors of wars. 3) Famines and earthquakes. 4) Pestilence [*called “troubles” in Mark*]. 5) Persecution of Christ’s disciples, and tribulation for Israel. 6) Remarkable signs in the sun, moon, stars and sky. 7) The desolation or destruction of Jerusalem, and Christ’s return in the clouds of heaven.

Consider the events that followed Christ’s incredible prophecy.

First Century Events

Christ’s prophecy was passed on by word of mouth to the early Church of God. Later the details of this remarkable prophecy were written down. Strangely enough, the details were not written down by those who heard what Christ said. Instead, Christ’s prophecy was recorded by a former tax collector – Matthew, by Mark and by a beloved physician named Luke – all whom later became apostles. John did not include the Olivet prophecy in his Gospel nor in his three epistles.

Neither did Peter mention it in his two letters. There is no record that James or Andrew, the other two disciples who were witnesses, wrote about it. James was killed (apparently beheaded) by Herod Agrippa I about 12 years after Christ gave the prophecy. Andrew disappeared from the scene of Scripture after **Acts chapter 1**.

With this prophecy in mind, consider the events of the next four decades.

There was a great increase of believers at and following the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 31. As the years came and went, the Church grew considerably.

False Teachers

It was not long before false teachers came on the scene, just as Christ warned. Simon Magus (**Acts 8**), was certainly one of the foremost. Within 20 years false teachers were upsetting even the faraway Galatian churches. The book of **Acts** and the letters by the apostles show that false teachings and opposition to the Church were rampant.

Anyone who has read the book of Acts knows that the Church of God was persecuted from the very beginning. This is also apparent from many comments made in the various epistles. Stephen and James were martyred. Saul himself caused many Christians to be put to death before His conversion.

Not *one* stone shall be left here upon another

Jesus clearly said the Temple would be destroyed.

In May of 66 – Gessius Florus confiscated 17 talents from the Temple treasury. He was said to be an evil and oppressive ruler, a principal agent, of the emperor from 64-66. His action caused an uproar and riot by the Jews. Gessius then allowed his cohorts to plunder part of the city of Jerusalem.

A multitude of Jews reacted by setting fire to palaces and public buildings. After two day' siege, the fort of Antonia was captured, set on fire, and the garrison slain. Thus began the war that ended in the destruction of the Temple and a second captivity of the Jews.

In September of 66, the high priest, Ananias, was murdered. In about November, Cestius Gallus, president Syria, took the Roman 12th legion and began a siege of Jerusalem that lasted about six days. He apparently could have taken the city if he had held on just a little longer. But a strange thing happened. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian writes about it:

“It then happened that Cestius was not conscious either how the besieged despaired...nor how courageous the people were for him; and so he recalled his soldiers from the place, and by

despairing of any expectation of taking it, without having received any disgrace, he retired from the city, without any reason in the world” (*Wars*, Book II, chapter XIX, section 7).

In the process of withdrawing his forces toward the coast, Cestius suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the Jews.

Clearly, God’s hand was in all of this – as it was not yet time for the destruction of Jerusalem. The Church of God at Jerusalem had to have a chance to leave the city.

About February of 67, Nero appointed Vespasian to carry on the war, and by June Vespasian had upwards of 60,000 men in Galilee. Fighting continued through late autumn and then stopped while Vespasian resided in Caesarea during the winter months. In the spring of 68, he began the attack again with a wide encirclement of Jerusalem.

Vespasian prepared for the final attack in June of 68, but on receiving news of Nero’s suicide he withdrew for about a year to await instructions from the new emperor.

In June of 69, he once more took to the field, reoccupied Hebron and restored order throughout Palestine around Jerusalem. The war was soon interrupted again while Vespasian returned to Rome to himself receive the reins of the Roman government. Vespasian then sent his son Titus to resume the war. This occupied the year from June, 69, to the spring of 70.

The final siege

On the Passover of 70 A.D. the final siege of Jerusalem commenced. It lasted 134 terrible days.

On the 84th day, in late summer, the Temple sacrifices were stopped, as there were no more animals to sacrifice. On the 105th day, the Temple was set on fire and, in time, the whole city was burned. On the 134th day, the remainder of the city was taken.

During the siege there was just about as much trouble from within the city as there was from without. It seems that it was every man for himself. There were several warring factions, each with their own interests, fighting against others. The “zealots” – were particularly cruel and ruthless.

The shortage of food was so bad that some resorted to cannibalism, as Moses had prophesied in **Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 11**.

Josephus (*Wars*, Book VI, chapter III, section 4) gives one such account of a woman who ate her own baby. The inhabitants of Jerusalem suffered terribly during this siege, almost beyond description.

Those Jews who tried to escape (at times 500 or more a day) were captured by the Romans and crucified in sight of the walls of the city.

Records state that 1,357,660 people were known killed and 97,000 taken captive. Most of the captives were sent to work in the mines of Egypt – 11,000 of these died, many from starvation.

Destruction of Jerusalem

Following the capture of the city by Titus and his soldiers, Jerusalem was destroyed:

“As soon as the army had no more people to slay or to plunder...Caesar gave orders that they should now demolish the entire city and temple, but should leave as many of the towers standing as were of the greatest eminency and also to spare the west wall of the city...in order to demonstrate to posterity what kind of city it was, and how well fortified, which the Roman valor had subdued; but for all the rest of the wall, it was so thoroughly laid even with the ground by those that dug it up to the foundation, that there was left nothing to make those that came thither believe it had ever been inhabited...This was the end which Jerusalem came to... (Josephus, *Wars*, Book VII, chapter I, section 1).

Amazing events followed the incredible prophecies of Jesus Christ. Christ’s Olivet prophecy was fulfilled, in type, in the first century, leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The Jerusalem Church moves to Pella

Before the final siege of Jerusalem – those of God’s Church in Jerusalem fled to Pella, about 50 miles northeast.

The theologian and church historian Eusebius, who lived during the fourth century, wrote:

“But the members of the church in Jerusalem were instructed by a prophecy, revealed to the leaders, to abandon the city before the war and to take up residence in one of the cities of Perea which was named Pella. From Jerusalem the followers of Christ migrated to Pella, and thus the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judea were abandoned by holy men” (**Eusebius, III, 5:1-7**).

The Church followed Christ’s instructions about what to do when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies (**Luke 21:20-21**). As we just noted – after Cestius Gallus first surrounded Jerusalem the siege had been lifted. This allowed God’s Church to leave the city and escape the holocaust that followed. It was more than three and a half years later when the final siege started and no one could escape without being captured and killed.

By A.D. 70 the Gospel had been preached far and wide, all the way from the British Isles to India. It seemed that Christ's prophecy had come to pass, except that He had not returned to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Some who waited for Christ's return may not have known about the principle of duality in prophecy. They may not have noted that Christ actually foretold two major events: 1) The destruction of Jerusalem, and 2) His return.

It was about more than twenty years later, before the apostle John, on the Isle of Patmos, experienced the vision he recorded in the book of Revelation. Remember that John was one of the four disciples who had heard the Olivet prophecy by Christ sixty some years earlier. John was the only one of the four still alive.

In the vision [*we read about John's vision in the Book of Revelation*] God filled in all the details in a remarkable prophecy that covered the time from John's day to the end of this age to the world tomorrow and the new heavens and new earth. The same Jesus now showed him the same sequence of events, but in the form of mysterious seals on a written scroll.

The events relating to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 were only a type of a far worse time that is yet to occur! We must not be overcome by this world and its ways. We must watch and pray always. If we do these things, we will be protected, by God, from the holocaust that is soon coming on the earth.

The Temple to Be Destroyed

V1 Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the building of the temple.

V2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

The Disciples' Two Questions

V3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Age – the original Greek is *aion*, meaning "age" – not the physical earth on which we live.

The Olivet Prophecy is the longest and most pivotal prophecy uttered by Jesus Christ on earth. The Apostle John was there – when Christ gave his followers the signposts of His Second Coming and the end of man's government. It is the same time setting as the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation is an expanded visionary description of the same series of events described in capsule in **Matthew 24**.

The Time Setting

In **Revelation 6:1-8** – John sees the Four Horsemen, a symbolic re-enactment of the bold, straightforward, easily understood Olivet Prophecy. They differ only slightly in fulfillment. **Matthew 24** – had a first “typical” fulfillment in the war, famine, and disease epidemics in and around Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

John’s vision of the Four Horsemen, however, occurred some twenty years after the local Jewish wars, the fall of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple. John’s vision does NOT refer to any past fulfillment or present condition, but to a future series of specific events, an “anti-typical” fulfillment of **Matthew 24**.

One way to prove that these events are yet future is the contextual evidence of the Book of Revelation itself. John speaks of an army of 200 million men in **Revelation 9:16**. There were barely that many men, women, and children on earth in the days of Christ or the Apostle John. The world did not pass the one billion mark until as recently as 1850. No army from a GROUP of nations could possibly reach the prophesied size of 200 million until the earth housed at least a billion.

The context of **Matthew 24** also shows the ultimate fulfillment of these prophecies to be *yet future*, not in the past or present. Jesus said His messages would be fulfilled at a time when total annihilation was possible (**Matthew 24:21-22**). This period began with the Nuclear Age.

Understanding the duality of prophecy is vitally important. The words of **Matthew 24** refer to: 1) a first “typical” fulfillment in 70 A.D., 2) a long-term condition prevailing from 70 A.D. until now, and 3) an end-time “anti-typical” [*one that is foreshadowed by or identified with an earlier symbol or type – from the Greek – “corresponding” or “representing”*] fulfillment yet ahead.

V4 And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.

V5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.

Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 – show seven successive things, or events to occur. The very first condition Jesus foretells is that of false preachers, misleading and deceiving, not the few, but the many!

That condition set in almost immediately. The Apostle Paul wrote of it, and said this spirit of iniquity was already working, even as he wrote! And it has never relaxed or ceased, but rather has developed in intensity, until the whole world, as prophesied, has become deceived and misled as to the truths of God!

The end-time fulfillment of this lies yet ahead.

1) FALSE RELIGION – White Horse – represents a false Gospel and a great false Church– all in the name of Jesus Christ. This first Horseman is a clever counterfeit Christ –one close enough to fool the majority but not the “elect.” This powerful instrument of Satan – this will have unusual charisma and power! He will dazzle the world with miracles. The end-time False Prophet will ride “the beast” and take to himself titles and honors equal to, and attempting to exceed, those of God Himself! (**II Thessalonians 2:3-4.**)

The next thing Jesus said would occur was wars, and rumors of wars. They have grown progressively worse and worse.

V6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Wars and rumors of wars

There have always been wars. From the time of Christ until now there have been thousands of wars. But what has happened in just the last century or so?

The whole world suddenly erupted in world-shaking violence beginning in 1914.

There was a great change in casualties of all kinds starting in World War I. The casualties in this war were numbered in the tens of millions! World War II brought many more casualties than WW I. We could say there has been an “explosive increase” in the last century.

In the coming World War – which lies shortly ahead of us – the death toll will dwarf anything that has ever occurred in human history! Notice **verse 7.**

V7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

Verse 7 – indicates World War with one group of allied nations attacking another group of nations. It means more than “wars and rumors of wars.” World War III is coming!

2) WAR – Red Horse – a third of the Israelite nations die.

3) FAMINE – Black Horse – another third die from the combined effects of famine and disease epidemics.

4) PESTILENCE – Pale horse

Question: Just how destructive will this war be?

Answer: Jeremiah 4:7 “...your cities will be laid waste without inhabitant.”

How many will die?

Military experts estimate that about a third of a nation would be killed by a full-scale nuclear first strike. But more importantly, that is what the Bible predicted some 2500 years ago.

Bible prophecy not only speaks of a time of chaos affecting all nations, but it singles out the peoples of the United States and Britain, and other areas of the English-speaking world.

God through the pen of the prophet Ezekiel, forewarned that fully two-thirds of our people will perish by catastrophic warfare and famine and disease (**Ezekiel 5:12**).

Ezekiel 5:12 “One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.”

Ezekiel never reached the peoples of ancient Israel with this prophecy.. They had gone into captivity more than 100 years before this time. This prophecy is for our peoples, the descendants of the House of Israel today!

Why is this national destruction to come upon our lands?

Ezekiel 5:7-9: V7 “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have multiplied *disobedience* more than the nations that *are* all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* all around you –

V8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I, even I, *am* against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.

V9 And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations.”

God, who controls all events and would intervene on our behalf if we turned in repentance to Him, is going to allow disasters to teach us once and for all that it doesn't pay to transgress the laws He gives us for our good.

V8 All these *are* the beginning of sorrows [*or more properly translated – “of travail, or tribulation*].

We are now in the time of the second intermission of world war – but the final great worldwide war, famine and disease epidemic has not yet struck. We are already into these events, but we haven't reached the final FURY of them. As **Matthew 24 verse 8** says – “...these *are* the beginning of sorrows.”

When the first four seals described in Revelation are opened, one after another, each of the Four Horsemen will ride! The end-time fulfillment of these Horsemen represent an intensity of conditions far beyond the wars, famines, and disease epidemics that have periodically scourged mankind. The time of their full rampage lies around the bend.

Next, the fifth seal is opened. Notice what happens next.

V9 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.

The disciples of Christ did suffer persecution and were many were martyred. They were hated. But once again – an antitypical future fulfillment of this lies yet ahead.

FIFTH SEAL – The Great Tribulation

Notice how Jesus explained this FIFTH world-shaking event.

Matthew 24:9 – Notice Jesus used two pronouns – “they,” and “you.” Then THEY will deliver YOU up to tribulation [*to be afflicted*] and kill you...” Remember this: In New Testament Bible language the pronoun “you,” unless otherwise clearly defined, refers either to truly converted Christians, or to national Israel or Judah or to both Christians and Judah or Israel. If it is speaking spiritually and individually, the pronoun “you: refers to those who are truly begotten children of God. If the context is speaking nationally, it refers to Israel, or Judah, or both.

In this particular case, comparison with the account in **Mark 13 and Luke 21** makes it very evident that Jesus used this pronoun in the DUAL sense, including BOTH Spirit-begotten Christians, and flesh-born Israelites as nations!

There is DUALITY in nearly everything in God's plan! There is usually a former, typical, and then a final antitypical fulfillment of many prophecies. Not understanding this vital key, many are in total error in their attempts to understand or explain prophecies.

This tribulation did actually occur, in the typical forerunner sense, to the nation Judah, in 70 A.D. But that was merely the early type, the forerunner of the great NATIONAL invasion and captivity YET to occur.

This is described more plainly in – **Luke 21:23-24: V23** “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

V24 And they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

V10 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

V11 Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

V12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

This is also speaking individually of truly Spirit-begotten Christians who have become so lukewarm, so out of prayerful contact with God that they will not be accounted worthy to escape all these things. This is brought out in **Revelation 6:9-11** – this fifth seal pictures it as a time of martyrdom of saints – of truly converted, begotten children of God.

V13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

He who endures to the end shall be saved – we have not been saved yet! We must endure to the end of our lives or until Christ returns and we are born into His divine Family!

V14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The false preaching was not the end. The wars and rumors of wars were not the end. But here in **Matthew 24:14** – Jesus interrupted to tell them when the end shall come – after the “...gospel of the kingdom was preached in all the world as a witness...” There is Jesus answer! That was done in the Philadelphia era of God’s Church under the leadership of Herbert W. Armstrong and is still being done yet today in God’s Church!

Jesus made it plain that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God would be preached to the world as a “witness” to all nations ***shortly before*** His coming to establish the Kingdom. And He commissioned His Church to be responsible for proclaiming that wonderful message of GOOD NEWS to the world!

V15 Therefore when you see the ‘*abomination of desolation*,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place: (whoever reads, let him understand),

Daniel 12:11 “And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Daniel’s original prophecy (**Daniel 12:11**) has more than one fulfillment.

The first took place in 167 B.C., on the 25th day of the month Kislev (November-December in the Roman calendar). With the help of his army, Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to the Greek god Zeus on the temple mount in Jerusalem and offered swine upon it.

The “abomination of desolation” Jesus mentioned was the desecration of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. But, there is yet to be another fulfillment.

A short time before Christ returns, armies will once again surround Jerusalem and an “abomination” will be set up in the city. At that time, those in Jerusalem are told to flee to the mountains (**Matthew 24:16; Luke 21:20-21**).

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V16 “Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

V17 Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.

V18 And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.

V19 But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

V20 And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.

Matthew 24:19-20

These verses are part of a prophecy that was fulfilled in *type* in A.D. 69 when Christians fled just before the final siege of Jerusalem began, prior to its destruction in A.D. 70. Christ knew that those with small children and nursing babies would have it especially hard. (The “woe” in **verse 19** is said compassionately, while in **Matthew 23:13** it is said as a thing deserved.)

Matthew 23:13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who were entering to go in.”

Perhaps we can best understand why Christ said to pray that their flight from Jerusalem be not in the winter or on the Sabbath (**verse 20**) by noting what occurred in A.D. 70.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Jerusalem was then divided into *several* warring factions. One faction wanted to surrender to the Romans and avoid destruction. Another faction was determined to fight the Romans no matter how hopeless the outcome seemed. Those who were determined to fight would not allow the rest to go out of the city to surrender. The only way one could get out was to go out in the afternoon with hoes, rakes, and the like, as if to carry on regular daily duties in the fields. One could not take extra clothing, other belongings, or small children without being noticed and captured.

On the Sabbath or in winter, people would not be going out of the city to work in the fields. If the time to flee came then, few if any could escape. Thus, Christians were to pray that the time to flee would not fall in the winter or on the Sabbath.

The time is coming again, during the Great Tribulation, when Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. Christians will again have to flee to place of safety to avoid the terrible bloodshed that is prophesied to occur (**Revelation 12:13**).

Personal Correspondence Department Letter L008 - Worldwide Church of God.

God promises to provide a “**place of safety**” for the end-time true Church where it will be protected from the devil [*the dragon*].

Jesus Christ promises to keep the overcomers of His Church safe in the “hour of trial” – the coming Great Tribulation (**Revelation 3:10**).

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.”

The Philadelphian’s will be kept from this sore trial that going to come on all the world. This verse does not refer to any period of temptation the whole world went through during the time the original, small church at Philadelphia existed. It can only refer to the great Tribulation, but different words are used.

This trial takes place for an “hour.” Is this an indefinite time, or does it refer to the same “hour” the 10 kings receive power with the beast (**Revelation 17:12; Revelation 13:5**). Such time of trouble can only refer to the Great Tribulation.

Revelation 17:12 “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.”

Revelation 13:5 “And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.”

After the war in heaven pitting Michael and his angels against the devil and his angels (**Revelation 12:7**). Satan is cast to the earth and starts a new, vigorous persecution against the Church (**verse 13**).

Revelation 12:13-17: V13 “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*.”

After this we read:

V14 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.

Note that the woman (the Church – that group of people who are individually begotten and led by the Holy Spirit, and who are living in obedience to God) is given two wings of a great eagle, that she might “fly.” Here the Greek word literally means “fly” (as a bird or plane does), not flee or escape by other means. She flies to “her place,” where she is nourished (fed physically and spiritually) for three and a half years (time, and times, and half a time”).

Even though the scripture seems to indicate air transportation, that is not the only possible explanation. A similar statement is found in **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.” The ancient Israelites never heard of modern air transportation. They walked out of Egypt!

The word *place* is singular, not plural, so it must be just *one* place.

Where is that place?

It is said to be in “the wilderness.” A wilderness, in Bible terms, is what we would call a desolate place, often mountainous. It indicates a solitary, sparsely populated area. Whatever and wherever that place will be, we can be sure that it will be a place of testing – a final exam so to speak – where the begotten children of God will be polished and shaped into the kind of people God will account worthy to be born into His Family.

This place of God’s protection may quite possibly be in the area anciently occupied by Edom, Moab and Ammon, since that area will escape the final invasion of the king of the north (**Daniel 11:41**).

Several texts, including **Isaiah 16:1-4; Isaiah 33:13-17 and Isaiah 42:11-12**, indicate that Petra, located in this wilderness area, might be the place. The word *Petra* – which comes from a Greek word meaning “rock,” is called *Sela* in Hebrew. The area is very rocky and is generally entered through a narrow pathway with precipitous rock walls on each side.

If Petra is the place, it would certainly not be the Kingdom of God on earth (the Kingdom of God will come three and a half years later). Petra would not be paradise. The temperatures in this desert area are extreme in both summer and winter, and even from night to day.

Wherever the place, it will be a place of safety from Satan. But it will not yet be God’s Kingdom. Those who go will not yet have “endured to the end.” They will not yet have it made. They will still be able to sin and fall away. To some the “place of safety” could prove to be a place of danger and the place where they finally lose out on salvation.

V15 So the serpent [*Satan the Devil*] spewed water out of his mouth like a flood [*an army*] after the woman [*God’s Church*], that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

V16 But the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood [*army*] which the dragon [*Satan*] had spewed out of his mouth.

V17 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.”

Verse 17 – shows that there are certain others in the Church who do not make this flight. They face not just persecution from Satan but *war* with him, and there is no indication of divine protection for them.

Who are the people “accounted worthy” to escape?

Luke 21:36 “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Those worthy will be watching. In plain language, they will be observing world, national and local events, especially as they relate to prophecy, so that they will not be caught unawares by the snare that will trap the rest of the world.

Those worthy will be praying always. They will be close to God. These people will become worthy through Christ’s sacrifice and forgiveness of sin, and not as a result of their own “worthiness.” They will be giving their lives in God’s service. We are supposed to give our lives, not try to save them. It is through the process of giving our lives that our lives may be saved.

Luke 9:24 “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”

The main lesson we need to learn is to do the job God has given us – preaching the Gospel to the world as a witness, and getting close to God spiritually and staying there.