

Where Is Your Place of Safety?

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It has been assumed by some religious groups that God will protect them from cataclysmic events occurring on earth when Jesus Christ returns to usher in a one thousand year period of peace on earth (cf. Rev. 20:1-10). Some even believe there is a specific location that God will take certain people in order to preserve their physical lives. This location is referred to by at least one religious organization as “the place of safety.” A number of scriptural references are used to support this belief, and these will be examined in order to determine whether this teaching is correct.

First, it is important to examine what Jesus Christ taught about those who are seeking to obey his Father’s law and commandments because, presumably, these people would qualify to be protected from any harm whether they lived in the past, present, or future,

Remember the word that I (Christ) said to you (Christ’s followers), ‘A servant is not greater than his master,’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you... (Jn. 15:20a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Apparently all of Christ’s apostles, with the possible exception of John (cf. Jn. 21:20-23), were martyred while serving God,

Most assuredly, I (Christ) say to you (Peter, and in a general sense all the apostles), when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish. This he (Christ) spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God... (Jn. 21:18-19a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It was no different for those who faithfully served God during the First Covenant. They also suffered hardship and death,

... And others (God’s servants during the First Covenant) were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection (ref. to the 1st resurrection; cf. Rev. 20:4-6). Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, and were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented (Heb. 11:35a-37; Ed. notes in parentheses).

As God is not a respecter of persons (cf. Ac. 10:34; Dt. 10:17b), it is unlikely that those living at the time of Christ’s return are going to be under less hardship and persecution than God’s servants have been throughout the ages. Besides, those who have obeyed God until Christ’s return will be changed in the twinkling of an eye at the first resurrection (cf. 1Cor. 15:52-53); so why would they be concerned about preserving their physical bodies? Christ addressed this subject showing that true believers need to examine their priorities,

Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles (unbelievers) seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (cf. Ps. 119:160, 172), and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own troubles (Mt. 6:31-34; cf. Lk. 12:22-31; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In fact, those who are focused on saving their own physical lives, will end up losing them and waiting until the second resurrection because they were more concerned about preserving themselves than serving, trusting, and obeying God,

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (in the first resurrection). For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world (while in a flesh and blood body), and loses his own soul (at death)? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then **he will reward each according to his works** (Mt. 16:25-27; cf. Jas. 2:18-26; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Because God has allowed freedom of choice for all His creation, even the wicked are granted safety during their short time on this earth,

But God draws the mighty away with His power; He rises up, but no man is sure of life. **He gives them security, and they rely on it;** yet His eyes are on their ways. They are exalted for a little while, then they are gone. They are brought low; they are taken out of the way like all others; they dry out like the heads of grain (Job 24:22-24; emphasis added).

...He (Almighty God) makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45b; Ed. note in parenthesis).

If the wicked are granted a period of safety during which time they are able to conduct their evil deeds, what advantage does a righteous person have? King Solomon commented on this reality,

...There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness (Ecc. 7:15b).

However, because the righteous person is more focused on obeying God than saving his physical body, Solomon noted that he/she will do better in the long run than those who seek to do evil,

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged (on earth), yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him (because they will have everlasting life) (Ecc. 8:12; Ed. notes in parentheses).

For the righteous person, sometimes death is their place of safety from further hardship and trial during their physical lifetime,

The wicked is banished in his wickedness (cf. Gen. 4:9-13), but the righteous has a refuge in his death (Prov. 14:32; cf. Gen. 4:8).

Consequently, there is no guarantee in scripture that righteous people are going to be spared every hardship including cataclysmic events that some believe will be associated with the return of Jesus Christ. There are many passages in the Bible

showing that God's people benefit from various trials even though they sometimes end in death,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance or perseverance) (Jas. 1:2-3; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Though he (Christ) was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected (as a result of the hardships he endured including death on a stake), he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him (Heb. 5:8-9; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So our place of safety is not a location but rather a condition, and that condition is our relationship with Almighty God based on trust and obedience,

But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble (Ps. 37:39; cf. Ps. 9:9).

As soon as we focus on saving our physical lives we are in serious trouble (cf. Mt. 16:25-27). As soon as we dwell on the timing of Christ's return, which often includes predicting the date or time of his return, we are in serious trouble. Why? Because our focus should be on serving and obeying Him more than saving our own flesh and blood,

If anyone comes to me (Christ) and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, **and his own life also**, he cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14:26; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

It is an idolatrous practice to be in the business of predicting when Christ will return because preserving one's life becomes more important than anything else. This activity is very enticing to many people and some will go to extreme ends to prepare for what they believe will be the end of the world. There have been examples of people selling everything they have in order to flee to some physical location that they believe will offer protection. This can allow religious leaders to control and manipulate their followers because these they claim to know when Christ will return. Without following these leaders, the members believe they will not know when or where to flee. This ends up being a form of worship because the members are looking to a physical leader or religious organization, who they believe has this special knowledge, instead of trusting in God for their protection.

One prophecy that has been used to support the claim that God's people are going to be protected somewhere on this earth is found in the book of Daniel,

At that time (time of the end) Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book (Dan. 12:1; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The problem with using this prophecy as an example of God's people being protected from cataclysmic events associated with Christ's return is that it covers a time frame sometimes referred to as the Day of the Lord,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up (laid bare) (2Pet. 3:10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

The Day of the Lord is a period of judgment that commences with Christ's return, continues for a thousand years (cf. 2Pet. 3:7-8; Rev. 20:4-6), and is followed by a period of time referred to as the great white throne judgment. This is the point in time when everyone who was not part of the first resurrection will be judged and, upon repentance, will be in the book that is referred to in Daniel's prophecy,

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books (of God's word; cf. Mt. 4:4) (Rev. 20:11-12; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Therefore the people who are delivered in Daniel's prophecy are those who have repented and are written in the Book of Life mentioned in Revelation 20:12. The prophecy given to Daniel had nothing to do with some physical location on earth that God's people could go to in order to preserve their lives.

Revelation 3:10 has been used to claim that God's people will go to a place of safety to be protected from a tribulation that will last approximately three and a half years, based on the period of time that God's two witnesses will be warning earth's inhabitants (cf. Rev. 11:3),

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep (SHD 5083) you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth (Rev. 3:10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In this scripture, God promises to "guard and keep some in the state in which they are" as this is the meaning behind "keep (SHD 5083)." In other words, His people will not be changed or negatively affected by events that are going on around them. They will continue to function and do His work right up until Christ returns, even though they may have to endure some persecution,

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food (cf. Mt. 4:4) in due season (at the right time)? Blessed is that servant whom his master, **when he comes** (at Christ's return), **will find so doing** (Mt. 24:45-46; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man (Christ) comes (returns) (Mt. 10:23; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So contrary to the belief that God's people will be whisked off to some place of safety, scripture shows that God will protect them so they can continue to actively teach and warn others about the consequence of living contrary to His law and commandments (cf. Mt. 24:14). This is the work that God's servants have always done and will continue

to do until every power and principality that exalts itself above His law and commandments is subdued (cf. 1Cor. 15:24-28).

The scripture that has been used by some religious groups to support a physical place of safety is Isaiah 16:1-5. In this reference it is claimed that God will protect His people in a small city called Petra in the modern nation of Jordan, based on the people of this nation being descendants of the ancient Moabites,

Send the lamb to their ruler of the land, from Sela (Rock; hence Petra which means rock in the Greek language) to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. 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. Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day. Hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes. Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler (devastator)... (Isa. 16:1-4a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The problem with this theory is that it pictures God as unable to protect His people without hiding them away in a city called Petra. In reality, he protected a nation of approximately one million people by simply telling them to place the blood of a lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses and then remain indoors until after midnight (Ex. 12:1-14). At this time ancient Israel was in the midst of the Egyptian nation that wanted to get rid of them as quickly as possible. So Almighty God is more than capable of protecting His people wherever they are. He does not need to gather them together in one isolated location in order to preserve their physical lives,

...Is My (Almighty God's) hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? (Isa. 50:2b; Ed. note in parenthesis).

On the contrary, Almighty God is more than capable of preserving His people where ever they are and allowing them to continue doing His work right up until the return of Jesus Christ. This should be the focus of all those who claim they know what is required of His servants,

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord,' have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **depart from me, you who practice lawlessness** (Mt. 7:21-23; emphasis added; cf. 13:42; 1Jn. 3:4).

God's true servants will continue teaching others that disobedience to the law and commandments of God is the reason for the breaking down of our society and that repentance is required in order to reverse this trend. These servants will continue doing this work until Christ returns, despite those who wish to persecute them. God's servants will not be seeking a place of safety in order to preserve their physical lives because they will be actively teaching and witnessing to the nations they are living in (cf. Mt. 24:14).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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