

A PLACE IN THE WILDERNESS

The Place Where Israel Will Flee in the Tribulation

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation [the Tribulation] be overpast.

For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity...” (Isa. 26:20, 21a).

“Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17).

“When ye therefore see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matt. 24:15, 16; cf. Luke 21:20, 21).

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days...

And 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” (Rev. 12:5, 6, 13, 14).

The preceding Scriptures — from four different books, two from the Old Testament (Isaiah and Jonah) and two from the New Testament (Matthew and Revelation) — are the main verses one would normally go to when dealing with that which will happen to the Jews in the land of Israel (presently about 6,000,000) when events surrounding the man of sin, the Beast, breaking his seven-year covenant with Israel begin to occur.

The Scriptures, or That Often Taught?

First, it is important to understand that the Jewish people *are NOT* back in the land in fulfillment of any type Old Testament restoration promises. That is, they *are NOT* back in the land through any type fulfillment of promises pertaining to God regathering His people back to the land.

(The preceding would be contrary to much present popular thought in Christian circles. Most Christians today, seeking to deal with and understand things about Israel and the nations in the Middle East — many aligning themselves after some fashion with what is often called “Christian Zionism” — see the establishment of the Jewish nation May 14, 1948 and the continuous migration of Jews back to the land since that time as *God restoring His people to the land in accordance with His numerous promises in the O.T. to one day do so* [Ezek. 39:25-29; Amos 9:11-15].

And many of these see a gradual reclamation of parts of the land, mainly for agricultural purposes, as *God also restoring the land as well, again, in accordance with His promises to do so* [Lev. 26:42; II Chron. 7:14].

A number of other Bible students though would somewhat draw back from the all-inclusiveness of the preceding — because of the Jewish people’s present unbelieving and unrepentant state — and *see God restoring His people to their land only in accordance with certain, particular O.T. promises to do so*. They would *see God restoring His people in accordance with a handful of promises which they look upon as a restoration of the people in unbelief, to then be dealt with by God in or near the land* [e.g., in Petra] *relative to their salvation, with the Messianic Era in view* [e.g., sections such as Isa. 11:11, 12; Ezek. 20:33-38; 22:17-22; 36:22-28; Zeph. 2:1-3 are those usually referenced].

Thus, one might say that there are two groups

within the one larger group. Both though are making the same basic mistake, *for THERE ARE NO SCRIPTURES having to do with God restoring any of the Jewish people prior to the time of Christ’s return*. Both groups take different Scriptures having to do with events surrounding Israel occurring either immediately preceding or following Christ’s return and seek to apply them to events occurring since May 14, 1948.

[The verses used by those seeing God regathering a segment of the Jewish people in unbelief, are, as previously stated, actually verses pertaining to *God dealing with the Jewish people either during or following the Tribulation, mainly with activities following the Tribulation, having to do with a fulfillment of the things depicted by the seven Jewish festivals in Lev. 23*.

These verses, in this respect, have to do mainly with *the national conversion and cleansing of the Jewish people, among other related things, at the time of Christ’s return. And these things will occur following Man’s Day, at the beginning of the Lord’s Day*].

All of this misunderstanding, misrepresentation of Scripture — resulting in an erroneous teaching of Scripture — could have been prevented had these individuals paid attention to the O.T. types, the Jewish festivals, and the plain reading of Scripture in the light of that revealed by the Prophets concerning the matter. But all has seemingly been thrown to the winds, with the result in the matter where we are today.

The heavens remain *closed* relative to God’s dealings with the Jewish people today, and they *will NOT* again open *UNTIL* He has concluded His dealings with the Church during the present dispensation and has removed the Church.

[Note, for example, the typology of Jacob and Laban, when the heavens remained *closed* from Gen. 28:15 to Gen. 31:3, *during the ENTIRE time of Jacob’s exile* — extending to a time when he had acquired *ALL* of Laban’s *wealth* (cf. Isa. 60:1-12). *ONLY THEN* did God speak to Jacob relative to a return to his land].

Thus, with the heavens *closed*, the return of Jews back to the land since the establishment of the nation in the late ‘40s can, of course, have *NOTHING* to do with any type restoration of the people in accordance with any of the O.T. Prophets. God is simply *NOT* dealing with [speaking to] Israel in such a respect today, *which*

His having a part in any type restoration would necessitate.

Rather, the present migration of Jews to the land has to do with *God allowing* the Jewish people to rise up and seek to emancipate themselves — apart from their Messiah, in their present unbelieving and unrepentant state — and re-enter an “empty, swept, and garnished” house. And God has allowed this to occur in order to bring about end-time events relative to Israel and the nations [Matt. 12:43-45; 23:37-39].

But, seeking to relate all of this to any type O.T. prophecies concerning God speaking to Israel at a time when the heavens are closed is an entirely different matter. *It HASN'T happened and it's NOT happening for the simple reason that, from a Biblical standpoint, IT CAN'T HAPPEN!*

[For additional information on the preceding, note the author's pamphlets, “70 years, 490 Years” (Parts I-III), where this overall matter is dealt with and numerous other related pamphlets, articles, and chapters in books are referenced].)

Now, dealing with the subject of the Jewish people being uprooted from their land and fleeing into “the wilderness” in the middle of the Tribulation, when the man of sin turns against them (*i.e.*, the Jews presently in the land, some 6,000,000 today), why has so much time been spent on the way a large segment of Christendom looks upon that which has been happening since 1948?

The answer is *because of what Christians are confronted with today through that being taught by the vast majority of Bible teachers concerning the present Jewish nation in the Middle East.*

These individuals see the Jewish people presently in the land — not necessarily all of those in the land, but large numbers — forming some type remnant that will flee to a designated place in or near the land (*e.g.*, in Petra), there be protected from harm, be furnished with the necessities of life, and be dealt with by God during the last half of the Tribulation.

And they, in a respect, find themselves somewhat forced into this position, for they see God having brought the Jewish people back into the land in order to deal with them, after a particular fashion, *in or near the land rather than out among the nations.*

Then, beyond that, as previously stated, some see the present returning Jews as a people who can

never again be uprooted from their land.

Scenarios concerning any of the preceding though are built on previous error and are as far removed from that which Scripture has to say about the matter as the previous error — *i.e.*, their prior position concerning God speaking to the Jewish people today, when the heavens are closed, restoring them to their land (whether in unbelief, or in any other fashion).

And since the preceding is what so many Bible teachers believe and teach, and what so many Christians are confronted with by these numerous Bible teachers today, it has all been laid out before presenting the simple truth of the matter.

So, What Does Scripture Say?

The matter regarding Israel fleeing into the wilderness, where they will flee — *i.e.*, the location of “the wilderness” — is quite plainly stated in Scripture. And one wonders how anyone could ever miss it, though the reasons so many miss it are obvious.

When the manner in which God has structured Old Testament history is largely ignored (which is highly typical), leaving one estranged from a large section of God's Word, *one reason is provided.* How God uses metaphors, which in this case are largely ignored as well, *another reason is provided.* Then there is the matter of comparing Scripture with Scripture, *which, in this case, is also largely ignored.*

Thus, without using the means which God has provided in His Word, what can one expect but the error which has resulted?!

The truth of the matter is all very simple. Take the type in Jonah, the reference in Matthew, the reference in Revelation, compare Scripture with Scripture, bring in other related Scriptures, keep in mind how God uses metaphors, and *Scripture sets forth the whole of the matter for you.*

In the middle of the Tribulation the Jewish people in the land are said to flee into “the wilderness” in Rev. 12:6, 14. The word “wilderness” is a translation of the Greek word *eremos*, and “wilderness” is a good translation. The word is used in the New Testament referring to desolate places both in and out of the land of Israel (John 1:23; 3:14).

And, aside from the two usages of the word

in Revelation chapter twelve, it is used only one other time in this book, referring to *the same regal woman, though now seen as a harlot, out among the Gentile nations* (Rev. 17:3; *cf.* 12:1ff; 17:1, 15, 18).

The scene presented in Rev. 17:1ff is clearly that of *Israel following the nation's flight into the wilderness back in chapter twelve — now out among the nations, in the kingdom of the Beast.*

And both Matthew and Jonah present *EXACTLY the same picture, seen from different perspectives.*

In Matthew, instead of “the wilderness” it is “the mountains,” with “a mountain” used in Scripture to metaphorically signify *a kingdom* (*cf.* Isa. 2:1-5; Matt. 16:28-7:5). And with “mountains” (plural) in view, *the text can ONLY point to the Gentile nations.*

And this is perfectly in line with Jonah, typifying Israel, being swallowed by the great fish and there protected by God. The fish was in *the sea*, with “the sea” used as a metaphor for *the Gentile nations* (*cf.* Dan. 7:2, 3; Matt. 13:1; Rev. 13:1).

And, *as Jonah, so Israel — in the sea, out among the nations, in the place which God had originally prepared for Israel, where He will protect and care for the nation.*

Thus, *Scripture is quite clear.* In the middle of the Tribulation when the Beast breaks his covenant with Israel, *the Jews in the land will be driven back out among the nations, where God had originally driven them in order to deal with them relative to repentance.*

They will be driven back out where the remainder of world-Jewry resides — some 7,000,000 to 8,000,000 more Jews, and there God will deal with all of them together — the complete nation, in the kingdom of the Beast.

And it is here, *out among the nations, in the diaspora*, that God will bring His people *through the fire, providing for and protecting them, as seen in Rev. 12:14* — not necessarily as individuals, for over 9,000,000 (by today's count) will perish — but as *a nation.* For the nation, with God residing in the nation's midst, *where He has always been, CANNOT perish, else God Himself would have to perish as well* (*cf.* Ex. 3:1-7; Dan. 3:19-27).

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