

A Place Of Safety? (Part 2)

God's Purpose for the Place of Safety

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This sermon had two purposes to it. I wanted to show that we were approaching a time unique in the history of man, and I wanted to show that what matters is not what God is capable of doing, but what He *purposes* to do—whether to protect us where we are *or* in a place of safety. Now obviously being taken to a place of safety involves the matter of fleeing from the places where we are now scattered, and traveling to the designated location. There are people who object to that for a number of reasons.

There was one formally highly-placed Worldwide Church of God official who objected that fleeing is a cop out, a cowardly running from responsibility and a failing to properly witness for God. His argument relies heavily on the very wonderful Psalm 91. There are beautiful and encouraging promises there and I'm glad to see that he is relying on them. But I want to continue in this sermon to show that fleeing in no way invalidates Psalm 91, nor does Psalm 91 invalidate fleeing to safety, because fleeing rests on God's purpose—not on what God is capable of doing.

We're going to begin this sermon back in the book of Luke 4:9-13. We ought to immediately recognize that this is the temptation of Jesus Christ by Satan.

Luke 4:9-13 Then he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you: And in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone. And Jesus answered and said to him, It has been said, you shall not tempt the Lord your God. Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The theme here obviously is protection. All of us know at least the general theme of Psalm 91 and that is what Satan quoted here. Luke 4:10-11 are

verses 11 and 12 of Psalm 91, and so he is quoting back to Jesus the very words that Jesus Himself inspired. But he did it without quoting the whole thing, I don't mean all of Psalm 91; he missed part of the verses that are given there in verses 11 and 12. What he left out was one phrase that says "in all your ways". Very interesting that he left that out. Jesus immediately came back and showed him that he had misapplied it and what Jesus is saying is that God does not guarantee He will protect us in all our ways.

Look at this: is Jesus going to protect us in rebellion—in **our** rebellion? Is Jesus going to protect us if we are downright foolish in what we are doing? God does expect us to do things in faith—I should say involving faith *in* Him. The unconverted may even consider this faith to be foolish or dangerous. But willfully exposing ourselves to any danger, presuming that God is going to protect us, is tempting Him. Man has no right to dictate to God what God should do.

It's as if Satan said this to Jesus: "*Since you are God's son, certainly He will protect you from whatever danger you may go into. His angels will always be there to help you. You cannot be hurt. Deliverance will **always** be there, you can trust Him.*" It sounds good, but it is built upon a presumption.

I have heard of ministers of the Worldwide Church of God, when they were counseling people, say, "*You just do what I told you, and everything will work out.*" The implication is that even if the minister is wrong in his counsel, God will smooth it over and make it work simply because he is God's minister, and they are God's people. You can tell from this temptation of Jesus here in Luke 4 that Jesus did not believe that. One cannot tempt God and expect God's Psalm 91 promises to rescue them. God may, in His mercy, rescue such a one because of the person's ignorance, but that is not the mature way to go.

Now turn with me to the book of Hebrews 4:14-15. We're going to begin to extract information from Jesus' life—some examples—and if there is anybody that can teach us what God expects His people to do, it is Jesus. I'm going to show you that Jesus followed His rejection of Satan's temptation by fleeing—not by standing in the midst of danger and tempting God to rescue Him, presuming that God would do it, just because of who He was. Now let's begin laying the foundation here.

Hebrews 4:14-15 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted [or rather "tested" or "proved" or "tried"] as we are, yet without sin.

Christ's physical life was not spared the kind of calamities we might have to face, in order that He be prepared for His responsibility in God's purpose through sharing experiences with us. In other words, if it is possible that we might have to flee for our lives, then God was not going to just excuse Christ from that kind of a trial. He was going to allow Jesus to get into situations where indeed He might have to flee for His life. Now would He just presume that God would rescue Him because of who He was? I feel sure that the apostle Paul in writing this wants us to understand that Jesus' sinlessness was the result of *conscious decision* and *intense struggle*, not merely the consequence of His divine nature.

Did Jesus ever decide to flee? Let's go back beginning with the earliest part of His life, in Matthew 2:13-14. Here Jesus was a babe.

Matthew 2:13-14 And when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed for Egypt.

Did you see that the message for them to flee came from God? Does God expect us to flee or does He expect us to just stay there and let Him put an invisible shield around us so that we're impervious to what is going on around us? No, God Himself sent a message by an angel to Joseph. Joseph fled immediately by night. The implication of those two scriptures is: he hopped up out of bed while it was still night, gathered his things together, and took off for Egypt while it was yet dark. He didn't even wait apparently until morning to get out of there. Joseph, hand-picked, I am sure, by God to be the surrogate father—stepfather—to His own son had enough spiritual know-how to "get." There is nothing cowardly about fleeing; he got out.

Why would God want us to flee? Obviously because there are things to be learned from fleeing that cannot be learned if God is always protecting us from the damage that we may even bring on ourselves.

Now let's go to another one in chapter 4. If God smoothed everything out, would we ever learn that it doesn't pay to break His law? What if He smoothed out Adam's and Eve's sin and suspended "the wages of sin is death"? God won't do that. How many times have you heard that white-haired patriarch saying, "God will not budge one **inch** with His law"?

Matthew 4:12-14 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying... [...and then the prophecy is given.]

At first glance one might say, Jesus moved out of the area because He wanted to fulfill that prophecy that His preaching would begin in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. That's all right until one understands that the word "departed" means "to withdraw." Now it begins to take on a different connotation. Then when we begin to read, at the beginning of verse 12, we see why He withdrew. He withdrew because He heard that John had been put in prison. Why was John put in prison? Because there was a persecution raging that was going to—in the estimation of Jesus—envelop the very beginning of *His* ministry too.

So Jesus accomplished two things at one time. He got out of the area, and He also fulfilled a prophecy—that His ministry would begin in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. We're going to add proof to this because we're going to go, in just a little bit, to the book of Luke and we're going to see why He got out of the area of Nazareth. We're going to see very clearly why He got out the area of Nazareth.

Now let's stay in the book of Matthew and we're going to go to chapter 12 this time, Matthew 12:14-16. We need verse 14 because we need to see the context and unfortunately in many bibles they have broken the context by ending a paragraph with the end of verse 14. But verse 14 feeds right into verse 15.

Matthew 12:14-16 Then the Pharisees went out, and took council against Him, how they might destroy him. [Oh, we have a persecution arising here.] But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew [same word, the one we just read translated "departed"] from there and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all; And He warned them not to make Him known.

Is it possible that He was playing it safe? Yes it is! Verse 14 sets you up for that. He withdrew from the area. It was not notoriety that He was after. The opposition of some of the Pharisees drove Jesus into semi-retirement for a little while. He was not about to deliberately provoke the Pharisees into a fight and so discretion was the better part of valor. The best thing to do was to get out of the area, and not challenge these people.

Now let's go to the book of Luke, this time in chapter 4, Luke 4:16. We'll pick up the theme here. Luke 4:16 feeds right into this (it's in the same time frame as Matthew 4) where we read that He withdrew from Nazareth. Now here's what led him to withdraw from Nazareth...

Luke 4:16 So he came to Nazareth, [see this is just a little bit earlier than those verses we read in Matthew 4] where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

And then He was handed the book of Isaiah and He read from it, and began to preach a sermon from it. Now the sermon was a stinging rebuke of these people because they wanted to see miraculous things done by Him in their presence—things that He had apparently already done in Capernaum. So He said, in effect, He could not do it there because these people had no faith. They weren't like the Gentiles, who were living at the time of Elijah, or they weren't like Naaman who lived at the time of Elijah.

Luke 4:28-30 Then all of those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him

out of the city, and they led him to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, that they might throw him down over the cliff. And then passing through the midst of them, he went his way.

When He was faced with violence, brethren, He fled the area. His work had to go on and so God intervened. I think that Psalm 91 kicked in here and Jesus was the victim of something that He could not foresee. He was not tempting God in any way here. He was doing His job, persecution arose against Him very quickly and so God protected Him from the immediate danger. But Jesus fled to another area. He went to Capernaum. Brethren, God is not illogical. He does not defy His own laws. He *expects* His people to use both faith and wisdom—maybe we could say, "common sense."

Because of faith, God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves—like He did right here for Jesus in protecting His life, and in some way miraculously enabling Him to pass right through a very angry crowd. But wisdom in this case is clearly shown—He means for us to do something physical to remove ourselves from the danger. Jesus left the area. So there is a faith factor and there is also wisdom. The wisdom, I believe, is a fruit of one's faith.

There is a third factor. God is very deeply involved in the state of His work for you. So we have our faith in God, we have wisdom or common sense, and we also have the state—the way God is working with you.

Let's go back as we begin to make a little turn in this sermon. Let's go all the way back in the old testament to II Samuel 15:13-14. We'll leave Jesus and we'll go to another servant of God—David. The background here is David's flight from Absalom. You might recall that Absalom determined that he was going to become king, and so he began undermining David through some deceitful and worldly "wise" ways: through psychological means, through the giving of favor—by giving people judgments they would like to have, he began to persuade people to follow him. We find in that chapter that it took him four years of this undermining of David's reign to get a large enough following that he felt now that it was time to move to overthrow David. So he was successful to some extent.

II Samuel 15:13-14 And a messenger came to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom. And David said to all of his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, "Arise, and let us flee, or else we will not escape from Absalom: make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword."

There's a proverb that says that the wicked flee when no man pursues. I hardly think that God would call David a wicked man. He had times when he was far from God. Here, we see a time that he fled for his life (incidentally the bible says that he fled into the wilderness, which is interesting). He went to the wilderness east of Jordan. Now **why** did this man flee? Wisdom dictated that David was in no position to defend the city. He was outnumbered; he was outgunned. Absalom, in his strategy, had gained the upper hand and so David decided that it was better to have the freedom of movement—in an open place—than it was to be trapped in a city, where he would be subject to a siege.

So he—again, like Jesus later on—said that discretion is the better part of valor. "***Let's get out of here !***" Was David a coward? "David, O mighty man of valor, great man in the eyes of God, winner of many military victors, David has killed his ten thousands". Is there any one of us that would say David was a coward? I don't think so. Wisdom dictated that this was the best move to make. It wasn't cowardly at all. David usually had his spiritual wits about him. He did not presume to remove God's authority to do as He pleased. Now look at verse 24 and 25. This occurred while the fleeing was going on.

II Samuel 15:24-25 There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had finished crossing over from the city [That is crossing over Jordan]. Then the king said to Zadok, Carry the ark of God back into the city: and if I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and show me both it, and his habitation.

There is David's faith in God. He didn't presume that God would bring him back, and he didn't have superstitious ideas that somehow he would win, just because the ark—this holiest of all items in the nation—was with him. No, David's faith was in God and he knew that God would make the right decision. Would He bring David back or was David about to be replaced by his son, Absalom? So David, in faith, was going to let God decide which way it was going to be.

Now, you see, there is our approach. David said the ark is to be where God said it is to be—in the place where God has placed His name. *Not* where David, in his anxiety, might feel justified to move it. You see there is a man of faith.

So we find in chapter 19, that David returns. You can read that in verses 9 and 39 and we understand then that God still had much more for David to do. Much of David's work was in uniting and organizing Israel into a nation and much of that had *yet* to be done. In one sense, David was just reaching the peak of his powers. All of that experience behind him... so, in his old age, God still had a great deal for him yet to do. He rescued David, even though David had to flee.

Let's go back toward the front of the book again, this time to Genesis 27 and we'll look at another one of those heroes of faith—this time, Jacob. Jacob was not converted at this time, but again we see a man fleeing.

Genesis 27:41-45 So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob. And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away: Until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him: then I shall send, and bring you from there; why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?

Jacob brought this on, but still he fled *with* God's blessing. You know the blessing and the birthright both went to the one who fled. God preserved him because of the purpose He was working out through Jacob. Remember what it says in the book of Romans—how that God chose Jacob, that God loved Jacob, but He hated Esau, so that it might be by election. God's purpose was going to be worked out through Jacob—not Esau—even though we find here that Jacob was a scoundrel and he fled.

God allowed him to flee with His blessing because His purpose was being worked out through the one who was to blame and the one who was fleeing. You see God's purpose *is* what really counts here. So, again, we see a combination of God's purpose and wisdom working together. Rebecca apparently felt that Jacob wouldn't be gone all that long, but Jacob was gone for an excess of twenty years. Let's go to Genesis 5. Now the subject is Enoch.

Genesis 5:21-24 Enoch was sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah: And after he begot Methuselah, he had walked with God three hundred years and he begot sons and daughters: So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Let's just review. Hold your fingers there in the book of Genesis; we'll be back. Let's just review what it says back in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Now there's an escape. This one engineered totally by God. You see, there is a wide variety of kinds of escapes. Now we find in verse 13 of this same chapter:

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith [and that includes Enoch], not receiving the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

We know from the testimony of God's own word that Enoch pleased God. God engineered an escape and then Enoch died wherever God took him on this escape.

In each of the cases that we've covered so far the person fled, or was taken because of the anger or the hatred—maybe the two of them combined—anger and hatred of others that threatened the life and limb of the servants of God. Now we're going to examine a somewhat different condition. Let's go to Noah in Genesis 6.

Genesis 6:5-8 Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in his heart. So the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:17-18, 22 And, behold, I myself am bringing a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh, in which is the breath of life and everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; Noah, and you shall go into the ark [a place of escape], you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. Thus Noah did, according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

Here we have very clear evidence of an escape that was originated, planned and engineered by God. It required the cooperative preparation of those who were escaping, because Noah and his sons had to prepare by building the place in which they were going to escape. They were surrounded by worldwide trouble that they could not completely flee from, and so God gathered them into one place while the devastation was going on.

Genesis 7:1 Then the Lord said to Noah, come into the ark, you and all your household; because I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.

They were prepared both physically in making the ark and spiritually in being righteous before God. The two were working together, the physical and the spiritual.

Genesis 7:13-16 And on the very same day Noah and Noah sons, Shem Ham and Japheth and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark; they, and every beast after his kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. And they went into the ark, to Noah two by two of all flesh, in which is the breath of life. So those that entered the ark, male and female of all flesh went in, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

Interesting words! Comforting words! Now that's the kind of escape that one wants to be on. Again hold your finger in the book of Genesis, we'll go all the way back in the New Testament to II Peter 2:6-9.

II Peter 2:6-9 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them to destruction, making them an example unto those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (For that righteous man dwelling among them, tormented in his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds)—Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations [remember this, God knows how to do it], and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.

Does that not indicate to you a separation? The godly are delivered from the trial that might indeed cause them a great deal of harm—maybe even take their lives—but they are separated away from those who are set for judgment.

Genesis 19:15-17 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here; lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand and the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful to him:

and they brought him out and set him outside the city [showing guidance]. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life; do not look behind you, or stay anywhere in the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be destroyed."

And then Lot argued with them. "*No, I don't want to go to a mountain, it's too scary there, let's go to this other place, this little city, Zoar.*" So the angel says, "*Okay, hurry up.*"

Genesis 19:22 For I cannot do anything until you're all there. Therefore the name of that city was called Zoar.

So God yanked them out. Could God spare their lives in the midst of what appears to be something like an atomic, hydrogen destruction? Surely He could, but that's not what He wanted them to do. He wanted them to ***get out!*** Flee the area. He didn't expect them to live through that kind of destruction.

There are a very great number of scriptures that show God dramatically intervening where people were—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego comes to mind; Daniel comes to mind. There are many like this, and we would not want to fail to at least mention these examples to you. I want you to see that there is a balance here, and the balance is tilted in favor ***of*** or ***by*** what God's purpose is—what He is working out.

What we have to determine is: when the end of this age comes, what has He **shown** in His word is His intention for His church? Let's go back to the book of Revelation, in chapter 12. His intentions are very clearly shown. We all understand that this is an encapsulated history of the true church—taking it all the way back to the roots that are shown through the symbols of the sun, the moon and the stars—to, I believe Genesis 37 and Joseph's dream of the sun, the moon and the stars and the bowing down. It is showing the church's Israelitish roots and also the beginning of God's church.

We find it very rapidly coming up through the birth of Jesus Christ in verse 5, and then in verse 6 we find the woman—the church—fleeing into the wilderness where she has a place prepared by God. Now isn't that

interesting? God expected the church—the woman—to flee, and He prepared a place of safety for her. Now this period of time began roughly about 325 AD, after Constantine's edict. It ended roughly near the end of the 16th century in 1585 around that period of time during the reign of Mary Queen of Scots. We have a period there of 1260 years.

John, in his vision, literally saw a woman—representing the entire church—being persecuted by Satan. We find the time—the chronological movement in this chapter as well and we find in verse 13,

Revelation 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to earth, he persecuted the woman...

We're now at some time past the end of the 16th century and we are near the very end of time, because Satan has once again mounted a challenge against God and gone up to heaven and tried to throw God off His throne.

Revelation 12:13-14 ...he persecuted the woman [the church] who gave birth to the male child, but the woman was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly [Now here is a second escape, shown in this one chapter. But this time she flies and the Greek word literally means, "to fly". The first time she fled on foot into a wilderness, but this time she flies] into the wilderness to *her* place.

It indicates possession—something that had been assigned to her. We might say either indirect or direct ownership, assigned by God. Now we find...

Revelation 12:14 ...where she is nourished [or fed] for a time, and times, and half a time [or 1260 days, or 3½ years]

But we find that he saw, in vision, in verse 16 "that the **earth** helped the woman." John sees this vision taking place *on earth*. The place of refuge for this woman is *on the earth*, not raptured off into heaven, but on the earth. So we find protection. Then we find in verse 17, "that 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."

It shows, very clearly, a geographical separation between two divisions of what had been one group. One group is in "her place," in the wilderness to where they have flown. Another group remained behind and these people are persecuted by the dragon. It is very clear, then, that some Christians are not in the same place as other Christians, and yet both are of the woman. The end is that there will be a place of protection, of nourishment, in which some are segregated away from others.

Luke 21:21-23 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let those who are in the midst of her depart; and let not those who are in the countries enter her [that is Jerusalem]. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

Now here is wisdom from our Savior. If you are in Judea—flee. You should not expect God to protect you there. Wisdom dictates that we follow God's instruction and get out. God's purpose is going to be worked out somewhere else in these people's lives. He said that if you are outside the city, don't go into it—wisdom again. The reason is: "these are the days of vengeance." Now to this of course, we can attach verse 36.

Luke 21:36 Watch therefore and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape.

Now when we put this thought of escaping together with Revelation 12, we find that in Luke 21:21-22, that the order—the command to escape—is focused on a small specific area of Judea. But, in Revelation 12, the picture is very definitely much larger in scope. Indeed, it gives the implication of the escape being worldwide, rather than just concentrated on that small area of Palestine. To where will these people flee? Let's go to the book of Luke 17, where Jesus makes an enigmatic statement and, within its context, it is very interesting.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Now there, that sets the context. We are talking about the time of the end. He says that the general idea is that these people were doing what?

Luke 17:27-30 They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. But on the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even so shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Most people's attention on earth is going to be on secular things. Their attention is not going to be on the return of Christ; their focus is in the world.

Luke 17:31-32 In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away and likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. [Sounds very similar doesn't it to Matthew 24 and Luke 21?] Remember Lot's wife.

Lot's wife turned back, either in longing for what she was leaving (a way of life) or maybe she felt that she simply had material things back there that meant so much to her. She wanted to go back and get some of them to make sure that they were preserved. I don't know, but she was not of the same mind as Lot was, it's very clear. Lot didn't look back, his wife did.

Luke 17:33-37 Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; the one will be taken, and the other left. [He's talking about a separation, isn't he?] Two women shall be grinding together; the one will be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one will be taken, and the other left. [Now verse 37 is very interesting.] And they answered and said to him, "Where, Lord."

Doesn't it seem interesting that their question was not "*When will this happen?*" but "*Where will the people be taken?*" That intrigues me. Why did they ask that? Now Jesus answer is enigmatic and I think that we can conclude that He did not intend to give a crystal clear answer.

Luke 17:37 He said to them, "wherever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

Now to what does "where" refer to? Does it refer to the "judgment" that is obviously being spoken to, or does it refer to the "taken." I feel that either one may be applicable. They could say, "*Where is the judgment going to take place?*" and Jesus in His answer says, "*Well, wherever it's needed—just like an eagle or a vulture would be where a body needs to be picked up.*" But in the construction of the context, "where" is much closer to "taken." "*Where will they be taken?*"—those who are separated away from the judgment. Then His answer becomes *even more* enigmatic. Let's go back to the book of Job, because the verse that Jesus quoted was taken from there.

Job 39:27-30 Does the eagle mount up at your command, and make it's nest on high? It dwells on the rock, and resides on the crag of the rock, and the stronghold. From there it spies out the prey, it's eyes observe from afar. It's young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is.

Now Jesus' answer to "where" was taken from this series of verses. Now where will they be taken? Will they be taken to a high place where eagles dwell? Will they be taken to a place of rocks that is also considered to be the stronghold? Notice, incidentally, that it is not "*a*" stronghold, but the definite article "*the*" stronghold.

Now it was certainly enigmatic—I think, to say the least. But this is not the end of the indicators as to where that place will be. There are clues, in quite a variety of scriptures, that indicate that if the bible is pointing us toward any particular location, this is the location: some place that is high, some place that is rocky, a crag of a rock, some place that was considered in ancient times to be "*the*" stronghold.

Let's go to Psalm 107. We're not going to expound very much here, but Psalm 107 is the first Psalm in the last book of Psalms. There are five books and this is the last of the books. It lays the groundwork for the Psalms that follow; it sets the pattern and the pattern of these last Psalms is end time. By the time we get to the end of four or five Psalms, Jesus Christ is clearly on earth, and the Psalms there are just filled with wonderful expressions of **joy**. The whole creation is rejoicing because of the return of Christ. But Psalms 107 lays the groundwork for what is going to come. It opens:

Psalm 107:1-8 O, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, and from the north, and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to the city of habitation. Oh that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness [A pretty clear picture of the Israelites in their captivity and being led to a place of habitation].

So there we have the background. This last book of Psalm concerns itself with end time events and the regathering of Israel. Now let's go to Psalm 108, because events are taking place in the midst of what Psalm 107 lays the groundwork for, and let's begin in verse 5.

Psalm 108:5-10 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens: and your glory is above all the earth; that your beloved may be delivered: [Now that's a term that might be applied to the nations of Israel, but far more specifically applies to His church, His beloved] Save with your right hand and hear me. God has spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and measure out the valley of Succoth. Gilead is mine [that was a part of Manasseh]; Manasseh is mine [watch how he expands the focus, from a small part of Manasseh to now to the state of Manasseh]; Ephraim [very likely meaning the whole nation, not just Joseph, but Ephraim was the

tribal title, I guess you might say, that was given to all ten of the tribes and then] Judah is my lawgiver [focusing here on the kingly line, but now look how it changes in verse 9]. Moab is my washpot; over Edom I will cast my shoe; over Philistia I will triumph. Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me to Edom?

Why this interest for the people of Israel, for the beloved of God? In Moab and Edom? We'll see. Let's go to Daniel, this time in Daniel 11:41—another end time prophecy. He is talking about the king of the north attacking the king of the south. This attack is going to take place right in the area of the mideast and specifically in those areas of Syria, Palestine or we might say Israel, Saudi Arabia.

Daniel 11:41 He shall also enter the glorious land [that's Palestine] and many countries [the king of the north, you see] shall be overthrown, but these shall escape by his hand: Edom, Moab and the prominent people of Ammon

It seems almost incredible that these nations will somehow escape out of the almost invincible hand of the beast power of the north.

Daniel 11:42 He shall stretch out his hand against the countries and the land of Egypt shall not escape. [Libyans and Ethiopians, all the way down into Africa he goes—they don't escape. But somehow Moab, Edom and the people of Ammon do.]

Now where were these ancient nations located? They are all part of the modern nation of Jordan. Edom occupied the southern part, Moab the northern part, and Ammon was in the central part. Today, Jordan's capital city is named Ammon—very clearly showing their ancestry. The Jordanians are the descendants of Lot's incestuous relationship with his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. And so here is this little, insignificant nation at the time of the end that—somehow or another, by whatever means—God gives favor, and they escape being under the domination of the Beast power coming out of the north.

Back to the book of Psalms, in chapter 83—just very quickly so that we get enough of the context.

Psalm 83:1-8 Do not keep silence O God. Do not hold your peace and do not be still O God For behold your enemies make a tumult [so you can see the kind of situation that this psalm is describing] Those who hate you have lifted up their head. They have taken crafty counsel against your people and consulted together against your sheltered ones [very interesting]. They have said, "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more." For they have consulted together with one consent, they form a confederacy against you. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites [the Ishmaelites are the Arabs in that area] Moab and the Hagerites, Gebal, and Ammon and Amalek; the Philistines and the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria [here's the kingpin nation of the beast power, the king of the north] has also joined with them, they have helped the children of Lot.

Don't you think that rather incongruous that, at the end time, even though there is a confederation of the children of Jordan (of ancient Edom and Moab and Ammon with the great beast power), yet they are NOT under their domination to such an extent that they are not free to act on their own. I think it is very interesting that Petra is in Edom. Edom remember occupied the southern part of the land of Jordan or the modern land of Jordan and "Petra" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Selah"—which was translated there in the book of Job, chapter 39.

Those are the verses that Jesus quoted. He said the stronghold was in Selah—the rock, called today Petra (called Selah then). It is the equivalent of the English word "rock." Those two words—the Greek "Petra" and the Hebrew "Selah"—are the equivalent of the English word "rock."

Now it's not the kind of rock that one can pick up and throw, but a large rock, a huge boulder—something that no one could pick up, a room size boulder, up to something that might be the size of Gibraltar; that kind of rock; a real stronghold, where anciently people could dwell in a large measure of safety.

Now, let's continue this as we expand the indications from out of God's word.

Isaiah 42:10 Sing to the Lord a new song and his praise from the ends of the earth.

Now the context here is a description of the responsibilities and some of the things that God's servant, Jesus Christ is going to do. Now these things that we are reading here, beginning in verse 10, are not what He's going to do, but it's a response of His people.

Isaiah 42:10-11 Sing to the Lord a new song and his praise from the ends of the earth. You who go down to the sea and all that is in it. The coastlands and the inhabitants of them. Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits, let the inhabitants of Selah sing. Let them shout from the top of the mountains.

Let them—the inhabitants of Selah and, certainly in a smaller sense, those previously mentioned; but the focus here are those in Selah.

Isaiah 42:12-13 Let them give glory to the Lord and declare his praise in the coastlands [that means all over the place]. The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man...

So that gives you the time that this is going to take place—when God goes forth. We're talking here about the time of the end, and we may be able to pinpoint this to the day of the Lord, the sounding of the seventh trump, the pouring out of the seven last plagues of God.

Isaiah 42:13 The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man, he shall stir up his zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out yes, shout aloud, he shall prevail against his enemies.

Now this place has all of the benchmarks: wilderness, a rock, Selah, Kedar. Do you know where Kedar was? Kedar was in what is today northwest Arabia. I should even make it more specific, northwest *Saudi* Arabia, and it was the general name of that area in which Selah (Petra) was located.

Now I want to ask you [to consider this]: Today that area has nothing more than Bedouins passing through. God commands the inhabitants—those who live there—to sing praises to Him. Does it seem logical to you that at the end time when God goes forth, that the Bedouins would be singing praises to God? No, there is somebody else who is inhabiting Selah, who **will** glorify and sing praises to God. It's those who are being sheltered there when the Lord goes forth like a mighty warrior.

Isaiah 15:1, 5 The burden against Moab [there is the context, we will go now to verse 5]... My heart will cry out for Moab, his fugitives shall flee to Zoar.

Isn't that interesting? That's where Lot wanted to go. The fugitives of Moab, at the end time, are going to repeat or *try to repeat* something that their father Lot did, many, many centuries before. Something is going to happen so that Moab (who had an alliance with the beast)—the people of Moab—are to realize that they are in very dire trouble and they better get out. Now what is it that they are fleeing from?

Now here we will just jump over, and won't supply all of the information. But what is occurring is what the book of Revelation calls the sounding of the sixth trumpet when that huge 200 million-man juggernaut [army] is sweeping out of the north and the east toward the glorious place, you see, the glorious country. Moab, who had an alliance with Assyria—the beast power, the king of the north—is going to see that they cannot stand before this juggernaut. They have no treaty, no compromise, they are going to begin to flee for their lives. They are going to become fugitives, and they are going to become displaced persons.

Now if you were a Moabite (a Jordanian) seeing a 200 million-man army sweeping out of the northeast, which direction would you run? You'd better go south. You'd better go southwest. Where will that lead those people? ...to the land of Edom—where Selah is, where it seems very likely that the sheltered (the beloved of God) are being protected. Now does this mean that

if this juggernaut chases after the Moabites, they're going to bring these people right to where God's people are living—[thus] putting *them* in danger? Certainly does to me!

Here is the advice given to the Moabites (those who are fleeing)—these displaced persons who are fleeing in terror from this huge juggernaut of an army that is sweeping down against them.

Isaiah 16:1-2 Send the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. [Doesn't that language like the church?] For it shall be, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest, so shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.

The Arnon is a river that empties into the Dead Sea, that goes through Moab, flows west and into the Dead Sea. So it is big enough that, at certain times of the year, it has to be forded. There's water in it and so they have to ford across it in their fleeing.

Isaiah 16:3-5 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: [Satan] for the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. In mercy the throne will be established: and One [in my bible capitalized] will sit on it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.

Now the language there is very difficult for us and I could read this out of the Masoretic text from the Jewish Bible. I won't take the time, because we're running out of time, but I will summarize this for you.

These displaced persons are heading generally south, but they are mulling around in confusion—they're terrified, frightened, they really don't know what to do. So that's what they're doing at the fords of Arnon. "*What should we do? Where should we go? Maybe we ought to go to Zoar? It's a little*

place, you see nobody will pay any attention to us, if we're there." But they're admonished by God to make an offering—thus the mention of the word "lamb"—to make an offering to the ruler of the land.

Now who is the ruler of the land? It has to be Christ, because that is where His church is. He is governing His church and He is admonishing the Moabites to make an offering. He is saying, "*pray, cry out for mercy*" (is what God is saying)—to the ruler of the land, to Jesus Christ. The offering is to go through Selah. That's what it says: "From Selah to the wilderness," because that's where God's outcasts are. But He tells them, "*Be sure nobody sees you, hide them, hide my people, don't betray where my people are,*" and then he encourages them. He says "*Hang on, it's almost over. Christ is coming and it's but a short time when that will take place.*" That's what verse 5 is about.

Well, brethren we have just about reached another hour and 15 minutes and it's really exciting. It's exciting to me to give this, but I think that it's time to break this off and so we will sign off till the next time. I think that the next time I will surely conclude this sermon.