

The Good News

International Magazine of
THE CHURCH OF GOD

VOL. XI, NUMBER 4

APRIL, 1962

This Is PETRA!

What do Petra's mysterious ruins hold for us today? Is this hidden city the place of protection for God's Church during the coming tribulation?

by Herman L. Hoeh

EXCAVATIONS are at this moment being conducted at Petra. Fallen columns, ancient walls are being reconstructed. Old roadways are being uncovered by archæologists.

Petra, first inhabited by Canaanite Horites, then Edomites, Israelites, Nabatean Arabs, then lost to the world, is coming to life!

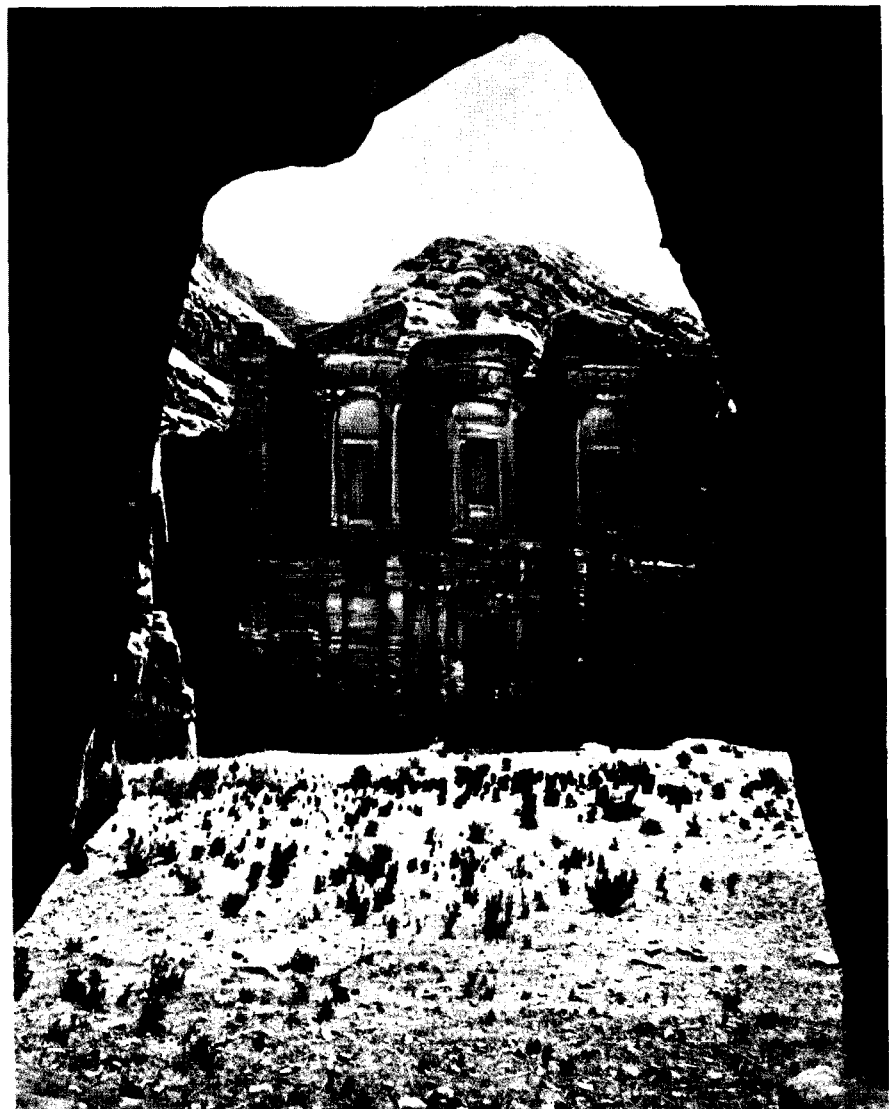
Why? Is this famous, yet mysterious city merely to be a tourist attraction? Or is it being cleaned up for some special reason—prophesied, perhaps, in the Bible?

Why the Mystery?

Cities other than Petra have remarkable histories—but only Petra remains a mystery! Not so much because of its past, as for its future! Over the centuries students of the Bible have puzzled over references to Petra in the Bible—and especially to verses revealing a place of escape. Yet none of the scholars of this world seem to understand.

Has the real meaning of Petra been purposely hidden from the world—even though archæologists are preparing the area for visitors? Are Petra's caves again to hide refugees from their enemies in a world where there is no other place to hide?

Let's open our Bibles to see why Petra



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On the mountains high above Petra is this famous building—Ed Deir—carved out of yellow-tan sandstone. Not all of Petra is rose-red.

has puzzled scholars and Bible students for centuries.

The true Church of God is pictured in Revelation 12. It is symbolized by a woman—the bride of Christ. But it is a persecuted woman—a Church hated by the world. According to verse 6 the Church fled the first time from her persecutors for 1260 years—during the Middle Ages. But verse 14 unveils another flight of the Church—in the very last days. This time the duration is only 3½ years! "And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle"—supernatural deliverance—"that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time"—3½ years.

This prophecy has never been understood by the world because the world cannot understand *to whom* this prophecy refers. It does not recognize who are the true Church. It sees only the false churches, described in Revelation 17.

But consider now the special *time* of this prophecy about protection in a mysterious wilderness. Notice exactly which period in the history of God's Church the escape shall occur. Turn to Revelation 3:7-13. This is addressed to the Philadelphia Era of God's Church—the Church before whom Christ opens the door to preach His gospel around the world (verse 8). Because this Church has kept God's word, Jesus promises: "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation"—the time of trial—"which shall come upon *all the world*, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (verse 10). Here is a world-wide terror to come upon all nations. This is not for the slow-moving past. It is a prophecy for the pulsating present—the last days of human history—just before God intervenes to set up His Kingdom to bring peace at last.

Here is a prophecy for this generation—at the very time God's Church is preaching and publishing the Gospel of the Kingdom of God world-wide. This prophecy is about *us!*

But how will Jesus keep us from the coming trial and persecution? We just read the answer from Revelation 12! There is a place of safety, in a wilderness, for the people of God.

But where is that wilderness?

That is the mystery that has puzzled so many for so long! God has kept it a mystery so the world would not know. He has even kept it hidden from God's Church in the past so His people would have their minds on their work! It is only those who are having a part in the work of God—who have their minds on the Kingdom of God, not some

physical place of protection—who will escape. That escape cannot be planned for *in advance*. It is a supernatural escape!

Remember, if the Christians in Jerusalem in apostolic days had quit their work and prematurely escaped to Pella before A.D. 69, they would have been destroyed by the Roman armies who devastated the city. It was only those who completed the work of God who reached safety in A.D. 69 *after* the Romans destroyed Pella!

That is why God has veiled the exact place of escape from human eyes all these years. But as the days draw closer to the time of the end, the light of prophecy shines ever more clearly! When the moment comes that we need to know where that place of safety is, Christ will make it known. Meanwhile we need to keep our eyes open and our minds yielded—drinking in the implications of prophecy for this Church today! But where does Petra fit in all this?

An Old Testament Prophecy

Turn to Isaiah 42:10-13. Here is a prophecy for today—a time of divine intervention, verse 14. Now read verse 11 from the Jewish Publication Society translation according to the original inspired Hebrew:

"Let the *wilderness* and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit"—the descendants of Kedar are the Bedouin Arabs who dwell throughout the Middle East in black tents. Here we have a wilderness located in the Arab world! But continue reading: "Let the inhabitants of Sela exult. Let them shout from the top of the mountains." The inhabitants of Sela? Who are they? And where is Sela? (In the King James Version the word for Sela is translated "rock.")

Any Bible student knows that Sela is the Hebrew name of Petra! Sela means Rock—in Hebrew; Petra means Rock in Greek! But Sela or Petra is fundamentally uninhabited today, save for a few dozen wandering Bedouin. These are not the inhabitants in this verse, for notice verse 12: "Let them"—the inhabitants of Petra or Sela—"give glory unto the Lord"—the Bedouin do not know God, they are Mohammedan—"and declare His praise in the *islands*."

Which islands? The islands which Israel inhabits—Isaiah 41:1 and 8. God is certainly not going to use a few uneducated, ignorant Mohammedan Bedouin to declare His glory in the islands and coastlands of Northwestern Europe—where Israel is today! This prophecy

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The Good News

International magazine of
THE CHURCH OF GOD
*ministering to its members
scattered abroad*

VOL. XI

NO. 4

Published monthly at Pasadena, California.
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is speaking of the time of the resurrection and the return of Christ in power and glory. Christ is going to use His servants—now immortal in the Kingdom of God—to proclaim His intervention and the establishment of His Kingdom over all the earth. He is going to use the very ones whom He is now using to proclaim His message. Then they will finally heed!

Isn't this prophecy a clear indication that the place of safety for the people of God who are now doing the work of God—and broadcasting to the islands and coastlands of Northwestern Europe—is in an Arabian wilderness, where the Bedouin dwell and is probably at Sela, or Petra?

Supernatural Protection

Turn now to another parallel passage, this time Isaiah 33. Read especially verses 13-17. Notice the time setting. It is when the world's ambassadors, who seek to make peace, suddenly find the world caught up in frightful destruction (verses 7-8).

Beginning with verse 13 God warns the House of Israel—the "sinners in Zion"—of their sins (verse 14). "Who will be able to live through the end-time fiery atomic and hydrogen warfare?" God asks (verse 14). Those who obey Him, declares verse 15. But where



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A Bedouin mother and baby before their cave home in Ed Deir Valley at Petra.

will they go?

Verses 16 and 17 answer! "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks..." This verse is poorly translated in most versions because the translators did not understand the prophecy. The true meaning has been hidden. The place of protection shall be, not munitions of rocks, but the "strongholds of Sela!" The original, in-

spired Hebrew, mistranslated "munitions," is *metsad*, and means a stronghold or a castle or a fort. And the word for "rock" in this verse is *Sela*, the name of Petra in the Hebrew language!

Petra is a dry, barren area. It hardly provides a few dozen Bedouin sufficient sustenance. How are all of the faithful people of God to be provided for? Continue with the end of verse 16: "...his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Here also is supernatural provision! Remember what happened to the children of Israel in the Sinai wilderness? God supernaturally provided them food and water nearly 40 long years! God can do the same today! It is not those who heap up provisions that shall escape! It is those who obey God, who do His work, and who trust Him to provide the necessities and the divine protection *when that time arrives!*

Verse 17 completes the picture: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off"—or "they shall behold a land stretching afar," according to the Jewish translation. We shall see Him as He is (I John 3:2). Notice also that those in safety see "the land"—Palestine, the promised land stretching into the distance. Surely here is another indication of the high rocky crags of Petra from which one may look northwest to the promised land.

Place of Safety

Perhaps the most commonly quoted



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The mountains of Petra viewed from the east.



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The approach to Petra passes by these three decayed pylons.

verses about Petra are found in Isaiah 16.

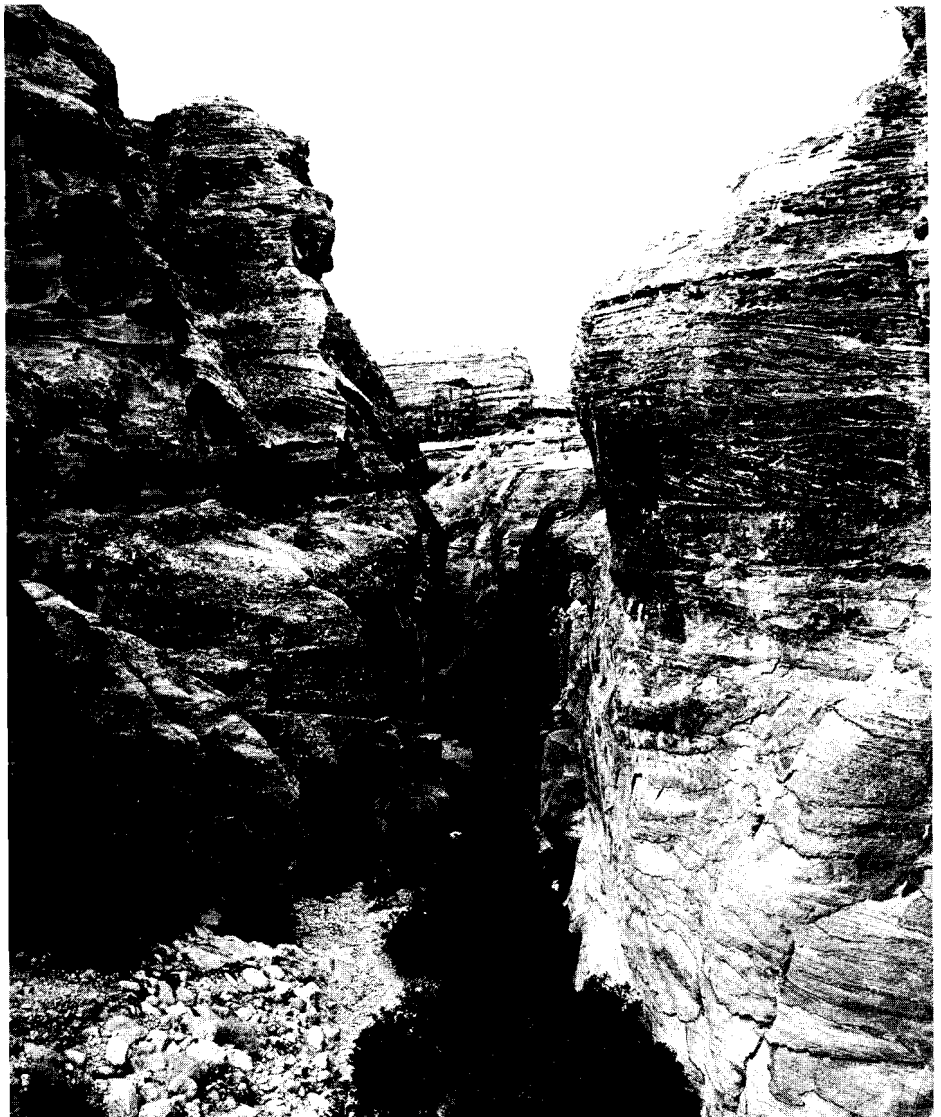
The prophecy is found in verses 1 to 5. It is a message to Moab—modern Jordan, in whose territory Petra or Sela is presently located. Verse 1 should read: "Send ye the lambs for the Ruler of the land from Sela that is toward the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion" (compare the KJV with the JPS translation).

The time setting of this prophecy is the return of Christ to rule the nations. He is the King of the land. The Moabites are commanded to seek Him, to send Him an offering as a token of their submission. The offering comes from Sela. But why are the Moabites found in Sela, when only Bedouin dwell there today? The succeeding verses answer: "For it shall be, that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters"—descendants—"of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon." Other prophecies picture hordes from the east capturing the land east of the Jordan. (See Ezekiel 25:10.) As these Communist hordes plunge toward Palestine, slaughtering as they go, a pitiful remnant—

described in Jeremiah 48:1-25—escapes at the Arnon (a stream running into the Dead Sea). The Moabite refugees flee southward for protection. Why? Is it perhaps because they have known of others already there in a place of safety? Now look at verse 4. God is addressing Moab: "Let *Mine outcasts* dwell with thee, Moab; *be thou a covert to them* from the face of the spoiler."

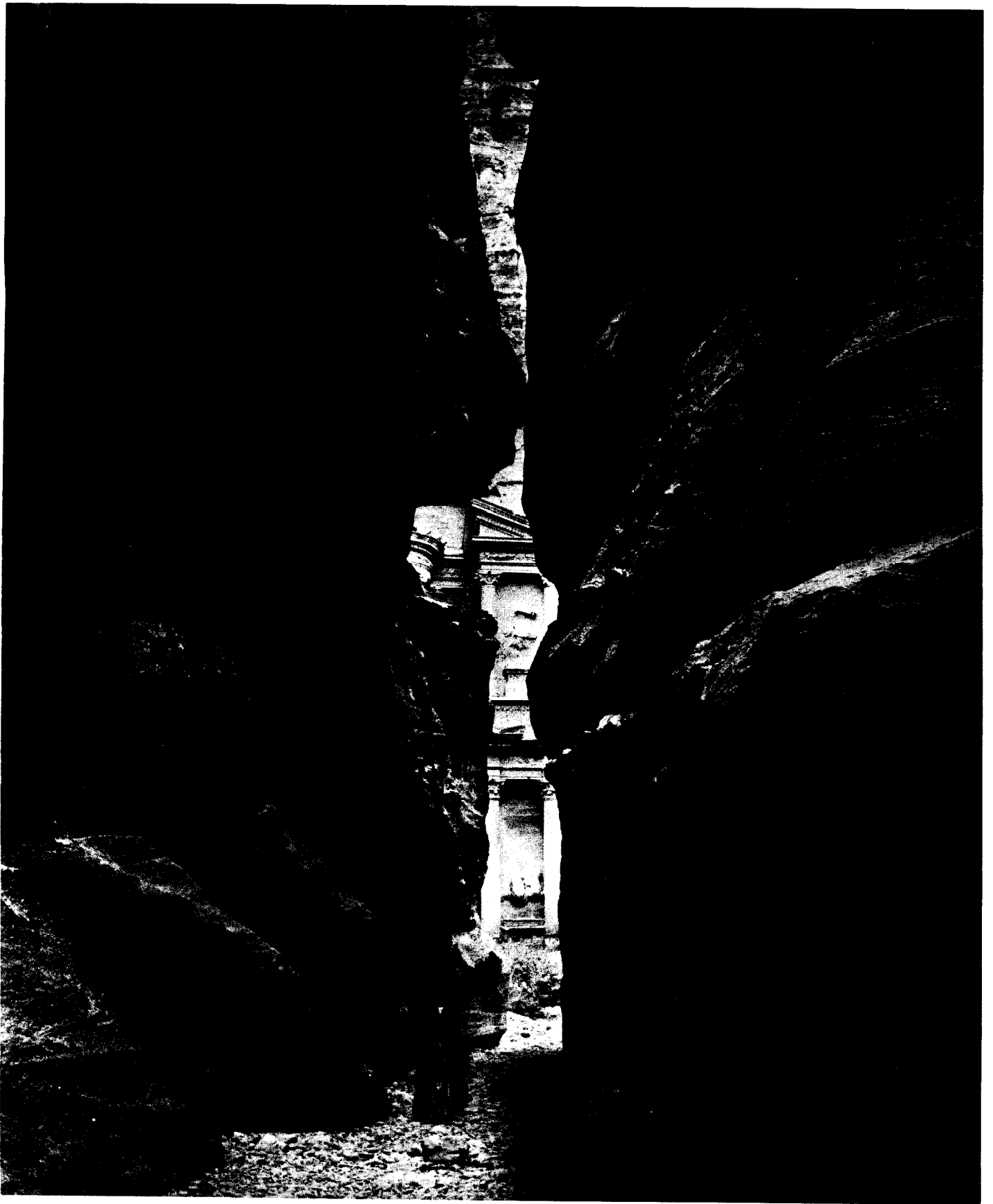
So there *are* others there already. "Mine outcasts," God calls them. God's people, who flee from the world, refugees or outcasts!

The fleeing Moabites are not to betray where they are. This makes verse 3 much clearer. The Moabites are commanded to "Give counsel, execute justice; make thy shadow as night in the midst of the noon day; hide the outcasts; betray not the fugitive" (JPS trans.). Their flight is not to reveal *where God's own outcasts are.* Their
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Gateway to the Sik, the only approach into Petra.



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Petra! The opening of the Sik! And the carved El Khazne, the first view of the glory of Petra. The Sik at this point is narrowest and darkest, with rugged cliffs on both sides — so narrow a large man could touch both sides at the same time!

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movements are to be as invisible as if it were in black night!

Now compare this prophecy with Jeremiah 48:28, "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock"—*Sela*, in Hebrew—"and be like the dove that makes her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth"! A perfect description of Petra, with its caves!

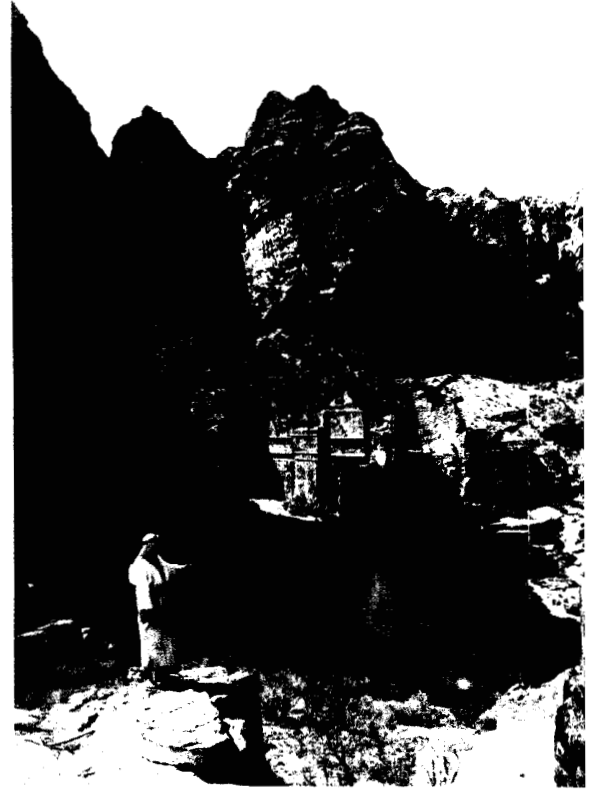
Isaiah 16:5 then reveals the very next prophetic event to occur: "And a throne is established through mercy, and there sitteth thereon in truth, in the tent of David, One that judgeth, and seeketh justice, and is ready in righteousness" (JPS trans.). Christ is now pictured as seated on the throne of David! Surely this indicates that God's

outcasts in Isaiah 16 are the same as those mentioned in Revelation 12 who escape to the wilderness—shortly before the return of Christ!

Christ the Rock

Everyone who has read the Bible has noticed how often the Bible reveals the Eternal God—the Christ of your New Testament—as a Rock. Consider, for example, David's words in II Samuel 22:2: "The LORD is my Rock." In this verse the original Hebrew word for Rock is *Sela*. Christ was David's Rock, his refuge. Christ is our Rock, our refuge. But is this not possibly a type of the very *place of refuge* where Christ will hide His own outcasts. Doesn't this imply that *Sela* may be that place?

By contrast, the European power which shall persecute God's people has
(Please continue on next page)



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Full view of the Roman theatre. Area was once caves before construction of the theatre. The interiors of the caves still extend into the hillside.

Right, deep gorge en route to Ed Deir, high above Petra.

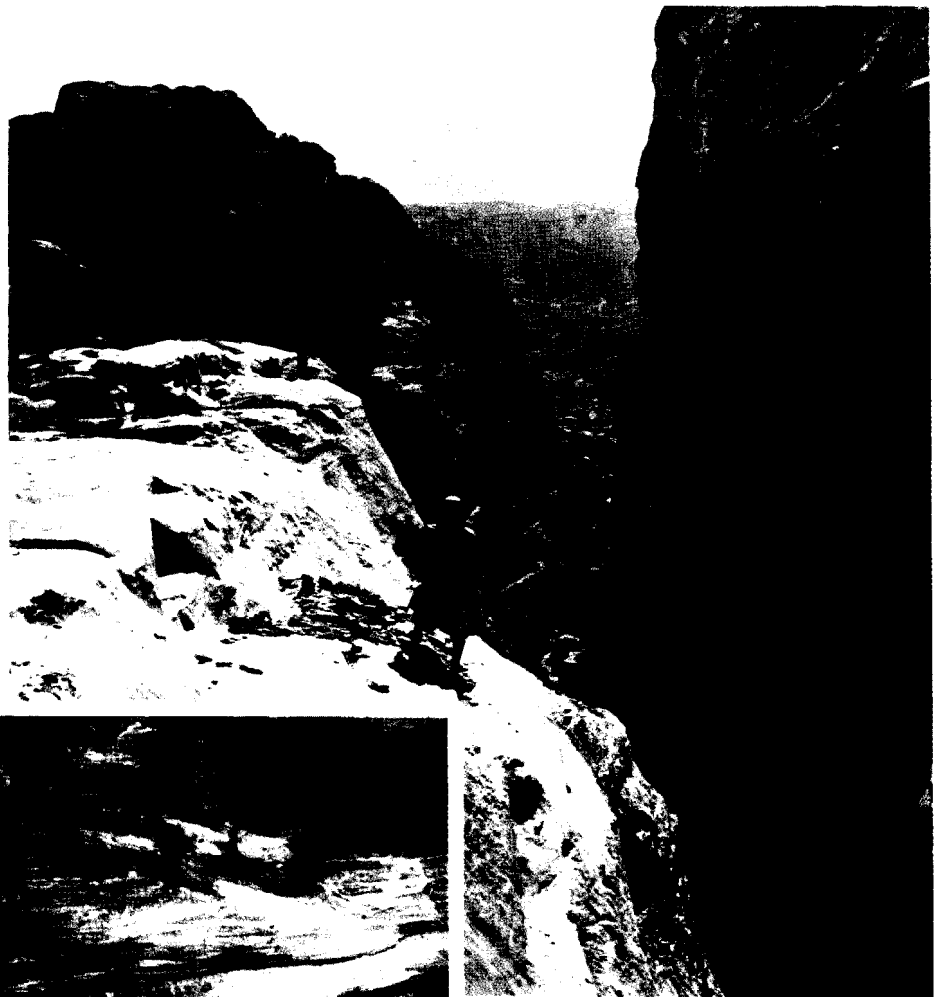
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Left, the high cliffs surrounding Petra Valley are a challenge to any mountain climber!

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Below, the gorgeously colored interior of the "Store House"—assumed to have been anciently used as vaults for precious merchandise.

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its rock, whom it calls "Peter." Did you ever stop to consider that the name "Peter" in English is merely a form of the Greek *petros*, meaning a "small rock." The Church which shall dominate the coming revival of the Roman Empire in Europe—already forming in the Common Market—claims to be founded on a Peter who died at Rome. They claim him as their foundation, their rock. But that Peter was not the apostle Peter. The history of all this cannot be included in this article, but a prophecy about *this* counterfeit rock is in your Bible. It is in Isaiah 31:8-9. This prophecy was not understood by the translators of the King James Version. It is correctly rendered in the Jewish translation: "Then shall Asshur fall with the sword, not of man, and the sword, not of men, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall become tributary. And his *rock* shall pass away by reason of terror, and his princes shall be dismayed at the ensign"—the ensign is Christ.

Did you observe verse 9? "*His rock shall pass away...*" Here is a *counterfeit rock*—a rock on which the coming
(Please continue on page 11)



Afternoon shadows stretch across terraced slopes leading down to the Lower Gardens, setting for our June Commencement Exercises. Pasadena's civic center with its domed

city hall lies in the background. In the distance, billowing clouds engulf the San Gabriel Mountains where, atop Mount Wilson, the famous 100-inch telescope is situated.

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German-dominated union, the revival of the Roman Empire, will be founded. Asshur in this prophecy is Germany—for the Germans are Assyrians! But it is to be a church-state union. And the church that will control it claims to be founded on a rock—a Peter! Their rock or Pope will finally perish—in the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20).

Daniel's Prophecy Reveals Where

The longest continuous prophecy, covering event by event over 2500 years of history, is found in Daniel 10 to 12. In the eleventh chapter, verse 41, is a prophecy for the time of the end. The final ruler of the Roman Empire—the kingdom of the north—overruns Egypt

and invades Palestine. But there is one land that escapes his grasp. "He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon" (v. 41). The ancient territories of Edom, Moab and Ammon are today all found in one modern nation—Jordan! And in Jordan today is Petra!

Does not this prophecy imply that Jordan escapes because God has chosen this land to be a place of safety? Every one of these prophecies point to the mysterious city of Petra as a place of safety!

The history of Petra and more hitherto unpublished pictures will appear next month. No matter where God should lead His Church, you will find the little-known story thrilling.

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Full view of El Khazne, the first edifice seen through the Sik. These buildings were carved in Roman times when the Nabatean Arabs lived in Petra.

efforts. The doctor clearly knew that *calories do count!*

Secondly, enthusiasm for overcoming a problem can bring a degree of improvement not attributable to the system alone. This is simply a matter of attitude and will—the influence of the mind over the body.

The final and most important reason is that many who read Dr. Taller's book for the first time became diet conscious and found that they were consuming less fat and total calories on the high-fat diet than they were on their regular diet! Of course they lost weight when they controlled their intake. The fact is Dr. Taller knows calories do count. He knows that even his unbalanced diet will reduce total calories to a weight-losing level.

Convinced by Dr. Taller's appealing theory, the reader is unknowingly led to correct his diet while thinking the success is due to the miracle action of the oil. In essence, the doctor has done nothing more than cover the proper dietary principles with a unique twist to sell his product. This is not so serious in itself, but it reveals a striking lack of real wisdom on the part of those who read the book.

What is even more serious is that a high-fat diet can be hazardous to health. This is just the natural result of disregarding God's principle of balance and moderation. Dr. Philip L. White, in *Today's Health*, April, 1962, page 80, writes, "The diet is likely to be deficient in vitamins and minerals [due to the mis-balance]. Carelessly followed, the diet could be dangerous for individuals with diabetes, and kidney, liver, or gall bladder disease. Dehydration may be produced. Also, the kidneys are forced to excrete large amounts of protein breakdown products." Some of this could be said of many a diet, but is outstandingly true for this diet.

Remember, Dr. Taller's diet, or any other diet, for that matter, is not the solution. It is just a dangerous crutch. Instead, you must eliminate the wrong *habits* which caused your problem in the first place! You need to exercise self-control. You will put the weight right back on regardless of the type of diet if you fail to learn proper eating habits. The reason Dr. Taller says that you have to stay on his system for life is that he has not told you how really to get rid of the bad habits creating your overweight problem. Dr. Taller's diet is nothing more than a life-long burden—a "broken reed" which will create far more health problems than it could possibly solve.



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A view of the valley in Petra — a desolate area once the site of the prosperous city of Petra. The Arab in picture is standing by the Wadi Siyyagh. In the center of the picture is the Wadi Mousa — the River of Moses, with the Khubta Range in the distance.

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Meanwhile, ask yourself: Are you going to *believe God* no matter where

He reveals we should go, no matter by what route? Are you going to *trust Him* to guide His ministers to reveal His will? Are you going to *remain faithful and obey* what God makes known through them?