

I Saw Petra

THE ROSE-RED
CITY OF THE DEAD

LOUIS T. TALBOT



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A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE
AUTHOR'S VISIT TO THE MOST
MYSTERIOUS RUINS IN THE WORLD

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Es Siq and El Khazna (Treasury of Pharaoh).

I SAW PETRA

The Rose-Red City of the Dead

To visit Petra, that incredible rose-colored ruin of antiquity, mysteriously concealed from this modern world in a remote rocky basin of Trans-Jordania, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, had been my ambition for years. This desire was deepened by travel reports I had heard and read and by pictures I had seen, but, most of all, by an intensive study of the Word of God in which it seemed to me that Petra held a strategic spot both in fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy.

So when on a recent missionary survey for the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, my travels took me in that direction, and I was permitted not only to behold with my own eyes that astonishing site, but also to photograph it for missionary purposes, my delight and gratitude knew no bounds. It was the fulfillment of a cherished dream.

The Amazing Siq

Indeed I felt as if actually I were in a dream when on that bright December day, accompanied by Dr. Paul R. Bauman,* my travelling companion, mounted on a small Arabian horse, I seemed to be riding straight into the face of a massive pink mountain. It was like another world to enter that extraordinary canyon so appropriately named Es Siq ("a cleft") by the Arabs. For it certainly looked as if God Himself by His own hand had split in two the sandstone mountains of Petra

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to make a way into the rock city of the dead. It did not seem real at all, but was of the essence of dreams.

In fact, I had not fully recovered from the tremendous emotional experiences of the previous weeks when I had visited the sacred sites of the Holy Land, traversing the village streets where my Lord had walked in the days of His flesh; preaching on Christmas Day in the shepherds' fields; standing with bowed head at the place of a skull, and entering with awe the garden tomb. Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, Amman had followed, each with its own unmistakable evidences of Biblical prophecies fulfilled to the letter making an indelible impression upon my heart.

Then finally there was a night at an Arab fortress in the barren land of Edom with the prospect of a visit to mysterious Petra on the morrow! No wonder sleep fled from me and that at dawn I was ready for my Arabian guide. For seven hours we proceeded at a snail's pace over barren desert rimmed by the Idumean hills. The only signs of life were a few wretched Bedouins with their even more wretched half-starved sheep for which not a blade of grass was visible. In the distance rose massive Mount Hor, on which Aaron is buried; at the rear lay the Wilderness of Sin. As I gazed at the great stretches of that waste No Man's Land which intervened, I said to myself: "So this is what happens to a land which falls under the judgment of God."

At last we dropped several thousand feet into the stony, almost circular, valley, which continues the great divide of the Jordan. This was the Wadi Musa ("Valley of Moses") which is what the Arabs call Petra, scorning the Greek word *Petra*, the Aramaic, *Rekem*, and the Hebrew, *Sela*, all of which mean "rock". We passed the suburbs of what was once Petra city proper containing tombs of the pylon type cut from rock and numerous white sandstone domes. The vale grew nar-



Map showing the location of Petra south of the Holy Land, and close to Mt. Hor, burial place of Aaron.

rower and deeper until we reached what appeared to be a dead-end, but which was in reality this amazing Siq, the only means of entering the rose-red city. It is a river-bed which is flooded in winter by a stream the Arabs claim originated from the water Moses produced by striking the rock in the wilderness.

There appeared to be no exit from that dim, dark corridor. I did not wonder that the Bedouins refused to travel there alone at night, but always made their way in companies, shouting and singing to drive off the evil spirits.

Hemmed in on either side by towering perpendicular peaks rising hundreds of feet, we followed the tortuous trail over broken antique paving stones and sharp pebbles, as it turned and twisted in quick bends and sharp curves, past great pink oleander bushes, shrines to forgotten gods and statues of dead heroes carved into the walls, and protruding clay pipes of ancient water mains. I gazed upward in wonder. The craggy pinnacles seemed to touch, now shutting out the light, now revealing a flash of blazing blue sky. Over the whole scene there fell such an eerie glow as the sunlight and shadow played upon the sandstone cliffs, changing them by turns to pastel pink, blush rose, deep purple or ruby-red, that I had the impression of being in a roseate Dreamland, filled with strange shadows of by-gone generations.

No sound but that of horses' hoofs broke the silence; the atmosphere was heavy, but at the same time there was a strange air of anticipation, as if something significant was about to happen. The Siq describes a sort of semi-circle, varying in width from twelve to forty feet, and extends nearly two miles in length. As I rode along, I thought of the mighty caravans that once, laden with treasures, had made their way in single file along this trail. I wondered if perchance any messenger of God

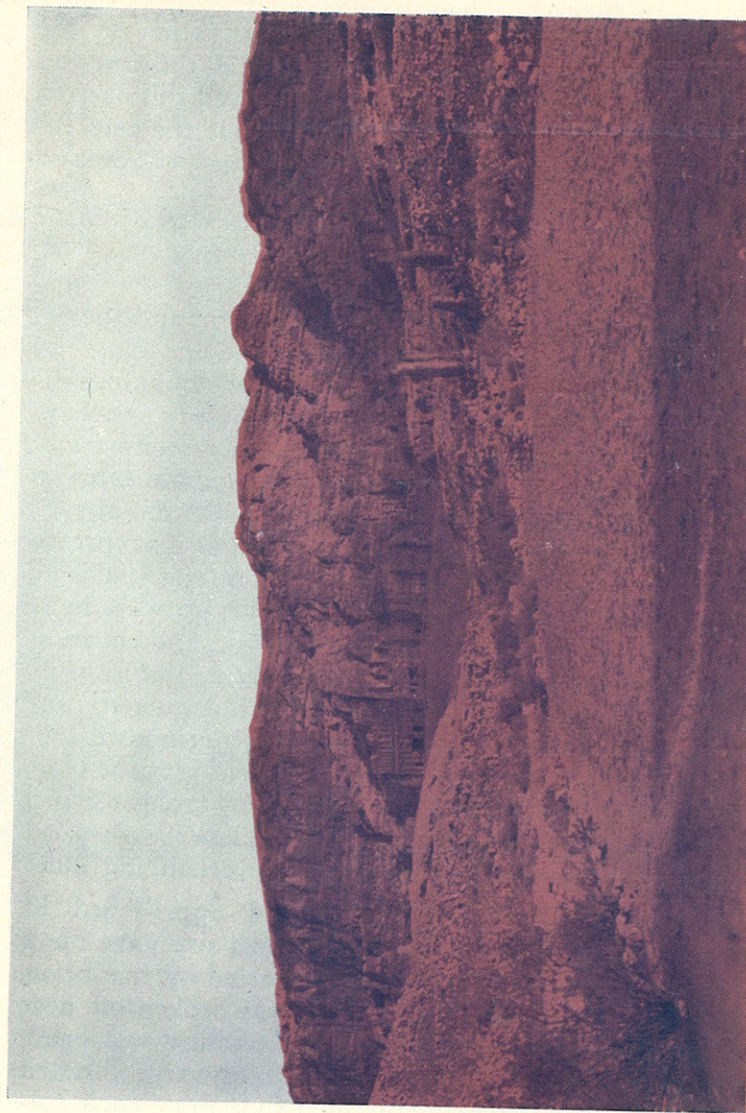


Photo by Dr. Paul R. Bauman
Temples in Distance. Masonry of City Proper in right center of foreground.

had ever brought the good news of salvation to the civilizations that had risen and fallen in the rose-red city. Surely God had planned and preserved this narrow defile and what lay beyond it throughout the ages for some glorious design of His own, not as yet revealed to mankind.

The Treasury

Suddenly our horses made a sharp turn, and the Siq ended abruptly, cut off by a longer, wider transverse ravine. I was in the brilliant sunlight, blinking incredulously at the most entrancing vision my eyes have ever seen. I was face to face with an incomparable Grecian temple carved out of the rock mountain. It was unbelievable. It was fantastic. In that wild and rugged natural setting, nothing could be more unexpected than this unparalleled example of man's artistic skill. Of course, it was El Khazna ("The Treasury"), more gorgeous than anything Athens can boast, and the most beautiful of all the monuments of Petra. But in spite of what I had heard and read about it, I was utterly unprepared for such loveliness. Fancy an enormous flame-colored cliff so high it seemed to disappear into the blue. Imagine, if you can, an immense rose-gold temple, of matchless symmetrical design, with a two-storied facade, cut cameo-like out of that overhanging cliff!

Dismounting from my horse, I approached El Khazna for a close-up. Its tremendous size gave me a feeling of awe. Its portico was supported by five beautiful Corinthian columns; a sixth was broken off near the base, perhaps when some great treasure was being transported to the interior. Gazing upward, I noted that the second "story" contained four more such columns. On top of the architrave stood an exquisite image of the goddess Isis, flanked on either side by the horned

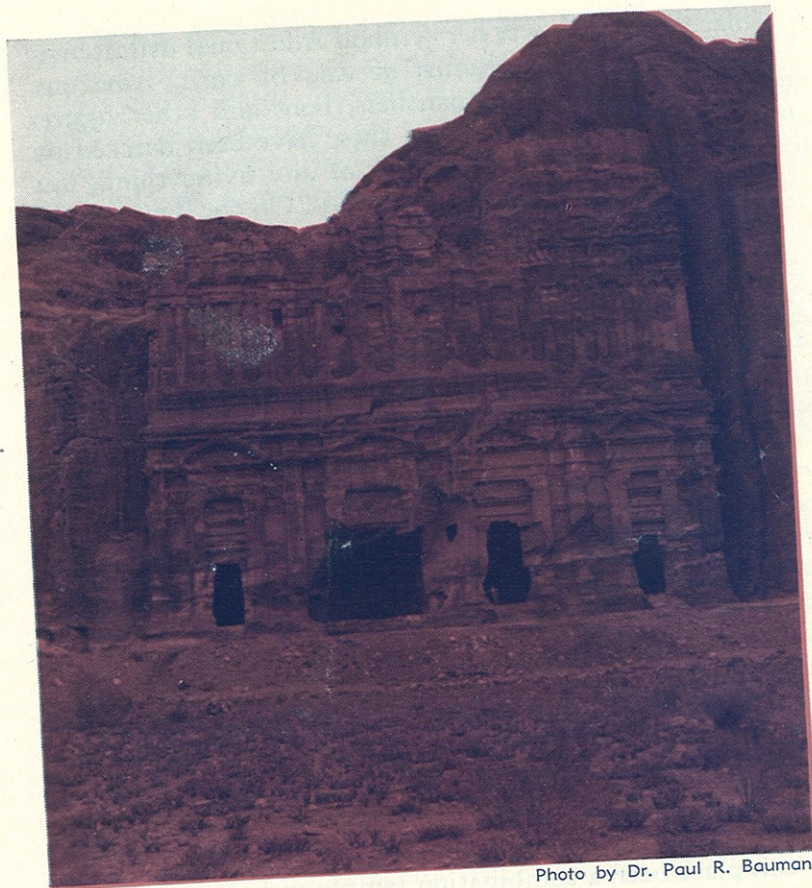


Photo by Dr. Paul R. Bauman

Large Temple. I am the tiny speck standing in right center doorway.

solar disc which was her symbol. Additional delicate engravings on the columns of ears of corn, Amazons, Medusa heads, eagles, panthers, lions and other figures could be detected. Some of these have been defaced by the Moslems who hate images of any living thing, but the charm of the art work remains. On the dome of the temple was an immense urn, supposed to contain Pharaoh's treasure, from which the name is derived. That this was believed by many to be a fact was attested by numerous bullet scars on the urn.

I walked up a flight of rock stairs and found myself on the "porch," from which three immense doorways, like great yawning caverns, opened into the interior. The central one, through which I entered, was thirty feet high and fifteen feet wide. I put my finger into a hinge hole where the enormous door once had swung. Why such out-size proportions? Had a race of giants dwelt here? Did the huge images of heathen deities once fill these open spaces? I found myself in a vast, empty hall, completely bare of furniture or decoration of any kind. There was only silence—so deep it was frightening—the stillness of the ages which only long-abandoned places hold. I walked through side doorways into mysterious cave-like recesses; had the dead lain there? By four additional stone steps I reached another deserted chamber; had offerings for Isis been stored here? Had this place been a combination temple and charnel house? Who made away with all the treasures of gold and silver and jewels? And had any knowledge of the true God and eternal life ever penetrated these inscrutable walls? The only answer to these musings of my heart were the echoes of my own footsteps in those deserted corridors.

I could not linger, in spite of the overwhelming fascination of the place. I had to cover as much as possible of other Petraean monuments during my brief stay in the rock city. But I promised myself that ere I

left for good I should treat myself to another look at El Khazna, castle of dreams, so hauntingly beautiful, so wholly dead. Its unbelievable immensity, its complete abandonment, its utter desolation, and its unequalled artistry had woven a spell about me which would not soon depart.

Petra Yesterday

Before I proceed with further details in regard to other never-to-be-forgotten wonders I beheld in Petra, a quick resume of what is known of its history will help to explain its present situation and the variety of the architecture of its tombs and temples.

Many historians believe that all the Biblical references to Edom, Sela, Mt. Hor, Mt. Seir, and Idumea may be safely applied to the Petraean area. Certain it is that the father of those aboriginal rock cave dwellers was Hori, the grandson of Seir; and that Esau, because of his difficulties with his brother Jacob, migrated to Mt. Seir, and became the ancestor of the infamous Edomites. Early in their history they incurred the displeasure of God for their treatment of the poor, wilderness-wandering Hebrew slaves who, under the leadership of Moses, sought freedom in another land. The very moving incident is recorded in Numbers 20:14-21:

"And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us: How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: And when we cried unto the Lord, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border: Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass



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Distant View of El Khazna, showing its position in relation to the ravine.

through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders: And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing any thing else, go through on my feet. And he said, Thou shalt not go through, and Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his borders; wherefore Israel turned away from him."

For this and subsequent crimes the Lord predicted eventual ruin for Edom. King Saul battled with them; David brought them into subjection and Solomon added them to his empire. In 2 Kings 14:7 we have this reference to their conquest by King Amaziah of Judah: "He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day." This took place in the ninth century B.C., and up until the Judean kingdom dissolved, Petra seems to have been more or less in subjection to it.

Then out of the desert came the hordes of a strong Bedouin people, the Nabatæans, claiming descent from Ishmael, "the wild man". Concealing themselves in the rock valley beyond the Siq, they made Petra their capital, and from about the second century B.C. through the first century of the Christian era they held the entire world at bay.

Petra became a world mart, a veritable Suez for that entire region, a caravan cross-roads between Arabia and Syria. Strabo, Pliny and other historians have described graphically their advanced civilization, which included intricate water systems by which the spring water was

piped into the city and stored in huge reservoirs; paved streets; industries; and great warehouses in which the camel caravan goods were stored for redistribution to points west and north. In the days when Gaza was the terminal for the Arabian trade, Petra was the place where the Gaza road branched off to Bosra, Palmyra and Northern Syria; the route from Egypt to Damascus was also via Petra; and it became the center for the main lines of overland trade between the East and West. Thousands of springs and streams from the surrounding hills flowed through the valleys, making it a very fertile spot.

Silks, gold, perfume, spices, and all manner of goods continually flowed in and out of the rock city. In addition, it was a manufacturing and distributing point for cult objects of their heathen worship as well. The population of Petra in those days must have exceeded 50,000. It became fabulously wealthy under the Nabataean rule, and other cultures were introduced. King Aretus II who reigned from 85-60 B.C. was a great admirer of the Greeks, and carried on an extensive business with them. It was he who gave the Graeco-Roman character to Petra; the most beautiful temples date from his reign.

Naturally, such wealth attracted the greed of other nations. In 312 Antigonus made an attempt to capture Petra, but failed; a second attempt was made by Demetrius, his son, which was also unsuccessful. Finally the Greeks gave it up. Later, after a terrific struggle, the Romans annexed it to their empire in 106 A.D. through Cornelius Palma, a lieutenant of Trajan, and it remained a dependency of Rome until her decline. The Franks are said to have taken possession of Petra in the 12th century; there are the remains of a Crusader's citadel, but these details are rather vague.

Why did this impregnable fortress fail? Petra was



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Temple of El Khazna from the Southeast.

doomed for two reasons. Had not God said: "O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence" (Jer. 49:16)? Added to this was Petra's own worship of the vile sun god, Dushara, and his mother-consort, Allat, the Arabian goddess. These dreadful deities were propitiated with the blood of living sacrifices and their worship was accompanied by indescribable licentious practices. They built high places similar to those the Israelites were forbidden to construct. I saw with my own eyes the great high place and the altars where they worshipped Dushara with blood and fire, and carried out their unspeakable orgies.

Whether the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ ever reached Petra we cannot tell. There are some claims that in the seventh century it was a monastic center, but this cannot be proven. An ancient historian named Sozomen has a note to the effect that Petra strongly resisted the inroads of Christianity in 400 A.D. An inscription on one of the monuments indicates that it was dedicated "in the time of the most holy bishop Jason" (447 A.D.) as a place of Christian worship. Evidently whatever traces of gospel witness there may have been were completely obliterated by the Moslem conquest in 629-632 A.D. which was really the end for Petra. She passed into black oblivion for more than a thousand years. Was it not written: "Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished" (Jer. 49:17)?

Not until 1812 when that courageous Swiss adventurer, John Lewis Burckhardt, disguised as a Moslem in an attempt to explore the sacred sites of Islam, came upon Petra by accident, did the world know anything about the rose-red city. For his safety's sake, Burckhardt was obliged to leave very shortly after his astounding

discovery. He gave a meager report which did not excite much comment, until ten years later some publicity was given to it, and explorers became interested in Petra. Many a brave man lost his life in those days trying to uncover its secrets. However, since World War I, it has been comparatively safe to visit Petra, for the Arabs are friendly and co-operative. It is a never-to-be-forgotten experience for anyone, albeit a strenuous undertaking which requires endurance. But I felt it worth all the difficulties. For in my opinion there is no spot on earth that proves more conclusively that what God has spoken He will perform than that rocky, rose-red city of the dead in northern Arabia.

Petra Today

It is difficult to furnish a panoramic word picture of Petra. The general topography is ridges and ravines and rocks. The valley of the Wadi Musa is enclosed by two immense sandstone mountain ranges, rent by flood and tempest into two main gorges. These rock walls are divided by these gorges into four different sections, the northeastern half being the enormous ridge of El Khubdha and the southeastern Zibb 'Atuf.

As there are more than one thousand temples of the Nabataean type in Petra and two dozen or more in the Graeco-Roman style, it was impossible for me to touch more than the fringes of a few of them. Later on I will give a few details of the places that impressed me most.

The ruins of the actual site of the city of Petra proper interested me greatly. There are traces of temples, bridges, and walls. Apparently the main street ran parallel with the stream, and there were many public buildings. A part of what was once a triple gate still remains. Not far from this gate is the only building of

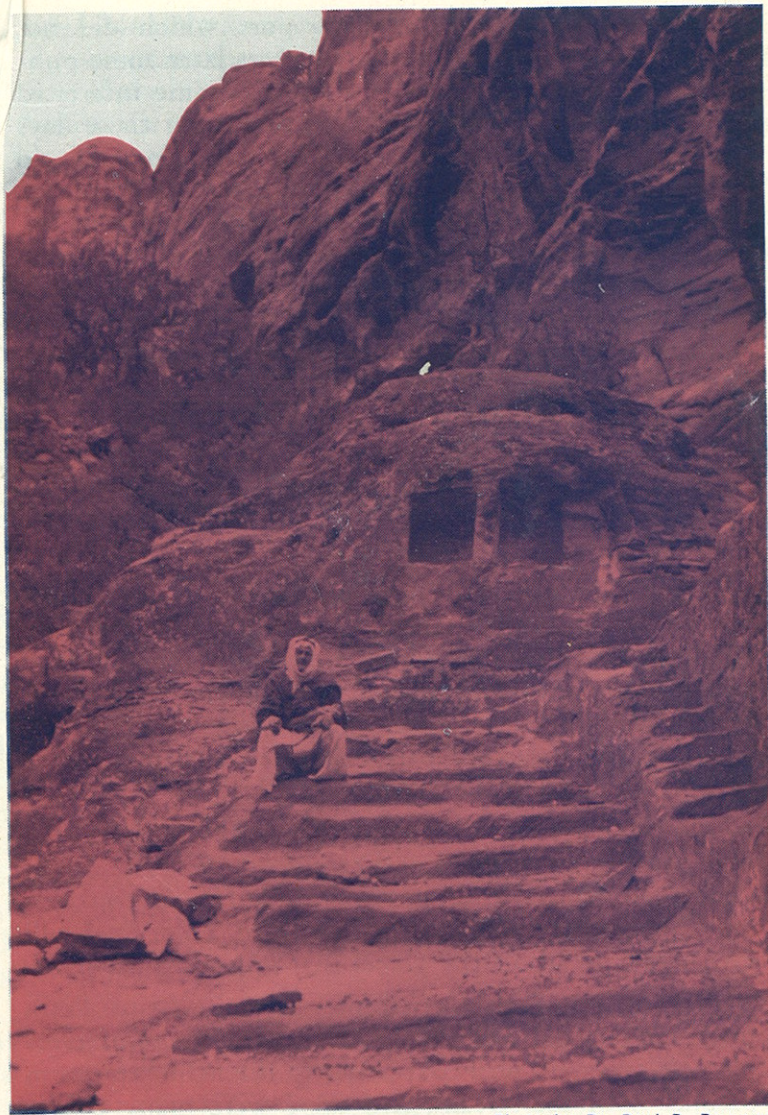


Photo by Dr. Paul R. Bauman

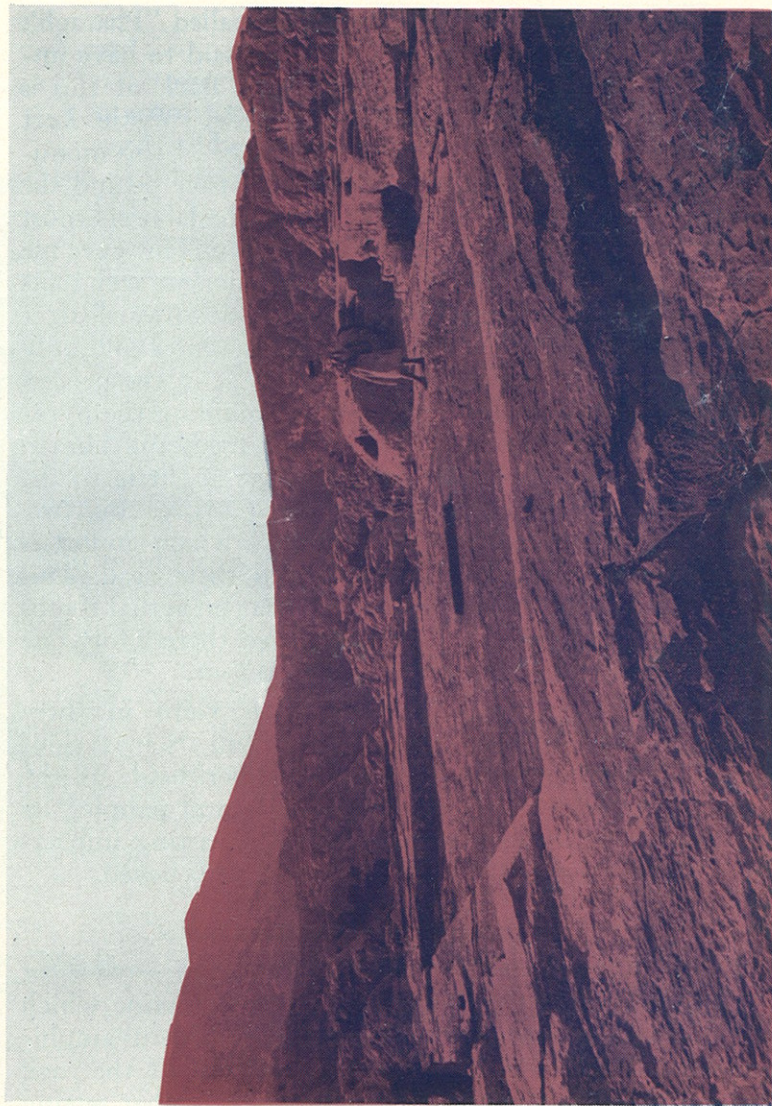
*Steps carved in side of mountain and leading to High Place.
Note niches for images.*

masonry work to be found in Petra, called "Pharaoh's Castle" by the Arabs. Here Pharaoh is said to have imprisoned his daughter for many years. Back of this is the Citadel Rock where stood a crusader's castle. Left of this is the unfinished tomb. At the base of this monument there is an opening leading to a space behind the proposed pillars. The platform where the laborers must have stood is reached by a crude stairway. This gave me an inkling of the method of those ancient architects who obviously carved from the rock downward after cutting out rock shelves for their feet. One could only conjecture how many lives had been lost in the process of construction, but no doubt, as in building the pyramids and Taj Mahal, slave labor was used, and human life was very expendable in those days. A little to the left of this is the Columbarium, obviously a sepulchre, its walls honeycombed with niches, which indicates that the Petraeans may have burned their dead. This undoubtedly accounts for the fact that no actual tombs or mummies have ever been discovered there. Only one temple in Petra is decorated in the interior.

Petra is different from all other ruins in three respects: its immensity, its coloring, and its marvelous state of preservation. It seems as imperishable as the rock from which it is hewn. Its tombs and temples, its mountain peaks and its gorges leave a lasting impression. It must be seen to be appreciated or believed.

The Roman Amphitheater

Before I left the Outer Siq, the cross ravine which intersects the entrance, I visited the Roman amphitheater. This astonishing arena carved out of the rock mountain seemed to me as out of place in that setting as the Grecian temple. I observed that it lay in a basin, not quite a semi-circle in shape, and that there were



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The High Place of Sacrifice from the North.

about thirty-three tiers of seats, with a seating capacity of three to five thousand. It was plain that the Roman conquerors had hacked away some of the Nabataean temples in order to form this amphitheater for some of the ancient inner chambers remained in the cliffs. Very weird were the hues of the rock benches of this ancient place of amusement. They reminded me of green, yellow and blue flames of fire. It was not difficult to imagine the gorgeously-attired pleasure seekers who had once occupied those seats, and the sports and plays that were performed for their amusement. Without doubt the great merchant men of the East were entertained there. It was uncanny to walk about a place which had been so full of life and now was utterly without sound or movement. And it had been like that for more than a thousand years!

After this, I made my way to the northern section of the eastern range. Here was an entirely different type of monument, the cliff having been carved with a corniced facade. Along the lower side of the mountain were tremendous cavities cut into the walls. Unquestionably these were the famous Nabataean warehouses where were stored the treasures from the caravans of the East to await proper distribution to the north and west. This is the highest rock face in Petra and its temples are the most resplendent. Among them is the Corinthian tomb, and the largest monument of all, Pharaoh's Castle, which I mentioned before, built entirely of masonry, of which a portion remains. I entered the immense hall, and examined a few chambers of different sizes and noted a thick outer wall with a four-foot ledge all the way around between the inner and outer walls. I climbed the rock stairs within, which led to the roof. There I saw carvings of birds, animals, gods and goddesses. On one side of the building were four huge columns and ruins of many more.



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Details of colorful veining in the Petra sandstone.

The Great High Place

I determined to see the Great High Place of Sacrifice although the ascent to it was one of the most rugged climbs I made. Over uneven ledges and broken rock steps, part of the way on my hands and knees, stumbling and slipping, I made my way up to the top of Zibb 'Atuf. This site was excavated by Edwin L. Wilson in 1882 and was originally the most sacred mountain of the Nabatæan cult. There I had a good view of the two giant obelisks I had observed from various parts of the valley. Unbelievable as it may seem, the entire surface of the mountain had been hewn away, leaving these enormous rectangular monuments standing in solitary splendor. In reality, they were monolithic representations of the principal deities of the Nabatæans, the thirty-foot one being sacred to Dushara, the sun god, and the twenty-foot one to his mother-consort, Allat, the Arabian goddess. These were the vertical images, the more common symbol being the black cuboid stones, found in niches and crannies all over Petra. The Black Stone in the Kaaba itself, at Mecca, is said to be one of these Dushara; apparently Islam later incorporated into its religion some aspects of the Nabatæan worship. Surely it is a strange conception that their gods should be thus symbolized; but by not forming images of living things, they thus could claim that they were not idol-worshippers. The Dushara was used by the Nabatæans in the same way the early Christians used the cross.

Making another short, but very precipitous, climb up rock stairs, I arrived at a flat rocky plateau, with a very uneven surface, out of which a shallow rectangular court had been carved. I noted a raised platform in the center, evidently for the bodies of the victims, and rock benches encircling the court, apparently for the convenience of the participants in the heathen worship



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*Urn of Ed Deir. Dr. Bauman and I climbed
to the base of this urn.*

as they observed and feasted. So this was the Great Place of Sacrifice, the throne of the terrible god of the sun! I could scarcely believe I was standing on the very spot. I remembered reading that in the opinion of some historians this altar was actually the depression where the base of a tremendous rectangular Dushara had stood. I could well believe it, as the measurements of four feet high by two feet square would seem to fit. If so, had God's judgment utterly obliterated the image in centuries gone by?

Walking a short distance, I examined the twin altars, also carved out of the rock—one square and surrounded on three sides by channels cut into the rock; the other round, hollowed out in the center, with a hole cut into one side. I stared with horror and amazement at these evident provisions for disposing of the blood of the sacrifices. It was not difficult to imagine the dreadful scenes that must have taken place on this rocky hill—the ghastly offerings, the screams of the dying, and the filthy immoral rites which characterized worship in the “high places.” No doubt the ascending smoke of the sacrifices was a signal to the inhabitants of the village below to engage in accompanying orgies lasting many days.

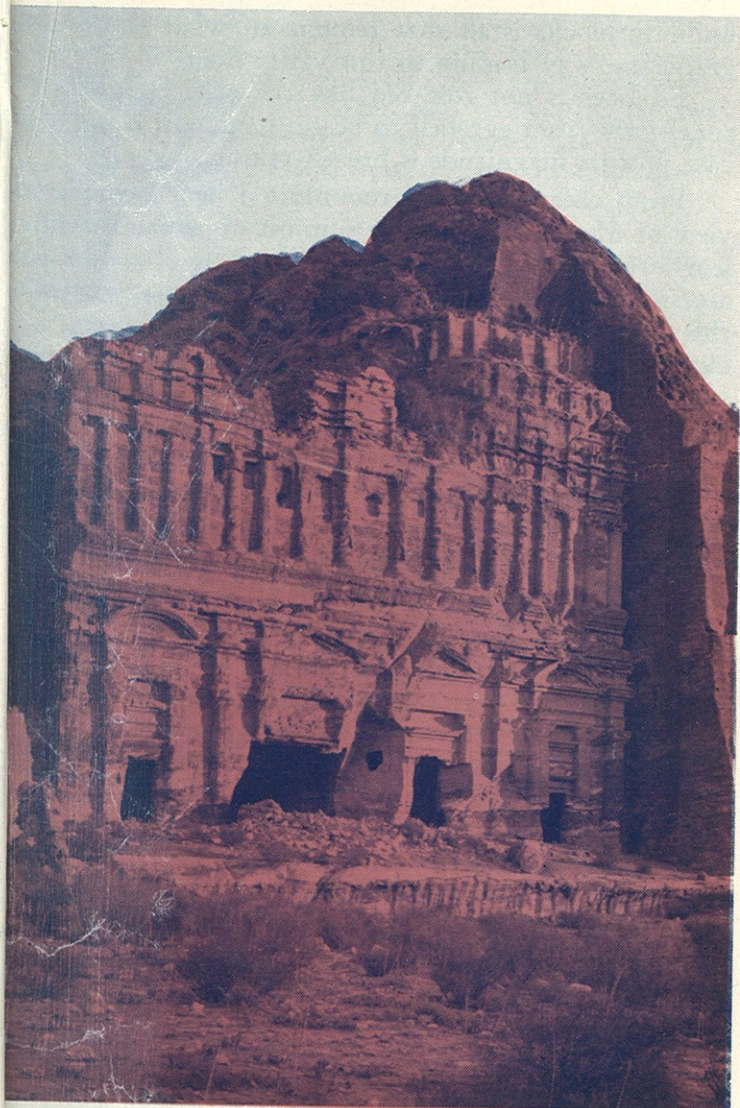
As I turned with a shudder to leave this sinister place, I thought with deep love and gratitude in my heart of another hill, where the blood of Another Sacrifice, the spotless Lamb of God, had been poured out for the sins of all the world, including my own. I wondered what would have been the history of the rose-red city if it had been conquered by Him instead of being turned over to the hosts of hell. Then as I made my hazardous way down to the valley, I called to mind the prophecies in God's Book, and it gave me a thrill to consider that those rock-hewn tombs and temples might yet bring glory and honor to His name.

The Roman Temple — Ed Dier

My next venture was a long, hard climb through a deep gorge over boulders and up rock-cut stairways to about six hundred foot elevation to have a look at that famous monolithic Roman Temple, Ed Dier ("The Monastery"). As I ascended, I noted a tomb with carved lions on its doors, and many cult objects.

Evidently the Romans obliterated all they could of Nabatæan design to make a truly Roman temple of Ed Dier. Unlike El Khazna, which was cut out of the face of the cliff, tons of rock had to be removed before the carving of this temple began, as a flat area in front indicates.

Two red crosses have been painted on its walls. These have given it its name, and account for the supposition that this may have been used as a Christian church at one time. There is a tremendous hall, across from which is a tomb. Its facade is one hundred and fifty feet in height and its width even greater; at its summit stands a huge urn, carved, like the temple, out of the rock. It must have been a tremendous engineering feat to place this urn, weighing many tons, at that height. Believe it or not, Dr. Bauman and I climbed up many steps, and by leaping across the chasm, succeeded in climbing onto the base of this urn. It made me slightly dizzy to look down, and getting back again was pretty rugged! It was really a hair-raising experience, and later when the motion picture was shown my wife, she nearly fainted. As I looked at the film, I too had to wonder at the enthusiasm that had prompted me to take such a risk! I doubt if I would ever repeat it. It is on one of these temples that an inscription makes mention of a Christian bishop. This temple rises above the level of the city and has a masonry extension supported by two stories of arched vaults. A jumble of enormous



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Tomb in Stories

building blocks is all that remains of what was once a grand stairway leading to this valley floor.

Ed Dier is not rose-red like the other temples. Its tones vary from eggshell to beige; its design is not delicate, but its magnitude is breath-taking.

From the top of this mountain I had a wonderful view of Mount Hor, on the summit of which is a Moslem shrine, built over Aaron's grave. None but Moslems are supposed to ascend it, which is almost as sacred to the Arabs as Mecca. Christians do, from time to time, climb Mount Hor and enter the tomb, but since there is nothing to see but a stone cenotaph draped with a dusty green flag, I didn't think it was worth the risk. Besides, I was dead tired by that time. I had climbed so many stairs my legs were aching and my feet were blistered.

Petra Tomorrow

In this brief booklet I have tried to tell you what I saw and felt in Petra. As I made my way over its rocks and ravines, and gazed with wonder upon those temple-tombs, there was ever in the background of my mind the prophecies of God's Word with which I was familiar. I remembered what Daniel had foretold of "the seventieth week" when the fury of Satan through Antichrist would fall upon the Jewish people. I recalled the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His Olivet discourse. His description of the time of "Jacob's trouble" is found in Matthew 24:15-22:

"When ye therefore shall 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 Judæa flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; Neither let him which is in the field return back

to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

If, as those verses indicate, God is to preserve the Jewish remnant which will believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, where will He hide them? A company of 144,000 people cannot be concealed just anywhere.

There are two very significant verses in Isaiah in this connection: "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler" (16:4); and "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 be overpast" (26:20). There is also this striking statement in Daniel 11:41: "He [the Antichrist] shall enter also."

One of the passages that corroborates these verses is found in Revelation 12:1, 5 and 6: "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun . . . 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 threescore days."

The context makes it clear that the woman referred to is the nation of Israel through whom Christ, according to the flesh, came. The event described is the great tribulation period. The man child is both Christ and the church, for we are members of His body. The



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Air View

dragon pursuing the woman is Satan and the 1,260 days are of course the three and one-half years of "Jacob's trouble."

But please note the reference to the place prepared in the wilderness where the woman Israel is to be nourished. Many Bible teachers are of the opinion that this refers to the city of Petra, which is the only place in Palestine which answers this description. Surely there is shelter there for a vast multitude. In that coming day the remnant will be preserved as miraculously as was Elijah in the days of his distress at the brook Cherith when he was fed by the ravens.

It is my conviction that God has already provided and preserved a place of refuge for the Jewish remnant in that day and that this place is not far from Jerusalem itself. I saw with my own eyes those "chambers" all ready for them. No more appropriate spot on earth for harboring these outcasts from the Satanic wrath of Antichrist and his hordes could be found. As I gazed into those extensive corridors, I could imagine them filled with the "D.P.'s" of the tribulation. Of course, no one can be certain of these things, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that God has reserved these huge buildings for just such a purpose. How easily a few men at the Siq entrance could defend the city against the enemy!

Once Edom haughtily refused to allow the persecuted Hebrews to put their feet upon their precious soil. It would be like God to give them the entire land! It would not be the first time He made the wrath of man to praise Him and turned a curse into a blessing.

That godly and scholarly Bible teacher of a past generation, Dr. W. E. Blackstone, was so convinced that Petra was to be God's hiding-place for the Jews during the tribulation that he invested considerable money in a project to place New Testaments in the

crannies of the rocks of the rose-red city. He hoped thereby to provide for the Jews a means of learning the way of salvation and their own future. Whether any Scriptures are today concealed in those rock temples is not known.

Who knows but that some day, perhaps in the Millennium, all of us as God's children may be able to visit Petra, a restored and inhabited city, with its dwellers no longer worshipping heathen deities, but the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be in His rightful place as King of kings and Lord of lords of all peoples of earth, with every tongue acknowledging Him as Lord and Saviour?