

Charisma News Brief: Did Angels Help Build This 13th-Century Church?

A 13th-century church in Ethiopia, carved from volcanic rock, sits deep inside a pit in the earth. Despite its unique setting, it has become one of the more visited landmarks on the entire continent of Africa.

The church, hewn from red volcanic rock, welcomes thousands of pilgrims that arrive to celebrate events on the Ethiopian Christian Calendar, the Insider reports.

The New York Times reports that Muslim conquests in 13th-century Africa put a stop to Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land. That left many Christians prohibited from making what was a treacherous journey to the Israeli city of Jerusalem.

That, the New Times reported, opened the opportunity for King Lalibela, who reigned from 1181 to 1221 AD, to create a “New Jerusalem” where Christians could make the journey, hiding them from Muslims invading from the North.

The church, now known as the Church of St. George, captured the attention of Coptic Christians for centuries and has been heralded by many travel guides as one of the more “impressive Christian structures” throughout the world.

The church is freestanding inside a square pit. Its interior is dimly lit by high windows and candles. It is considered sacred, containing a Bible and holy water.

Lalibela directed his people that to chisel 11 monolithic structures to be chiseled out of the nearby red volcanic hills.

The church, which was dedicated to Ethiopia’s patron saint,

took 23 years to complete and stands 40 feet tall. It is located in a small village in the Lasta mountains of Ethiopia and is one of the UNESCO-protected rock-hewn churches. It has been designated as a World Heritage site.

Local legend has it, the Insider reported, that thousands of laborers worked on the structure by day, but their work was continued by angels at night. {eo}

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Shawn A. Akers is the online editor at Charisma Media.