

Bible, Revised Standard Version

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2 Esdras

4Ezra.1

[1] The second book of the prophet Ezra the son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub,

[2] son of Ahijah, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, son of Arna, son of Uzzi, son of Borith, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar,

[3] son of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi, who was a captive in the country of the Medes in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians.

[4]

The word of the Lord came to me, saying,

[5] "Go and declare to my people their evil deeds, and to their children the iniquities which they have committed against me, so that they may tell their children's children

[6] that the sins of their parents have increased in them, for they have forgotten me and have offered sacrifices to strange gods.

[7] Was it not I who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage? But they have angered me and despised my counsels.

[8] Pull out the hair of your head and hurl all evils upon them, for they have not obeyed my law -- they are a rebellious people.

[9] How long shall I endure them, on whom I have bestowed such great benefits?

[10] For their sake I have overthrown many kings: I struck down Pharaoh with his servants, and all his army.

[11] I have destroyed all nations before them, and scattered in the east the people of two provinces, Tyre and Sidon; I have slain all their enemies.

[12]

"But speak to them and say, Thus says the Lord:

[13] Surely it was I who brought you through the sea, and made safe highways for you where there was no road; I gave you Moses as leader and Aaron as priest;

[14] I provided light for you from a pillar of fire, and did great wonders among you. Yet you have forgotten me, says the Lord.

[15]

"Thus says the Lord Almighty: The quails were a sign to you; I gave you camps for your protection, and in them you complained.

[16] You have not exulted in my name at the destruction of your enemies, but to this day you still complain.

[17] Where are the benefits which I bestowed on you? When you were hungry and thirsty in the wilderness, did you not cry out to me,

[18] saying, 'Why hast thou led us into this wilderness to kill us? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in this wilderness.'

[19] I pitied your groanings and gave you manna for food; you ate the bread of angels.

[20] When you were thirsty, did I not cleave the rock so that waters flowed in abundance? Because of the heat I covered you with the leaves of trees.

[21] I divided fertile lands among you; I drove out the Canaanites, the Perizzites, and the Philistines before you. What more can I do for you? says the Lord.

[22] Thus says the Lord Almighty: When you were in the wilderness, at the bitter stream, thirsty and blaspheming my name,

[23] I did not send fire upon you for your blasphemies, but threw a tree into the water and made the stream sweet.

[24]

"What shall I do to you, O Jacob? You would not obey me, O Judah. I will turn to other nations and will give them my name, that they may keep my statutes.

[25] Because you have forsaken me, I also will forsake you. When you beg mercy of me, I will show you no mercy.

[26] When you call upon me, I will not listen to you; for you have defiled your hands with blood, and your feet are swift to commit murder.

[27] It is not as though you had forsaken me; you have forsaken yourselves, says the Lord.

[28]

"Thus says the Lord Almighty: Have I not entreated you as a father entreats his sons or a mother her daughters or a nurse her children,

[29] that you should be my people and I should be your God, and that you should be my sons and I should be your father?

[30] I gathered you as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you out from my presence.

[31] When you offer oblations to me, I will turn my face from you; for I have rejected your feast days, and new moons, and circumcisions of the flesh.

[32] I sent to you my servants the prophets, but you have taken and slain them and torn their bodies in pieces; their blood I will require of you, says the Lord.

[33]

"Thus says the Lord Almighty: Your house is desolate; I will drive you out as the wind drives straw;

[34] and your sons will have no children, because with you they have neglected my commandment and have done what is evil in my sight.

[35] I will give your houses to a people that will come, who without having heard me will believe. Those to whom I have shown no signs will do what I have commanded.

[36] They have seen no prophets, yet will recall their former state.

[37] I call to witness the gratitude of the people that is to come, whose children rejoice with gladness; though

they do not see me with bodily eyes, yet with the spirit they will believe the things I have said.

[38]

"And now, father, look with pride and see the people coming from the east;

[39] to them I will give as leaders Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Hosea and Amos and Micah and Joel and Obadiah and Jonah

[40] and Nahum and Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, who is also called the messenger of the Lord.

4Ezra.2

[1]

"Thus says the Lord: I brought this people out of bondage, and I gave them commandments through my servants the prophets; but they would not listen to them, and made my counsels void.

[2] The mother who bore them says to them, 'Go, my children, because I am a widow and forsaken.

[3] I brought you up with gladness; but with mourning and sorrow I have lost you, because you have sinned before the Lord God and have done what is evil in my sight.

[4] But now what can I do for you? For I am a widow and forsaken. Go, my children, and ask for mercy from the Lord.'

[5] I call upon you, father, as a witness in addition to the mother of the children, because they would not keep my covenant,

[6] that you may bring confusion upon them and bring their mother to ruin, so that they may have no offspring.

[7] Let them be scattered among the nations, let their names be blotted out from the earth, because they have despised my covenant.

[8]

"Woe to you, Assyria, who conceal the unrighteous in your midst! O wicked nation, remember what I did to Sodom and Gomorrah,

[9] whose land lies in lumps of pitch and heaps of ashes. So will I do to those who have not listened to me, says the Lord Almighty."

[10]

Thus says the Lord to Ezra: "Tell my people that I will give them the kingdom of Jerusalem, which I was going to give to Israel.

[11] Moreover, I will take back to myself their glory, and will give to these others the everlasting habitations, which I had prepared for Israel.

[12] The tree of life shall give them fragrant perfume, and they shall neither toil nor become weary.

[13] Ask and you will receive; pray that your days may be few, that they may be shortened. The kingdom is already prepared for you; watch!

[14] Call, O call heaven and earth to witness, for I left out evil and created good, because I live, says the Lord.

[15]

"Mother, embrace your sons; bring them up with gladness, as does the dove; establish their feet, because I have chosen you, says the Lord.

[16] And I will raise up the dead from their places, and will bring them out from their tombs, because I recognize my name in them.

[17] Do not fear, mother of sons, for I have chosen you, says the Lord.

[18] I will send you help, my servants Isaiah and Jeremiah. According to their counsel I have consecrated and prepared for you twelve trees loaded with various fruits,

[19] and the same number of springs flowing with milk and honey, and seven mighty mountains on which roses and lilies grow; by these I will fill your children with joy.

[20] Guard the rights of the widow, secure justice for the fatherless, give to the needy, defend the orphan, clothe the naked,

[21] care for the injured and the weak, do not ridicule a lame man, protect the maimed, and let the blind man have a vision of my splendor.

[22] Protect the old and the young within your walls;

[23] When you find any who are dead, commit them to the grave and mark it, and I will give you the first place in my resurrection.

[24] Pause and be quiet, my people, because your rest will come.

[25] Good nurse, nourish your sons, and strengthen their feet.

[26] Not one of the servants whom I have given you will perish, for I will require them from among your number.

[27] Do not be anxious, for when the day of tribulation and anguish comes, others shall weep and be sorrowful, but you shall rejoice and have abundance.

[28] The nations shall envy you but they shall not be able to do anything against you, says the Lord.

[29] My hands will cover you, that your sons may not see Gehenna.

[30] Rejoice, O mother, with your sons, because I will deliver you, says the Lord.

[31] Remember your sons that sleep, because I will bring them out of the hiding places of the earth, and will show mercy to them; for I am merciful, says the Lord Almighty.

[32] Embrace your children until I come, and proclaim mercy to them; because my springs run over, and my grace will not fail."

[33]

I, Ezra, received a command from the Lord on Mount Horeb to go to Israel. When I came to them they rejected me and refused the Lord's commandment.

[34] Therefore I say to you, O nations that hear and understand, "Await your shepherd; he will give you everlasting rest, because he who will come at the end of the age is close at hand.

[35] Be ready for the rewards of the kingdom, because the eternal light will shine upon you for evermore.

[36] Flee from the shadow of this age, receive the joy of your glory; I publicly call on my Savior to witness.

[37] Receive what the Lord has entrusted to you and be joyful, giving thanks to him who has called you to heavenly kingdoms.

[38] Rise and stand, and see at the feast of the Lord the number of those who have been sealed.

[39] Those who have departed from the shadow of this age have received glorious garments from the Lord.

[40] Take again your full number, O Zion, and conclude the list of your people who are clothed in white, who have fulfilled the law of the Lord.

[41] The number of your children, whom you desired, is full; beseech the Lord's power that your people, who have been called from the beginning, may be made holy."

[42]

I, Ezra, saw on Mount Zion a great multitude, which I could not number, and they all were praising the Lord with songs.

[43] In their midst was a young man of great stature, taller than any of the others, and on the head of each of them he placed a crown, but he was more exalted than they. And I was held spellbound.

[44] Then I asked an angel, "Who are these, my lord?"

[45] He answered and said to me, "These are they who have put off mortal clothing and have put on the immortal, and they have confessed the name of God; now they are being crowned, and receive palms."

[46] Then I said to the angel, "Who is that young man who places crowns on them and puts palms in their hands?"

[47] He answered and said to me, "He is the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world." So I began to praise those who had stood valiantly for the name of the Lord.

[48] Then the angel said to me, "Go, tell my people how great and many are the wonders of the Lord God which you have seen."

4Ezra.3

[1]

In the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city, I Salathiel, who am also called Ezra, was in Babylon. I was troubled as I lay on my bed, and my thoughts welled up in my heart,

[2] because I saw the desolation of Zion and the wealth of those who lived in Babylon.

[3] My spirit was greatly agitated, and I began to speak anxious words to the Most High, and said,

[4] "O sovereign Lord, didst thou not speak at the beginning when thou didst form the earth -- and that without help -- and didst command the dust

[5] and it gave thee Adam, a lifeless body? Yet he was the workmanship of thy hands, and thou didst breathe into him the breath of life, and he was made alive in thy presence.

[6] And thou didst lead him into the garden which thy right hand had planted before the earth appeared.

[7] And thou didst lay upon him one commandment of thine; but he transgressed it, and immediately thou didst appoint death for him and for his descendants. From him there sprang nations and tribes, peoples and clans without number.

[8] And every nation walked after its own will and did ungodly things before thee and scorned thee, and thou didst not hinder them.

[9] But again, in its time thou didst bring the flood upon the inhabitants of the world and destroy them.

[10] And the same fate befell them: as death came upon Adam, so the flood upon them.

[11] But thou didst leave one of them, Noah with his household, and all the righteous who have descended from him.

[12]

"When those who dwelt on earth began to multiply, they produced children and peoples and many nations, and again they began to be more ungodly than were their ancestors.

[13] And when they were committing iniquity before thee, thou didst choose for thyself one of them, whose name was Abraham;

[14] and thou didst love him, and to him only didst thou reveal the end of the times, secretly by night.

[15] Thou didst make with him an everlasting covenant, and promise him that thou wouldst never forsake his descendants; and thou gavest to him Isaac, and to Isaac thou gavest Jacob and Esau.

[16] And thou didst set apart Jacob for thyself, but Esau thou didst reject; and Jacob became a great multitude.
 [17] And when thou didst lead his descendants out of Egypt, thou didst bring them to Mount Sinai.
 [18] Thou didst bend down the heavens and shake the earth, and move the world, and make the depths to tremble, and trouble the times.
 [19] And thy glory passed through the four gates of fire and earthquake and wind and ice, to give the law to the descendants of Jacob, and thy commandment to the posterity of Israel.
 [20]

"Yet thou didst not take away from them their evil heart, so that thy law might bring forth fruit in them.

[21] For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him.
 [22] Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained.
 [23] So the times passed and the years were completed, and thou didst raise up for thyself a servant, named David.
 [24] And thou didst command him to build a city for thy name, and in it to offer thee oblations from what is thine.
 [25] This was done for many years; but the inhabitants of the city transgressed,
 [26] in everything doing as Adam and all his descendants had done, for they also had the evil heart.
 [27] So thou didst deliver the city into the hands of thy enemies.
 [28]

"Then I said in my heart, Are the deeds of those who inhabit Babylon any better? Is that why she has gained dominion over Zion?

[29] For when I came here I saw ungodly deeds without number, and my soul has seen many sinners during these thirty years. And my heart failed me,
 [30] for I have seen how thou dost endure those who sin, and hast spared those who act wickedly, and hast destroyed thy people, and hast preserved thy enemies,
 [31] and hast not shown to any one how thy way may be comprehended. Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion?
 [32] Or has another nation known thee besides Israel? Or what tribes have so believed thy covenants as these tribes of Jacob?
 [33] Yet their reward has not appeared and their labor has borne no fruit. For I have traveled widely among the nations and have seen that they abound in wealth, though they are unmindful of thy commandments.
 [34] Now therefore weigh in a balance our iniquities and those of the inhabitants of the world; and so it will be found which way the turn of the scale will incline.
 [35] When have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in thy sight? Or what nation has kept thy commandments so well?
 [36] Thou mayest indeed find individual men who have kept thy commandments, but nations thou wilt not find."

4Ezra.4

[1]

Then the angel that had been sent to me, whose name was Uriel, answered

[2] and said to me, "Your understanding has utterly failed regarding this world, and do you think you can comprehend the way of the Most High?"

[3] Then I said, "Yes, my lord." And he replied to me, "I have been sent to show you three ways, and to put before you three problems.

[4] If you can solve one of them for me, I also will show you the way you desire to see, and will teach you why the heart is evil."

[5]

I said, "Speak on, my lord."

And he said to me, "Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a measure of wind, or call back for me the day that is past."

[6]

I answered and said, "Who of those that have been born can do this, that you ask me concerning these things?"

[7]

And he said to me, "If I had asked you, 'How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many streams are at the source of the deep, or how many streams are above the firmament, or which are the exits of hell, or which are the entrances of paradise?'

[8] Perhaps you would have said to me, 'I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into hell, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.'

[9] But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day, things through which you have passed and without which you cannot exist, and you have given me no answer about them!"

[10] And he said to me, "You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up;

[11] how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High? And how can one who is already worn out by the corrupt world understand incorruption?" When I heard this, I fell on my face

[12] and said to him, "It would be better for us not to be here than to come here and live in ungodliness, and to suffer and not understand why."

[13]

He answered me and said, "I went into a forest of trees of the plain, and they made a plan

[14] and said, 'Come, let us go and make war against the sea, that it may recede before us, and that we may make for ourselves more forests.'

[15] And in like manner the waves of the sea also made a plan and said, 'Come, let us go up and subdue the forest of the plain so that there also we may gain more territory for ourselves.'

[16] But the plan of the forest was in vain, for the fire came and consumed it;

[17] likewise also the plan of the waves of the sea, for the sand stood firm and stopped them.

[18] If now you were a judge between them, which would you undertake to justify, and which to condemn?"

[19]

I answered and said, "Each has made a foolish plan, for the land is assigned to the forest, and to the sea is assigned a place to carry its waves."

[20]

He answered me and said, "You have judged rightly, but why have you not judged so in your own case?"

[21] For as the land is assigned to the forest and the sea to its waves, so also those who dwell upon earth can understand only what is on the earth, and he who is above the heavens can understand what is above the height of the heavens."

[22]

Then I answered and said, "I beseech you, my lord, why have I been endowed with the power of understanding?"

[23] For I did not wish to inquire about the ways above, but about those things which we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the law of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist;

[24] and why we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist, and we are not worthy to obtain mercy.

[25] But what will he do for his name, by which we are called? It is about these things that I have asked."

[26]

He answered me and said, "If you are alive, you will see, and if you live long, you will often marvel, because the age is hastening swiftly to its end.

[27] For it will not be able to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed times, because this age is full of sadness and infirmities.

[28] For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the harvest of it has not yet come.

[29] If therefore that which has been sown is not reaped, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come.

[30] For a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam's heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now, and will produce until the time of threshing comes!

[31] Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced.

[32] When heads of grain without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill!"

[33]

Then I answered and said, "How long and when will these things be? Why are our years few and evil?"

[34] He answered me and said, "You do not hasten faster than the Most High, for your haste is for yourself, but the Highest hastens on behalf of many.

[35] Did not the souls of the righteous in their chambers ask about these matters, saying, 'How long are we to remain here? And when will come the harvest of our reward?"

[36] And Jeremiel the archangel answered them and said, 'When the number of those like yourselves is completed; for he has weighed the age in the balance,

[37] and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse them until that measure is fulfilled.'" "

[38]

Then I answered and said, "O sovereign Lord, but all of us also are full of ungodliness.

[39] And it is perhaps on account of us that the time of threshing is delayed for the righteous -- on account of the sins of those who dwell on earth."

[40]

He answered me and said, "Go and ask a woman who is with child if, when her nine months have been completed, her womb can keep the child within her any longer."

[41]

And I said, "No, lord, it cannot."

And he said to me, "In Hades the chambers of the souls are like the womb.

[42] For just as a woman who is in travail makes haste to escape the pangs of birth, so also do these places hasten to give back those things that were committed to them from the beginning.

[43] Then the things that you desire to see will be disclosed to you."

[44]

I answered and said, "If I have found favor in your sight, and if it is possible, and if I am worthy,

[45] show me this also: whether more time is to come than has passed, or whether for us the greater part has gone by.

[46] For I know what has gone by, but I do not know what is to come."

[47]

And he said to me, "Stand at my right side, and I will show you the interpretation of a parable."

[48]

So I stood and looked, and behold, a flaming furnace passed by before me, and when the flame had gone by I looked, and behold, the smoke remained.

[49] And after this a cloud full of water passed before me and poured down a heavy and violent rain, and when the rainstorm had passed, drops remained in the cloud.

[50]

And he said to me, "Consider it for yourself; for as the rain is more than the drops, and the fire is greater than the smoke, so the quantity that passed was far greater; but drops and smoke remained."

[51]

Then I prayed and said, "Do you think that I shall live until those days? Or who will be alive in those days?"

[52]

He answered me and said, "Concerning the signs about which you ask me, I can tell you in part; but I was not sent to tell you concerning your life, for I do not know.

4Ezra.5

[1]

"Now concerning the signs: behold, the days are coming when those who dwell on earth shall be seized with great terror, and the way of truth shall be hidden, and the land shall be barren of faith.

[2] And unrighteousness shall be increased beyond what you yourself see, and beyond what you heard of formerly.

[3] And the land which you now see ruling shall be waste and untrodden, and men shall see it desolate.

[4] But if the Most High grants that you live, you shall see it thrown into confusion after the third period; and the sun shall suddenly shine forth at night, and the moon during the day.

[5] Blood shall drip from wood, and the stone shall utter its voice; the peoples shall be troubled, and the stars shall fall.

[6] And one shall reign whom those who dwell on earth do not expect, and the birds shall fly away together; [7] and the sea of Sodom shall cast up fish; and one whom the many do not know shall make his voice heard by night, and all shall hear his voice.

[8] There shall be chaos also in many places, and fire shall often break out, and the wild beasts shall roam beyond their haunts, and menstruous women shall bring forth monsters.

[9] And salt waters shall be found in the sweet, and all friends shall conquer one another; then shall reason hide itself, and wisdom shall withdraw into its chamber,

[10] and it shall be sought by many but shall not be found, and unrighteousness and unrestraint shall increase on earth.

[11] And one country shall ask its neighbor, 'Has righteousness, or any one who does right, passed through you?' And it will answer, 'No.'

[12] And at that time men shall hope but not obtain; they shall labor but their ways shall not prosper.

[13] These are the signs which I am permitted to tell you, and if you pray again, and weep as you do now, and fast for seven days, you shall hear yet greater things than these."

[14]

Then I awoke, and my body shuddered violently, and my soul was so troubled that it fainted.

[15] But the angel who had come and talked with me held me and strengthened me and set me on my feet.

[16]

Now on the second night Phaltiel, a chief of the people, came to me and said, "Where have you been? And why is your face sad?"

[17] Or do you not know that Israel has been entrusted to you in the land of their exile?

[18] Rise therefore and eat some bread, so that you may not forsake us, like a shepherd who leaves his flock in the power of cruel wolves."

[19]

Then I said to him, "Depart from me and do not come near me for seven days, and then you may come to me."

He heard what I said and left me.

[20] So I fasted seven days, mourning and weeping, as Uriel the angel had commanded me.

[21]

And after seven days the thoughts of my heart were very grievous to me again.

[22] Then my soul recovered the spirit of understanding, and I began once more to speak words in the presence of the Most High.

[23] And I said, "O sovereign Lord, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees thou hast chosen one vine,

[24] and from all the lands of the world thou hast chosen for thyself one region, and from all the flowers of the world thou hast chosen for thyself one lily,

[25] and from all the depths of the sea thou hast filled for thyself one river, and from all the cities that have been built thou hast consecrated Zion for thyself,

[26] and from all the birds that have been created thou hast named for thyself one dove, and from all the flocks that have been made thou hast provided for thyself one sheep,

[27] and from all the multitude of peoples thou hast gotten for thyself one people; and to this people, whom thou hast loved, thou hast given the law which is approved by all.

[28] And now, O Lord, why hast thou given over the one to the many, and dishonored the one root beyond the others, and scattered thine only one among the many?

[29] And those who opposed thy promises have trodden down those who believed thy covenants.

[30] If thou dost really hate thy people, they should be punished at thy own hands."

[31]

When I had spoken these words, the angel who had come to me on a previous night was sent to me,

[32] and he said to me, "Listen to me, and I will instruct you; pay attention to me, and I will tell you more."

[33]

And I said, "Speak, my lord." And he said to me, "Are you greatly disturbed in mind over Israel? Or do you love him more than his Maker does?"

[34]

And I said, "No, my lord, but because of my grief I have spoken; for every hour I suffer agonies of heart, while I strive to understand the way of the Most High and to search out part of his judgment."

[35]

And he said to me, "You cannot." And I said, "Why not, my lord? Why then was I born? Or why did not my mother's womb become my grave, that I might not see the travail of Jacob and the exhaustion of the people of Israel?"

[36]

He said to me, "Count up for me those who have not yet come, and gather for me the scattered raindrops, and make the withered flowers bloom again for me;

[37] open for me the closed chambers, and bring forth for me the winds shut up in them, or show me the picture of a voice; and then I will explain to you the travail that you ask to understand."

[38]

And I said, "O sovereign Lord, who is able to know these things except he whose dwelling is not with men?

[39] As for me, I am without wisdom, and how can I speak concerning the things which thou hast asked me?"

[40]

He said to me, "Just as you cannot do one of the things that were mentioned, so you cannot discover my judgment, or the goal of the love that I have promised my people."

[41]

And I said, "Yet behold, O Lord, thou dost have charge of those who are alive at the end, but what will those do who were before us, or we, or those who come after us?"

[42]

He said to me, "I shall liken my judgment to a circle; just as for those who are last there is no slowness, so for those who are first there is no haste."

[43]

Then I answered and said, "Couldst thou not have created at one time those who have been and those who are and those who will be, that thou mightest show thy judgment the sooner?"

[44]

He replied to me and said, "The creation cannot make more haste than the Creator, neither can the world hold at one time those who have been created in it."

[45]

And I said, "How hast thou said to thy servant that thou wilt certainly give life at one time to thy creation? If therefore all creatures will live at one time and the creation will sustain them, it might even now be able to support all of them present at one time."

[46]

He said to me, "Ask a woman's womb, and say to it, 'If you bear ten children, why one after another?' Request it therefore to produce ten at one time."

[47]

I said, "Of course it cannot, but only each in its own time."

[48]

He said to me, "Even so have I given the womb of the earth to those who from time to time are sown in it."

[49] For as an infant does not bring forth, and a woman who has become old does not bring forth any longer, so have I organized the world which I created."

[50]

Then I inquired and said, "Since thou hast now given me the opportunity, let me speak before thee. Is our mother, of whom thou hast told me, still young? Or is she now approaching old age?"

[51]

He replied to me, "Ask a woman who bears children, and she will tell you."

[52] Say to her, "Why are those whom you have borne recently not like those whom you bore before, but smaller in stature?"

[53] And she herself will answer you, 'Those born in the strength of youth are different from those born during the time of old age, when the womb is failing.'

[54] Therefore you also should consider that you and your contemporaries are smaller in stature than those who were before you,

[55] and those who come after you will be smaller than you, as born of a creation which already is aging and passing the strength of youth."

[56]

And I said, "O Lord, I beseech thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show thy servant through whom thou dost visit thy creation."

4Ezra.6

[1]

And he said to me, "At the beginning of the circle of the earth, before the portals of the world were in place, and before the assembled winds blew,

[2] and before the rumblings of thunder sounded, and before the flashes of lightning shone, and before the foundations of paradise were laid,

[3] and before the beautiful flowers were seen, and before the powers of movement were established, and before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together,

[4] and before the heights of the air were lifted up, and before the measures of the firmaments were named, and before the footstool of Zion was established,

[5] and before the present years were reckoned; and before the imaginations of those who now sin were estranged, and before those who stored up treasures of faith were sealed --

[6] then I planned these things, and they were made through me and not through another, just as the end shall come through me and not through another."

[7]

And I answered and said, "What will be the dividing of the times? Or when will be the end of the first age and the beginning of the age that follows?"

[8]

He said to me, "From Abraham to Isaac, because from him were born Jacob and Esau, for Jacob's hand held Esau's heel from the beginning.

[9] For Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows.

[10] For the beginning of a man is his hand, and the end of a man is his heel; between the heel and the hand seek for nothing else, Ezra!"

[11]

I answered and said, "O sovereign Lord, if I have found favor in thy sight,

[12] show thy servant the end of thy signs which thou didst show me in part on a previous night."

[13]

He answered and said to me, "Rise to your feet and you will hear a full, resounding voice.

[14] And if the place where you are standing is greatly shaken

[15] while the voice is speaking, do not be terrified; because the word concerns the end, and the foundations of the earth will understand

[16] that the speech concerns them. They will tremble and be shaken, for they know that their end must be changed."

[17]

When I heard this, I rose to my feet and listened, and behold, a voice was speaking, and its sound was like the sound of many waters.

[18] And it said, "Behold, the days are coming, and it shall be that when I draw near to visit the inhabitants of the earth,

[19] and when I require from the doers of iniquity the penalty of their iniquity, and when the humiliation of Zion is complete,

[20] and when the seal is placed upon the age which is about to pass away, then I will show these signs: the books shall be opened before the firmament, and all shall see it together.

[21] Infants a year old shall speak with their voices, and women with child shall give birth to premature children at three and four months, and these shall live and dance.

[22] Sown places shall suddenly appear unsown, and full storehouses shall suddenly be found to be empty;

[23] and the trumpet shall sound aloud, and when all hear it, they shall suddenly be terrified.

[24] At that time friends shall make war on friends like enemies, and the earth and those who inhabit it shall be terrified, and the springs of the fountains shall stand still, so that for three hours they shall not flow.

[25]

"And it shall be that whoever remains after all that I have foretold to you shall himself be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world.

[26] And they shall see the men who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death; and the heart of the earth's inhabitants shall be changed and converted to a different spirit.

[27] For evil shall be blotted out, and deceit shall be quenched;

[28] faithfulness shall flourish, and corruption shall be overcome, and the truth, which has been so long without fruit, shall be revealed."

[29]

While he spoke to me, behold, little by little the place where I was standing began to rock to and fro.

[30] And he said to me, "I have come to show you these things this night.

[31] If therefore you will pray again and fast again for seven days, I will again declare to you greater things than these,

[32] because your voice has surely been heard before the Most High; for the Mighty One has seen your uprightness and has also observed the purity which you have maintained from your youth.

[33] Therefore he sent me to show you all these things, and to say to you: `Believe and do not be afraid!

[34] Do not be quick to think vain thoughts concerning the former times, lest you be hasty concerning the last times."

[35]

Now after this I wept again and fasted seven days as before, in order to complete the three weeks as I had been told.

[36] And on the eighth night my heart was troubled within me again, and I began to speak in the presence of the Most High.

[37] For my spirit was greatly aroused, and my soul was in distress.

[38]

I said, "O Lord, thou didst speak at the beginning of creation, and didst say on the first day, 'Let heaven and earth be made,' and thy word accomplished the work.

[39] And then the Spirit was hovering, and darkness and silence embraced everything; the sound of man's voice was not yet there.

[40] Then thou didst command that a ray of light be brought forth from thy treasures, so that thy works might then appear.

[41]

"Again, on the second day, thou didst create the spirit of the firmament, and didst command him to divide and separate the waters, that one part might move upward and the other part remain beneath.

[42]

"On the third day thou didst command the waters to be gathered together in the seventh part of the earth; six parts thou didst dry up and keep so that some of them might be planted and cultivated and be of service before thee.

[43] For thy word went forth, and at once the work was done.

[44] For immediately fruit came forth in endless abundance and of varied appeal to the taste; and flowers of inimitable color; and odors of inexpressible fragrance. These were made on the third day.

[45]

"On the fourth day thou didst command the brightness of the sun, the light of the moon, and the arrangement of the stars to come into being;

[46] and thou didst command them to serve man, who was about to be formed.

[47]

"On the fifth day thou didst command the seventh part, where the water had been gathered together, to bring forth living creatures, birds, and fishes; and so it was done.

[48] The dumb and lifeless water produced living creatures, as it was commanded, that therefore the nations might declare thy wondrous works.

[49]

"Then thou didst keep in existence two living creatures; the name of one thou didst call Behemoth and the name of the other Leviathan.

[50] And thou didst separate one from the other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered together could not hold them both.

[51] And thou didst give Behemoth one of the parts which had been dried up on the third day, to live in it, where there are a thousand mountains;

[52] but to Leviathan thou didst give the seventh part, the watery part; and thou hast kept them to be eaten by whom thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

[53]

"On the sixth day thou didst command the earth to bring forth before thee cattle, beasts, and creeping things;

[54] and over these thou didst place Adam, as ruler over all the works which thou hadst made; and from him we have all come, the people whom thou hast chosen.

[55]

"All this I have spoken before thee, O Lord, because thou hast said that it was for us that thou didst create this world.

[56] As for the other nations which have descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and thou hast compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket.

[57] And now, O Lord, behold, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and devour us.

[58] But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy first-born, only begotten, zealous for thee, and most dear, have been given into their hands.

[59] If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so?"

4Ezra.7

[1]

When I had finished speaking these words, the angel who had been sent to me on the former nights was sent to me again,

[2] and he said to me, "Rise, Ezra, and listen to the words that I have come to speak to you."

[3]

I said, "Speak, my lord." And he said to me, "There is a sea set in a wide expanse so that it is broad and vast,

[4] but it has an entrance set in a narrow place, so that it is like a river.

[5] If any one, then, wishes to reach the sea, to look at it or to navigate it, how can he come to the broad part unless he passes through the narrow part?

[6] Another example: There is a city built and set on a plain, and it is full of all good things;

[7] but the entrance to it is narrow and set in a precipitous place, so that there is fire on the right hand and deep water on the left;

[8] and there is only one path lying between them, that is, between the fire and the water, so that only one man can walk upon that path.

[9] If now that city is given to a man for an inheritance, how will the heir receive his inheritance unless he passes through the danger set before him?"

[10]

I said, "He cannot, lord." And he said to me, "So also is Israel's portion.

[11] For I made the world for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged.

[12] And so the entrances of this world were made narrow and sorrowful and toilsome; they are few and evil,

full of dangers and involved in great hardships.

[13] But the entrances of the greater world are broad and safe, and really yield the fruit of immortality.

[14] Therefore unless the living pass through the difficult and vain experiences, they can never receive those things that have been reserved for them.

[15] But now why are you disturbed, seeing that you are to perish? And why are you moved, seeing that you are mortal?

[16] And why have you not considered in your mind what is to come, rather than what is now present?"

[17]

Then I answered and said, "O sovereign Lord, behold, thou hast ordained in thy law that the righteous shall inherit these things, but that the ungodly shall perish.

[18] The righteous therefore can endure difficult circumstances while hoping for easier ones; but those who have done wickedly have suffered the difficult circumstances and will not see the easier ones."

[19]

And he said to me, "You are not a better judge than God, or wiser than the Most High!

[20] Let many perish who are now living, rather than that the law of God which is set before them be disregarded!

[21] For God strictly commanded those who came into the world, when they came, what they should do to live, and what they should observe to avoid punishment.

[22] Nevertheless they were not obedient, and spoke against him; they devised for themselves vain thoughts,

[23] and proposed to themselves wicked frauds;

they even declared that the Most High does not exist,

and they ignored his ways!

[24] They scorned his law,

and denied his covenants;

they have been unfaithful to his statutes,

and have not performed his works.

[25]

"Therefore, Ezra, empty things are for the empty, and full things are for the full.

[26] For behold, the time will come, when the signs which I have foretold to you will come to pass, that the city which now is not seen shall appear, and the land which now is hidden shall be disclosed.

[27] And every one who has been delivered from the evils that I have foretold shall see my wonders.

[28] For my son the Messiah shall be revealed with those who are with him, and those who remain shall rejoice four hundred years.

[29] And after these years my son the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath.

[30] And the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings; so that no one shall be left.

[31] And after seven days the world, which is not yet awake, shall be roused, and that which is corruptible shall perish.

[32] And the earth shall give up those who are asleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it; and the chambers shall give up the souls which have been committed to them.

[33] And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment, and compassion shall pass away, and patience shall be withdrawn;

[34] but only judgment shall remain, truth shall stand, and faithfulness shall grow strong.

[35] And recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be manifested; righteous deeds shall awake, and unrighteous deeds shall not sleep.

[36] Then the pit of torment shall appear, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of hell shall be disclosed, and opposite it the paradise of delight.

[37] Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised from the dead, 'Look now, and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised!

[38] Look on this side and on that; here are delight and rest, and there are fire and torments!' Thus he will speak to them on the day of judgment --

[39] a day that has no sun or moon or stars,

[40] or cloud or thunder or lightning or wind or water or air, or darkness or evening or morning,

[41] or summer or spring or heat or winter or frost or cold or hail or rain or dew,

[42] or noon or night, or dawn or shining or brightness or light, but only the splendor of the glory of the Most High, by which all shall see what has been determined for them.

[43] For it will last for about a week of years.

[44] This is my judgment and its prescribed order; and to you alone have I shown these things."

[45]

I answered and said, "O sovereign Lord, I said then and I say now: Blessed are those who are alive and keep thy commandments!

[46] But what of those for whom I prayed? For who among the living is there that has not sinned, or who among men that has not transgressed thy covenant?

[47] And now I see that the world to come will bring delight to few, but torments to many.

[48] For an evil heart has grown up in us, which has alienated us from God, and has brought us into corruption and the ways of death, and has shown us the paths of perdition and removed us far from life -- and that not just a few of us but almost all who have been created!"

[49]

He answered me and said, "Listen to me, Ezra, and I will instruct you, and will admonish you yet again.

[50] For this reason the Most High has made not one world but two.

[51] For whereas you have said that the righteous are not many but few, while the ungodly abound, hear the explanation for this.

[52]

"If you have just a few precious stones, will you add to them lead and clay?"

[53]

I said, "Lord, how could that be?"

[54]

And he said to me, "Not only that, but ask the earth and she will tell you; defer to her, and she will declare it to you.

[55] Say to her, 'You produce gold and silver and brass, and also iron and lead and clay;

[56] but silver is more abundant than gold, and brass than silver, and iron than brass, and lead than iron, and clay than lead.'

[57] Judge therefore which things are precious and desirable, those that are abundant or those that are rare?"

[58]

I said, "O sovereign Lord, what is plentiful is of less worth, for what is more rare is more precious."

[59]

He answered me and said, "Weigh within yourself what you have thought, for he who has what is hard to get rejoices more than he who has what is plentiful.

[60] So also will be the judgment which I have promised; for I will rejoice over the few who shall be saved, because it is they who have made my glory to prevail now, and through them my name has now been honored.

[61] And I will not grieve over the multitude of those who perish; for it is they who are now like a mist, and are similar to a flame and smoke -- they are set on fire and burn hotly, and are extinguished."

[62]

I replied and said, "O earth, what have you brought forth, if the mind is made out of the dust like the other created things!

[63] For it would have been better if the dust itself had not been born, so that the mind might not have been made from it.

[64] But now the mind grows with us, and therefore we are tormented, because we perish and know it.

[65] Let the human race lament, but let the beasts of the field be glad; let all who have been born lament, but let the four-footed beasts and the flocks rejoice!

[66] For it is much better with them than with us; for they do not look for a judgment, nor do they know of any torment or salvation promised to them after death.

[67] For what does it profit us that we shall be preserved alive but cruelly tormented?

[68] For all who have been born are involved in iniquities, and are full of sins and burdened with transgressions.

[69] And if we were not to come into judgment after death, perhaps it would have been better for us."

[70]

He answered me and said, "When the Most High made the world and Adam and all who have come from him, he first prepared the judgment and the things that pertain to the judgment.

[71] And now understand from your own words, for you have said that the mind grows with us.

[72] For this reason, therefore, those who dwell on earth shall be tormented, because though they had understanding they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received.

[73] What, then, will they have to say in the judgment, or how will they answer in the last times?

[74] For how long the time is that the Most High has been patient with those who inhabit the world, and not for their sake, but because of the times which he has foreordained!"

[75]

I answered and said, "If I have found favor in thy sight, O Lord, show this also to thy servant: whether after death, as soon as every one of us yields up his soul, we shall be kept in rest until those times come when thou wilt renew the creation, or whether we shall be tormented at once?"

[76]

He answered me and said, "I will show you that also, but do not be associated with those who have shown scorn, nor number yourself among those who are tormented.

[77] For you have a treasure of works laid up with the Most High; but it will not be shown to you until the last times.

[78] Now, concerning death, the teaching is: When the decisive decree has gone forth from the Most High that a man shall die, as the spirit leaves the body to return again to him who gave it, first of all it adores the glory of the Most High.

[79] And if it is one of those who have shown scorn and have not kept the way of the Most High, and who have despised his law, and who have hated those who fear God --

[80] such spirits shall not enter into habitations, but shall immediately wander about in torments, ever grieving and sad, in seven ways.

[81] The first way, because they have scorned the law of the Most High.

[82] The second way, because they cannot now make a good repentance that they may live.

[83] The third way, they shall see the reward laid up for those who have trusted the covenants of the Most High.

[84] The fourth way, they shall consider the torment laid up for themselves in the last days.

[85] The fifth way, they shall see how the habitations of the others are guarded by angels in profound quiet.

[86] The sixth way, they shall see how some of them will pass over into torments.

[87] The seventh way, which is worse than all the ways that have been mentioned, because they shall utterly waste away in confusion and be consumed with shame, and shall wither with fear at seeing the glory of the Most High before whom they sinned while they were alive, and before whom they are to be judged in the last times.

[88]

"Now this is the order of those who have kept the ways of the Most High, when they shall be separated from their mortal body.

[89] During the time that they lived in it, they laboriously served the Most High, and withstood danger every hour, that they might keep the law of the Lawgiver perfectly.

[90] Therefore this is the teaching concerning them:

[91] First of all, they shall see with great joy the glory of him who receives them, for they shall have rest in seven orders.

[92] The first order, because they have striven with great effort to overcome the evil thought which was formed with them, that it might not lead them astray from life into death.

[93] The second order, because they see the perplexity in which the souls of the ungodly wander, and the punishment that awaits them.

[94] The third order, they see the witness which he who formed them bears concerning them, that while they were alive they kept the law which was given them in trust.

[95] The fourth order, they understand the rest which they now enjoy, being gathered into their chambers and guarded by angels in profound quiet, and the glory which awaits them in the last days.

[96] The fifth order, they rejoice that they have now escaped what is corruptible, and shall inherit what is to

come; and besides they see the straits and toil from which they have been delivered, and the spacious liberty which they are to receive and enjoy in immortality.

[97] The sixth order, when it is shown to them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on.

[98] The seventh order, which is greater than all that have been mentioned, because they shall rejoice with boldness, and shall be confident without confusion, and shall be glad without fear, for they hasten to behold the face of him whom they served in life and from whom they are to receive their reward when glorified.

[99] This is the order of the souls of the righteous, as henceforth is announced; and the aforesaid are the ways of torment which those who would not give heed shall suffer hereafter."

[100]

I answered and said, "Will time therefore be given to the souls, after they have been separated from the bodies, to see what you have described to me?"

[101]

He said to me, "They shall have freedom for seven days, so that during these seven days they may see the things of which you have been told, and afterwards they shall be gathered in their habitations."

[102]

I answered and said, "If I have found favor in thy sight, show further to me, thy servant, whether on the day of judgment the righteous will be able to intercede for the ungodly or to entreat the Most High for them,

[103] fathers for sons or sons for parents, brothers for brothers, relatives for their kinsmen, or friends for those who are most dear."

[104]

He answered me and said, "Since you have found favor in my sight, I will show you this also. The day of judgment is decisive and displays to all the seal of truth. Just as now a father does not send his son, or a son his father, or a master his servant, or a friend his dearest friend, to be ill or sleep or eat or be healed in his stead,

[105] so no one shall ever pray for another on that day, neither shall any one lay a burden on another; for then every one shall bear his own righteousness and unrighteousness."

[36(106)]

I answered and said, "How then do we find that first Abraham prayed for the people of Sodom, and Moses for our fathers who sinned in the desert,

[37(107)] and Joshua after him for Israel in the days of Achan,

[38(108)] and Samuel in the days of Saul, and David for the plague, and Solomon for those in the sanctuary,

[39(109)] and Elijah for those who received the rain, and for the one who was dead, that he might live,

[40(110)] and Hezekiah for the people in the days of Sennacherib, and many others prayed for many?

[41(111)] If therefore the righteous have prayed for the ungodly now, when corruption has increased and unrighteousness has multiplied, why will it not be so then as well?"

[42(112)]

He answered me and said, "This present world is not the end; the full glory does not abide in it; therefore those who were strong prayed for the weak.

[43(113)] But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away,

[44(114)] sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared.

[45(115)] Therefore no one will then be able to have mercy on him who has been condemned in the judgment, or to harm him who is victorious."

[46(116)]

I answered and said, "This is my first and last word, that it would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning.

[47(117)] For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death?

[48(118)] O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants.

[49(119)] For what good is it to us, if an eternal age has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death?

[50(120)] And what good is it that an everlasting hope has been promised to us, but we have miserably failed?

[51(121)] Or that safe and healthful habitations have been reserved for us, but we have lived wickedly?

[52(122)] Or that the glory of the Most High will defend those who have led a pure life, but we have walked in the most wicked ways?

[53(123)] Or that a paradise shall be revealed, whose fruit remains unspoiled and in which are abundance and healing, but we shall not enter it,

[54(124)] because we have lived in unseemly places?

[55(125)] Or that the faces of those who practiced self-control shall shine more than the stars, but our faces shall be blacker than darkness?

[56(126)] For while we lived and committed iniquity we did not consider what we should suffer after death."

[57(127)]

He answered and said, "This is the meaning of the contest which every man who is born on earth shall wage,

[58(128)] that if he is defeated he shall suffer what you have said, but if he is victorious he shall receive what I have said.

[59(129)] For this is the way of which Moses, while he was alive, spoke to the people, saying, 'Choose for yourself life, that you may live!'

[60(130)] But they did not believe him, or the prophets after him, or even myself who have spoken to them.

[61(131)] Therefore there shall not be grief at their destruction, so much as joy over those to whom salvation is assured."

[62(132)]

I answered and said, "I know, O Lord, that the Most High is now called merciful, because he has mercy on those who have not yet come into the world;

[63(133)] and gracious, because he is gracious to those who turn in repentance to his law;

[64(134)] and patient, because he shows patience toward those who have sinned, since they are his own works;

[65(135)] and bountiful, because he would rather give than take away;

[66(136)] and abundant in compassion, because he makes his compassions abound more and more to those now living and to those who are gone and to those yet to come,
 [67(137)] for if he did not make them abound, the world with those who inhabit it would not have life;
 [68(138)] and he is called giver, because if he did not give out of his goodness so that those who have committed iniquities might be relieved of them, not one ten-thousandth of mankind could have life;
 [69(139)] and judge, because if he did not pardon those who were created by his word and blot out the multitude of their sins,
 [70(140)] there would probably be left only very few of the innumerable multitude."

4Ezra.8

[1]

He answered me and said, "The Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of few.

[2] But I tell you a parable, Ezra. Just as, when you ask the earth, it will tell you that it provides very much clay from which earthenware is made, but only a little dust from which gold comes; so is the course of the present world.

[3] Many have been created, but few shall be saved."

[4]

I answered and said, "Then drink your fill of understanding, O my soul, and drink wisdom, O my heart!

[5] For not of your own will did you come into the world, and against your will you depart, for you have been given only a short time to live.

[6] O Lord who are over us, grant to thy servant that we may pray before thee, and give us seed for our heart and cultivation of our understanding so that fruit may be produced, by which every mortal who bears the likeness of a human being may be able to live.

[7] For thou alone dost exist, and we are a work of thy hands, as thou hast declared.

[8] And because thou dost give life to the body which is now fashioned in the womb, and dost furnish it with members, what thou hast created is preserved in fire and water, and for nine months the womb which thou has formed endures thy creation which has been created in it.

[9] But that which keeps and that which is kept shall both be kept by thy keeping. And when the womb gives up again what has been created in it,

[10] thou hast commanded that from the members themselves (that is, from the breasts) milk should be supplied which is the fruit of the breasts,

[11] so that what has been fashioned may be nourished for a time; and afterwards thou wilt guide him in thy mercy.

[12] Thou hast brought him up in thy righteousness, and instructed him in thy law, and reproved him in thy wisdom.

[13] Thou wilt take away his life, for he is thy creation; and thou wilt make him live, for he is thy work.

[14] If then thou wilt suddenly and quickly destroy him who with so great labor was fashioned by thy command, to what purpose was he made?

[15] And now I will speak out: About all mankind thou knowest best; but I will speak about thy people, for whom I am grieved,

[16] and about thy inheritance, for whom I lament, and about Israel, for whom I am sad, and about the seed of Jacob, for whom I am troubled.

[17] Therefore I will pray before thee for myself and for them, for I see the failings of us who dwell in the

land,

[18] and I have heard of the swiftness of the judgment that is to come.

[19] Therefore hear my voice, and understand my words, and I will speak before thee."

The beginning of the words of Ezra's prayer, before he was taken up. He said:

[20] "O Lord who inhabitest eternity, whose eyes are exalted and whose upper chambers are in the air,
[21] whose throne is beyond measure and whose glory is beyond comprehension, before whom the hosts of angels stand trembling

[22] and at whose command they are changed to wind and fire, whose word is sure and whose utterances are certain, whose ordinance is strong and whose command is terrible,

[23] whose look dries up the depths and whose indignation makes the mountains melt away, and whose truth is established for ever --

[24] hear, O Lord, the prayer of thy servant, and give ear to the petition of thy creature; attend to my words.

[25] For as long as I live I will speak, and as long as I have understanding I will answer.

[26] O look not upon the sins of thy people, but at those who have served thee in truth.

[27] Regard not the endeavors of those who act wickedly, but the endeavors of those who have kept thy covenants amid afflictions.

[28] Think not on those who have lived wickedly in thy sight; but remember those who have willingly acknowledged that thou art to be feared.

[29] Let it not be thy will to destroy those who have had the ways of cattle; but regard those who have gloriously taught thy law.

[30] Be not angry with those who are deemed worse than beasts; but love those who have always put their trust in thy glory.

[31] For we and our fathers have passed our lives in ways that bring death, but thou, because of us sinners, are called merciful.

[32] For if thou hast desired to have pity on us, who have no works of righteousness, then thou wilt be called merciful.

[33] For the righteous, who have many works laid up with thee, shall receive their reward in consequence of their own deeds.

[34] But what is man, that thou art angry with him; or what is a corruptible race, that thou art so bitter against it?

[35] For in truth there is no one among those who have been born who has not acted wickedly, and among those who have existed there is no one who has not transgressed.

[36] For in this, O Lord, thy righteousness and goodness will be declared, when thou art merciful to those who have no store of good works."

[37]

He answered me and said, "Some things you have spoken rightly, and it will come to pass according to your words.

[38] For indeed I will not concern myself about the fashioning of those who have sinned, or about their death, their judgment, or their destruction;

[39] but I will rejoice over the creation of the righteous, over their pilgrimage also, and their salvation, and their receiving their reward.

[40] As I have spoken, therefore, so it shall be.

[41]

"For just as the farmer sows many seeds upon the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will come up in due season, and not all that were planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved."

[42]

I answered and said, "If I have found favor before thee, let me speak.

[43] For if the farmer's seed does not come up, because it has not received thy rain in due season, or if it has been ruined by too much rain, it perishes.

[44] But man, who has been formed by thy hands and is called thy own image because he is made like thee, and for whose sake thou hast formed all things -- hast thou also made him like the farmer's seed?

[45] No, O Lord who art over us! But spare thy people and have mercy on thy inheritance, for thou hast mercy on thy own creation."

[46]

He answered me and said, "Things that are present are for those who live now, and things that are future are for those who will live hereafter.

[47] For you come far short of being able to love my creation more than I love it. But you have often compared yourself to the unrighteous. Never do so!

[48] But even in this respect you will be praiseworthy before the Most High,

[49] because you have humbled yourself, as is becoming for you, and have not deemed yourself to be among the righteous in order to receive the greatest glory.

[50] For many miseries will affect those who inhabit the world in the last times, because they have walked in great pride.

[51] But think of your own case, and inquire concerning the glory of those who are like yourself,

[52] because it is for you that paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand.

[53] The root of evil is sealed up from you, illness is banished from you, and death is hidden; hell has fled and corruption has been forgotten;

[54] sorrows have passed away, and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest.

[55] Therefore do not ask any more questions about the multitude of those who perish.

[56] For they also received freedom, but they despised the Most High, and were contemptuous of his law, and forsook his ways.

[57] Moreover they have even trampled upon his righteous ones,

[58] and said in their hearts that there is not God -- though knowing full well that they must die.

[59] For just as the things which I have predicted await you, so the thirst and torment which are prepared await them. For the Most High did not intend that men should be destroyed;

[60] but they themselves who were created have defiled the name of him who made them, and have been ungrateful to him who prepared life for them.

[61] Therefore my judgment is now drawing near;

[62] I have not shown this to all men, but only to you and a few like you."

Then I answered and said,

[63] "Behold, O Lord, thou hast now shown me a multitude of the signs which thou wilt do in the last times, but thou hast not shown me when thou wilt do them."

4Ezra.9

[1]

He answered me and said, "Measure carefully in your mind, and when you see that a certain part of the predicted signs are past,

[2] then you will know that it is the very time when the Most High is about to visit the world which he has made.

[3] So when there shall appear in the world earthquakes, tumult of peoples, intrigues of nations, wavering of leaders, confusion of princes,

[4] then you will know that it was of these that the Most High spoke from the days that were of old, from the beginning.

[5] For just as with everything that has occurred in the world, the beginning is evident, and the end manifest; [6] so also are the times of the Most High: the beginnings are manifest in wonders and mighty works, and the end in requital and in signs.

[7] And it shall be that every one who will be saved and will be able to escape on account of his works, or on account of the faith by which he has believed,

[8] will survive the dangers that have been predicted, and will see my salvation in my land and within my borders, which I have sanctified for myself from the beginning.

[9] Then those who have now abused my ways shall be amazed, and those who have rejected them with contempt shall dwell in torments.

[10] For as many as did not acknowledge me in their lifetime, although they received my benefits,

[11] and as many as scorned my law while they still had freedom, and did not understand but despised it while an opportunity of repentance was still open to them,

[12] these must in torment acknowledge it after death.

[13] Therefore, do not continue to be curious as to how the ungodly will be punished; but inquire how the righteous will be saved, those to whom the age belongs and for whose sake the age was made."

[14]

I answered and said,

[15] "I said before, and I say now, and will say it again: there are more who perish than those who will be saved,

[16] as a wave is greater than a drop of water."

[17]

He answered me and said, "As is the field, so is the seed; and as are the flowers, so are the colors; and as is the work, so is the product; and as is the farmer, so is the threshing floor.

[18] For there was a time in this age when I was preparing for those who now exist, before the world was made for them to dwell in, and no one opposed me then, for no one existed;

[19] but now those who have been created in this world which is supplied both with an unfailing table and an inexhaustible pasture, have become corrupt in their ways.

[20] So I considered my world, and behold, it was lost, and my earth, and behold, it was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it.

[21] And I saw and spared some with great difficulty, and saved for myself one grape out of a cluster, and one

plant out of a great forest.

[22] So let the multitude perish which has been born in vain, but let my grape and my plant be saved, because with much labor I have perfected them.

[23] But if you will let seven days more pass -- do not fast during them, however;

[24] but go into a field of flowers where no house has been built, and eat only of the flowers of the field, and taste no meat and drink no wine, but eat only flowers,

[25] and pray to the Most High continually -- then I will come and talk with you."

[26]

So I went, as he directed me, into the field which is called Ardat; and there I sat among the flowers and ate of the plants of the field, and the nourishment they afforded satisfied me.

[27] And after seven days, as I lay on the grass, my heart was troubled again as it was before.

[28] And my mouth was opened, and I began to speak before the Most High, and said,

[29] "O Lord, thou didst show thyself among us, to our fathers in the wilderness when they came out from Egypt and when they came into the untrodden and unfruitful wilderness;

[30] and thou didst say, 'Hear me, O Israel, and give heed to my words, O descendants of Jacob.

[31] For behold, I sowed my law in you, and it shall bring forth fruit in you and you shall be glorified through it for ever.'

[32] But though our fathers received the law, they did not keep it, and did not observe the statutes; yet the fruit of the law did not perish -- for it could not, because it was thine.

[33] Yet those who received it perished, because they did not keep what had been sown in them.

[34] And behold, it is the rule that, when the ground has received seed, or the sea a ship, or any dish food or drink, and when it happens that what was sown or what was launched or what was put in is destroyed,

[35] they are destroyed, but the things that held them remain; yet with us it has not been so.

[36] For we who have received the law and sinned will perish, as well as our heart which received it;

[37] the law, however, does not perish but remains in its glory."

[38]

When I said these things in my heart, I lifted up my eyes and saw a woman on my right, and behold, she was mourning and weeping with a loud voice, and was deeply grieved at heart, and her clothes were rent, and there were ashes on her head.

[39] Then I dismissed the thoughts with which I had been engaged, and turned to her

[40] and said to her, "Why are you weeping, and why are you grieved at heart?"

[41]

And she said to me, "Let me alone, my lord, that I may weep for myself and continue to mourn, for I am greatly embittered in spirit and deeply afflicted."

[42]

And I said to her, "What has happened to you? Tell me."

[43]

And she said to me, "Your servant was barren and had no child, though I lived with my husband thirty years.

- [44] And every hour and every day during those thirty years I besought the Most High, night and day.
 [45] And after thirty years God heard your handmaid, and looked upon my low estate, and considered my distress, and gave me a son. And I rejoiced greatly over him, I and my husband and all my neighbors; and we gave great glory to the Mighty One.
 [46] And I brought him up with much care.
 [47] So when he grew up and I came to take a wife for him, I set a day for the marriage feast.
-

4Ezra.10

[1]

"But it happened that when my son entered his wedding chamber, he fell down and died.

- [2] Then we all put out the lamps, and all my neighbors attempted to console me; and I remained quiet until evening of the second day.
 [3] But when they all had stopped consoling me, that I might be quiet, I got up in the night and fled, and came to this field, as you see.
 [4] And now I intend not to return to the city, but to stay here, and I will neither eat nor drink, but without ceasing mourn and fast until I die."
 [5]

Then I broke off the reflections with which I was still engaged, and answered her in anger and said,

- [6] "You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning, and what has happened to us?
 [7] For Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great affliction.
 [8] It is most appropriate to mourn now, because we are all mourning, and to be sorrowful, because we are all sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, for our mother.
 [9] Now ask the earth, and she will tell you that it is she who ought to mourn over so many who have come into being upon her.
 [10] And from the beginning all have been born of her, and others will come; and behold, almost all go to perdition, and a multitude of them are destined for destruction.
 [11] Who then ought to mourn the more, she who lost so great a multitude, or you who are grieving for one?
 [12] But if you say to me, 'My lamentation is not like the earth's, for I have lost the fruit of my womb, which I brought forth in pain and bore in sorrow;
 [13] but it is with the earth according to the way of the earth -- the multitude that is now in it goes as it came';
 [14] then I say to you, 'As you brought forth in sorrow, so the earth also has from the beginning given her fruit, that is, man, to him who made her.'
 [15] Now, therefore, keep your sorrow to yourself, and bear bravely the troubles that have come upon you.
 [16] For if you acknowledge the decree of God to be just, you will receive your son back in due time, and will be praised among women.
 [17] Therefore go into the city to your husband."
 [18]

She said to me, "I will not do so; I will not go into the city, but I will die here."

[19]

So I spoke again to her, and said,

[20] "Do not say that, but let yourself be persuaded because of the troubles of Zion, and be consoled because of the sorrow of Jerusalem.

[21] For you see that our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down, our temple destroyed;

[22] our harp has been laid low, our song has been silenced, and our rejoicing has been ended; the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been profaned; our free men have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into captivity, our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished; our righteous men have been carried off, our little ones have been cast out, our young men have been enslaved and our strong men made powerless.

[23] And, what is more than all, the seal of Zion -- for she has now lost the seal of her glory, and has been given over into the hands of those that hate us.

[24] Therefore shake off your great sadness and lay aside your many sorrows, so that the Mighty One may be merciful to you again, and the Most High may give you rest, a relief from your troubles."

[25]

While I was talking to her, behold, her face suddenly shone exceedingly, and her countenance flashed like lightning, so that I was too frightened to approach her, and my heart was terrified. While I was wondering what this meant,

[26] behold, she suddenly uttered a loud and fearful cry, so that the earth shook at the sound.

[27] And I looked, and behold, the woman was no longer visible to me, but there was an established city, and a place of huge foundations showed itself. Then I was afraid, and cried with a loud voice and said,

[28] "Where is the angel Uriel, who came to me at first? For it was he who brought me into this overpowering bewilderment; my end has become corruption, and my prayer a reproach."

[29]

As I was speaking these words, behold, the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and he looked upon me;

[30] and behold, I lay there like a corpse and I was deprived of my understanding. Then he grasped my right hand and strengthened me and set me on my feet, and said to me,

[31] "What is the matter with you? And why are you troubled? And why are your understanding and the thoughts of your mind troubled?"

[32]

I said, "Because you have forsaken me! I did as you directed, and went out into the field, and behold, I saw, and still see, what I am unable to explain."

[33]

He said to me, "Stand up like a man, and I will instruct you."

[34]

I said, "Speak, my lord; only do not forsake me, lest I die before my time.

- [35] For I have seen what I did not know, and I have heard what I do not understand.
[36] Or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming?
[37] Now therefore I entreat you to give your servant an explanation of this bewildering vision."
[38]

He answered me and said, "Listen to me and I will inform you, and tell you about the things which you fear, for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you.

- [39] For he has seen your righteous conduct, that you have sorrowed continually for your people, and mourned greatly over Zion.
[40] This therefore is the meaning of the vision.
[41] The woman who appeared to you a little while ago, whom you saw mourning and began to console --
[42] but you do not now see the form of a woman, but an established city has appeared to you --
[43] and as for her telling you about the misfortune of her son, this is the interpretation:
[44] This woman whom you saw, whom you now behold as an established city, is Zion.
[45] And as for her telling you that she was barren for thirty years, it is because there were three thousand years in the world before any offering was offered in it.
[46] And after three thousand years Solomon built the city, and offered offerings; then it was that the barren woman bore a son.
[47] And as for her telling you that she brought him up with much care, that was the period of residence in Jerusalem.
[48] And as for her saying to you, 'When my son entered his wedding chamber he died,' and that misfortune had overtaken her, that was the destruction which befell Jerusalem.
[49] And behold, you saw her likeness, how she mourned for her son, and you began to console her for what had happened.
[50] For now the Most High, seeing that you are sincerely grieved and profoundly distressed for her, has shown you the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty.
[51] Therefore I told you to remain in the field where no house had been built,
[52] for I knew that the Most High would reveal these things to you.
[53] Therefore I told you to go into the field where there was no foundation of any building,
[54] for no work of man's building could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed.
[55]

"Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor and vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it,

- [56] and afterward you will hear as much as your ears can hear.
[57] For you are more blessed than many, and you have been called before the Most High, as but few have been.
[58] But tomorrow night you shall remain here,
[59] and the Most High will show you in those dream visions what the Most High will do to those who dwell on earth in the last days."

So I slept that night and the following one, as he had commanded me.

4Ezra.11

[1]

On the second night I had a dream, and behold, there came up from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads.

[2] And I looked, and behold, he spread his wings over all the earth, and all the winds of heaven blew upon him, and the clouds were gathered about him.

[3] And I looked, and out of his wings there grew opposing wings; but they became little, puny wings.

[4] But his heads were at rest; the middle head was larger than the other heads, but it also was at rest with them.

[5] And I looked, and behold, the eagle flew with his wings, to reign over the earth and over those who dwell in it.

[6] And I saw how all things under heaven were subjected to him, and no one spoke against him, not even one creature that was on the earth.

[7] And I looked, and behold, the eagle rose upon his talons, and uttered a cry to his wings, saying,

[8] "Do not all watch at the same time; let each sleep in his own place, and watch in his turn;

[9] but let the heads be reserved for the last."

[10]

And I looked, and behold, the voice did not come from his heads, but from the midst of his body.

[11] And I counted his opposing wings, and behold, there were eight of them.

[12] And I looked, and behold, on the right side one wing arose, and it reigned over all the earth.

[13] And while it was reigning it came to its end and disappeared, so that its place was not seen. Then the next wing arose and reigned, and it continued to reign a long time.

[14] And while it was reigning its end came also, so that it disappeared like the first.

[15] And behold, a voice sounded, saying to it.

[16] "Hear me, you who have ruled the earth all this time; I announce this to you before you disappear.

[17] After you no one shall rule as long as you, or even half as long."

[18]

Then the third wing raised itself up, and held the rule like the former ones, and it also disappeared.

[19] And so it went with all the wings; they wielded power one after another and then were never seen again.

[20] And I looked, and behold, in due course the wings that followed also rose up on the right side, in order to rule. There were some of them that ruled, yet disappeared suddenly;

[21] and others of them rose up, but did not hold the rule.

[22]

And after this I looked, and behold, the twelve wings and the two little wings disappeared;

[23] and nothing remained on the eagle's body except the three heads that were at rest and six little wings.

[24] And I looked, and behold, two little wings separated from the six and remained under the head that was on the right side; but four remained in their place.

[25] And I looked, and behold, these little wings planned to set themselves up and hold the rule.

[26] And I looked, and behold, one was set up, but suddenly disappeared;

[27] a second also, and this disappeared more quickly than the first.
 [28] And I looked, and behold, the two that remained were planning between themselves to reign together;
 [29] and while they were planning, behold, one of the heads that were at rest (the one which was in the middle) awoke; for it was greater than the other two heads.
 [30] And I saw how it allied the two heads with itself,
 [31] and behold, the head turned with those that were with it, and it devoured the two little wings which were planning to reign.
 [32] Moreover this head gained control of the whole earth, and with much oppression dominated its inhabitants; and it had greater power over the world than all the wings that had gone before.
 [33]

And after this I looked, and behold, the middle head also suddenly disappeared, just as the wings had done.

[34] But the two heads remained, which also ruled over the earth and its inhabitants.
 [35] And I looked, and behold, the head on the right side devoured the one on the left.
 [36]

Then I heard a voice saying to me, "Look before you and consider what you see."

[37] And I looked, and behold, a creature like a lion was aroused out of the forest, roaring; and I heard how he uttered a man's voice to the eagle, and spoke, saying,
 [38] "Listen and I will speak to you. The Most High says to you,
 [39] 'Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts which I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of my times might come through them?
 [40] You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with much terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have dwelt on the earth with deceit.
 [41] And you have judged the earth, but not with truth;
 [42] for you have afflicted the meek and injured the peaceable; you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the dwellings of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm.
 [43] And so your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One.
 [44] And the Most High has looked upon his times, and behold, they are ended, and his ages are completed!
 [45] Therefore you will surely disappear, you eagle, and your terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body,
 [46] so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it.'"

4Ezra.12

[1]

While the lion was saying these words to the eagle, I looked,

[2] and behold, the remaining head disappeared. And the two wings that had gone over to it arose and set themselves up to reign, and their reign was brief and full of tumult.
 [3] And I looked, and behold, they also disappeared, and the whole body of the eagle was burned, and the earth was exceedingly terrified.

Then I awoke in great perplexity of mind and great fear, and I said to my spirit,

[4] "Behold, you have brought this upon me, because you search out the ways of the Most High.

[5] Behold, I am still weary in mind and very weak in my spirit, and not even a little strength is left in me, because of the great fear with which I have been terrified this night.

[6] Therefore I will now beseech the Most High that he may strengthen me to the end."

[7]

And I said, "O sovereign Lord, if I have found favor in thy sight, and if I have been accounted righteous before thee beyond many others, and if my prayer has indeed come up before thy face,

[8] strengthen me and show me, thy servant, the interpretation and meaning of this terrifying vision, that thou mayest fully comfort my soul.

[9] For thou hast judged me worthy to be shown the end of the times and the last events of the times."

[10]

He said to me, "This is the interpretation of this vision which you have seen:

[11] The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel.

[12] But it was not explained to him as I now explain or have explained it to you.

[13] Behold, the days are coming when a kingdom shall arise on earth, and it shall be more terrifying than all the kingdoms that have been before it.

[14] And twelve kings shall reign in it, one after another.

[15] But the second that is to reign shall hold sway for a longer time than any other of the twelve.

[16] This is the interpretation of the twelve wings which you saw.

[17] As for your hearing a voice that spoke, coming not from the eagle's heads but from the midst of his body, this is the interpretation:

[18] In the midst of the time of that kingdom great struggles shall arise, and it shall be in danger of falling; nevertheless it shall not fall then, but shall regain its former power.

[19] As for your seeing eight little wings clinging to his wings, this is the interpretation:

[20] Eight kings shall arise in it, whose times shall be short and their years swift;

[21] and two of them shall perish when the middle of its time draws near; and four shall be kept for the time when its end approaches; but two shall be kept until the end.

[22] As for your seeing three heads at rest, this is the interpretation:

[23] In its last days the Most High will raise up three kings, and they shall renew many things in it, and shall rule the earth

[24] and its inhabitants more oppressively than all who were before them; therefore they are called the heads of the eagle.

[25] For it is they who shall sum up his wickedness and perform his last actions.

[26] As for your seeing that the large head disappeared, one of the kings shall die in his bed, but in agonies.

[27] But as for the two who remained, the sword shall devour them.

[28] For the sword of one shall devour him who was with him; but he also shall fall by the sword in the last days.

[29] As for your seeing two little wings passing over to the head which was on the right side,

[30] this is the interpretation: It is these whom the Most High has kept for the eagle's end; this was the reign which was brief and full of tumult, as you have seen.

[31]

"And as for the lion whom you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard,

[32] this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David, and will come and speak to them; he will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will cast up before them their contemptuous dealings.

[33] For first he will set them living before his judgment seat, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them.

[34] But he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning.

[35] This is the dream that you saw, and this is its interpretation.

[36] And you alone were worthy to learn this secret of the Most High.

[37] Therefore write all these things that you have seen in a book, and put it in a hidden place;

[38] and you shall teach them to the wise among your people, whose hearts you know are able to comprehend and keep these secrets.

[39] But wait here seven days more, so that you may be shown whatever it pleases the Most High to show you." Then he left me.

[40]

When all the people heard that the seven days were past and I had not returned to the city, they all gathered together, from the least to the greatest, and came to me and spoke to me, saying,

[41] "How have we offended you, and what harm have we done you, that you have forsaken us and sit in this place?

[42] For of all the prophets you alone are left to us, like a cluster of grapes from the vintage, and like a lamp in a dark place, and like a haven for a ship saved from a storm.

[43] Are not the evils which have befallen us sufficient?

[44] Therefore if you forsake us, how much better it would have been for us if we also had been consumed in the burning of Zion!

[45] For we are no better than those who died there." And they wept with a loud voice.

Then I answered them and said,

[46] "Take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob;

[47] for the Most High has you in remembrance, and the Mighty One has not forgotten you in your struggle.

[48] As for me, I have neither forsaken you nor withdrawn from you; but I have come to this place to pray on account of the desolation of Zion, and to seek mercy on account of the humiliation of our sanctuary.

[49] Now go, every one of you to his house, and after these days I will come to you."

[50] So the people went into the city, as I told them to do.

[51] But I sat in the field seven days, as the angel had commanded me; and I ate only of the flowers of the field, and my food was of plants during those days.

4Ezra.13

[1]

After seven days I dreamed a dream in the night;

[2] and behold, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves.

[3] And I looked, and behold, this wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled,

[4] and whenever his voice issued from his mouth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire.

[5]

After this I looked, and behold, an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea.

[6] And I looked, and behold, he carved out for himself a great mountain, and flew up upon it.

[7] And I tried to see the region or place from which the mountain was carved, but I could not.

[8]

After this I looked, and behold, all who had gathered together against him, to wage war with him, were much afraid, yet dared to fight.

[9] And behold, when he saw the onrush of the approaching multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor held a spear or any weapon of war;

[10] but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks.

[11] All these were mingled together, the stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm, and fell on the onrushing multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke. When I saw it, I was amazed.

[12]

After this I saw the same man come down from the mountain and call to him another multitude which was peaceable.

[13] Then many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings.

Then in great fear I awoke; and I besought the Most High, and said,

[14] "From the beginning thou hast shown thy servant these wonders, and hast deemed me worthy to have my prayer heard by thee;

[15] now show me also the interpretation of this dream.

[16] For as I consider it in my mind, alas for those who will be left in those days! And still more, alas for those who are not left!

[17] For those who are not left will be sad,

[18] because they understand what is reserved for the last days, but cannot attain it.

[19] But alas for those also who are left, and for that very reason! For they shall see great dangers and much distress, as these dreams show.

[20] Yet it is better to come into these things, though incurring peril, than to pass from the world like a cloud, and not to see what shall happen in the last days."

He answered me and said,

[21] "I will tell you the interpretation of the vision, and I will also explain to you the things which you have mentioned.

[22] As for what you said about those who are left, this is the interpretation:

[23] He who brings the peril at that time will himself protect those who fall into peril, who have works and have faith in the Almighty.

[24] Understand therefore that those who are left are more blessed than those who have died.

[25] This is the interpretation of the vision: As for your seeing a man come up from the heart of the sea,

[26] this is he whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages, who will himself deliver his creation; and he will direct those who are left.

[27] And as for your seeing wind and fire and a storm coming out of his mouth,

[28] and as for his not holding a spear or weapon of war, yet destroying the onrushing multitude which came to conquer him, this is the interpretation:

[29] Behold, the days are coming when the Most High will deliver those who are on the earth.

[30] And bewilderment of mind shall come over those who dwell on the earth.

[31] And they shall plan to make war against one another, city against city, place against place, people against people, and kingdom against kingdom.

[32] And when these things come to pass and the signs occur which I showed you before, then my Son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea.

[33] And when all the nations hear his voice, every man shall leave his own land and the warfare that they have against one another;

[34] and an innumerable multitude shall be gathered together, as you saw, desiring to come and conquer him.

[35] But he shall stand on the top of Mount Zion.

[36] And Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, prepared and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands.

[37] And he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness (this was symbolized by the storm),

[38] and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and the torments with which they are to be tortured (which were symbolized by the flames), and will destroy them without effort by the law (which was symbolized by the fire).

[39] And as for your seeing him gather to himself another multitude that was peaceable,

[40] these are the ten tribes which were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea, whom Shalmaneser the king of the Assyrians led captive; he took them across the river, and they were taken into another land.

[41] But they formed this plan for themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the nations and go to a more distant region, where mankind had never lived,

[42] that there at least they might keep their statutes which they had not kept in their own land.

[43] And they went in by the narrow passages of the Euphrates river.

[44] For at that time the Most High performed signs for them, and stopped the channels of the river until they had passed over.

[45] Through that region there was a long way to go, a journey of a year and a half; and that country is called Arzareth.

[46]

"Then they dwelt there until the last times; and now, when they are about to come again,

[47] the Most High will stop the channels of the river again, so that they may be able to pass over. Therefore you saw the multitude gathered together in peace.

[48] But those who are left of your people, who are found within my holy borders, shall be saved.

[49] Therefore when he destroys the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, he will defend the people who remain.

[50] And then he will show them very many wonders."

[51]

I said, "O sovereign Lord, explain this to me: Why did I see the man coming up from the heart of the sea?"

[52]

He said to me, "Just as no one can explore or know what is in the depths of the sea, so no one on earth can see my Son or those who are with him, except in the time of his day.

[53] This is the interpretation of the dream which you saw. And you alone have been enlightened about this, [54] because you have forsaken your own ways and have applied yourself to mine, and have searched out my law;

[55] for you have devoted your life to wisdom, and called understanding your mother.

[56] Therefore I have shown you this, for there is a reward laid up with the Most High. And after three more days I will tell you other things, and explain weighty and wondrous matters to you."

[57]

Then I arose and walked in the field, giving great glory and praise to the Most High because of his wonders, which he did from time to time,

[58] and because he governs the times and whatever things come to pass in their seasons. And I stayed there three days.

4Ezra.14

[1]

On the third day, while I was sitting under an oak, behold, a voice came out of a bush opposite me and said, "Ezra, Ezra."

[2] And I said, "Here I am, Lord," and I rose to my feet.

[3] Then he said to me, "I revealed myself in a bush and spoke to Moses, when my people were in bondage in Egypt;

[4] and I sent him and led my people out of Egypt; and I led him up on Mount Sinai, where I kept him with me many days;

[5] and I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of the times. Then I commanded him, saying,

[6] 'These words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret.'

[7] And now I say to you;

[8] Lay up in your heart the signs that I have shown you, the dreams that you have seen, and the interpretations that you have heard;

[9] for you shall be taken up from among men, and henceforth you shall live with my Son and with those who are like you, until the times are ended.

[10] For the age has lost its youth, and the times begin to grow old.

[11] For the age is divided into twelve parts, and nine of its parts have already passed,

[12] as well as half of the tenth part; so two of its parts remain, besides half of the tenth part.

[13] Now therefore, set your house in order, and reprove your people; comfort the lowly among them, and instruct those that are wise. And now renounce the life that is corruptible,

[14] and put away from you mortal thoughts; cast away from you the burdens of man, and divest yourself now of your weak nature,

[15] and lay to one side the thoughts that are most grievous to you, and hasten to escape from these times.

[16] For evils worse than those which you have now seen happen shall be done hereafter.

[17] For the weaker the world becomes through old age, the more shall evils be multiplied among its inhabitants.

[18] For truth shall go farther away, and falsehood shall come near. For the eagle which you saw in the vision is already hastening to come."

[19]

Then I answered and said, "Let me speak in thy presence, Lord.

[20] For behold, I will go, as thou hast commanded me, and I will reprove the people who are now living; but who will warn those who will be born hereafter? For the world lies in darkness, and its inhabitants are without light.

[21] For thy law has been burned, and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by thee.

[22] If then I have found favor before thee, send the Holy Spirit into me, and I will write everything that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in thy law, that men may be able to find the path, and that those who wish to live in the last days may live."

[23]

He answered me and said, "Go and gather the people, and tell them not to seek you for forty days.

[24] But prepare for yourself many writing tablets, and take with you Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ethanus, and Asiel -- these five, because they are trained to write rapidly;

[25] and you shall come here, and I will light in your heart the lamp of understanding, which shall not be put out until what you are about to write is finished.

[26] And when you have finished, some things you shall make public, and some you shall deliver in secret to the wise; tomorrow at this hour you shall begin to write."

[27]

Then I went as he commanded me, and I gathered all the people together, and said,

[28] "Hear these words, O Israel

[29] At first our fathers dwelt as aliens in Egypt, and they were delivered from there,

[30] and received the law of life, which they did not keep, which you also have transgressed after them.

[31] Then land was given to you for a possession in the land of Zion; but you and your fathers committed iniquity and did not keep the ways which the Most High commanded you.

[32] And because he is a righteous judge, in due time he took from you what he had given.

[33] And now you are here, and your brethren are farther in the interior.

[34] If you, then, will rule over your minds and discipline your hearts, you shall be kept alive, and after death you shall obtain mercy.

[35] For after death the judgment will come, when we shall live again; and then the names of the righteous will

become manifest, and the deeds of the ungodly will be disclosed.
 [36] But let no one come to me now, and let no one seek me for forty days."
 [37]

So I took the five men, as he commanded me, and we proceeded to the field, and remained there.

[38] And on the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, "Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink."

[39] Then I opened my mouth, and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire.

[40] And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast, for my spirit retained its memory;

[41] and my mouth was opened, and was no longer closed.

[42] And the Most High gave understanding to the five men, and by turns they wrote what was dictated, in characters which they did not know. They sat forty days, and wrote during the daytime, and ate their bread at night.

[43] As for me, I spoke in the daytime and was not silent at night.

[44] So during the forty days ninety-four books were written.

[45] And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, "Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them;

[46] but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people.

[47] For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge."

[48] And I did so.

4Ezra.15

[1]

The Lord says, "Behold, speak in the ears of my people the words of the prophecy which I will put in your mouth,

[2] and cause them to be written on paper; for they are trustworthy and true.

[3] Do not fear the plots against you, and do not be troubled by the unbelief of those who oppose you.

[4] For every unbeliever shall die in his unbelief."

[5]

"Behold," says the Lord, "I bring evils upon the world, the sword and famine and death and destruction.

[6] For iniquity has spread throughout every land, and their harmful deeds have reached their limit.

[7] Therefore," says the Lord,

[8] "I will be silent no longer concerning their ungodly deeds which they impiously commit, neither will I tolerate their wicked practices. Behold, innocent and righteous blood cries out to me, and the souls of the righteous cry out continually.

[9] I will surely avenge them," says the Lord, "and will receive to myself all the innocent blood from among them.

[10] Behold, my people is led like a flock to the slaughter; I will not allow them to live any longer in the land of Egypt,

[11] but I will bring them out with a mighty hand and with an uplifted arm, and will smite Egypt with plagues,

as before, and will destroy all its land."

[12]

Let Egypt mourn, and its foundations, for the plague of chastisement and punishment that the Lord will bring upon it.

[13] Let the farmers that till the ground mourn, because their seed shall fail and their trees shall be ruined by blight and hail and by a terrible tempest.

[14] Alas for the world and for those who live in it!

[15] For the sword and misery draw near them, and nation shall rise up to fight against nation, with swords in their hands.

[16] For there shall be unrest among men; growing strong against one another, they shall in their might have no respect for their king or the chief of their leaders.

[17] For a man will desire to go into a city, and shall not be able.

[18] For because of their pride the cities shall be in confusion, the houses shall be destroyed, and people shall be afraid.

[19] A man shall have no pity upon his neighbors, but shall make an assault upon their houses with the sword, and plunder their goods, because of hunger for bread and because of great tribulation.

[20]

"Behold," says God, "I call together all the kings of the earth to fear me, from the rising sun and from the south, from the east and from Lebanon; to turn and repay what they have given them.

[21] Just as they have done to my elect until this day, so I will do, and will repay into their bosom." Thus says the Lord God:

[22] "My right hand will not spare the sinners, and my sword will not cease from those who shed innocent blood on earth."

[23] And a fire will go forth from his wrath, and will consume the foundations of the earth, and the sinners, like straw that is kindled.

[24] "Woe to those who sin and do not observe my commandments," says the Lord;

[25] "I will not spare them. Depart, you faithless children! Do not pollute my sanctuary."

[26] For the Lord knows all who transgress against him; therefore he will hand them over to death and slaughter.

[27] For now calamities have come upon the whole earth, and you shall remain in them; for God will not deliver you, because you have sinned against him.

[28]

Behold, a terrifying sight, appearing from the east!

[29] The nations of the dragons of Arabia shall come out with many chariots, and from the day that they set out, their hissing shall spread over the earth, so that all who hear them fear and tremble.

[30] Also the Carmonians, raging in wrath, shall go forth like wild boars of the forest, and with great power they shall come, and engage them in battle, and shall devastate a portion of the land of the Assyrians with their teeth.

[31] And then the dragons, remembering their origin, shall become still stronger; and if they combine in great power and turn to pursue them,

[32] then these shall be disorganized and silenced by their power, and shall turn and flee.

[33] And from the land of the Assyrians an enemy in ambush shall beset them and destroy one of them, and

fear and trembling shall come upon their army, and indecision upon their kings.

[34]

Behold, clouds from the east, and from the north to the south; and their appearance is very threatening, full of wrath and storm.

[35] They shall dash against one another and shall pour out a heavy tempest upon the earth, and their own tempest; and there shall be blood from the sword as high as a horse's belly

[36] and a man's thigh and a camel's hock.

[37] And there shall be fear and great trembling upon the earth; and those who see that wrath shall be horror-stricken, and they shall be seized with trembling.

[38] And, after that, heavy storm clouds shall be stirred up from the south, and from the north, and another part from the west.

[39] And the winds from the east shall prevail over the cloud that was raised in wrath, and shall dispel it; and the tempest that was to cause destruction by the east wind shall be driven violently toward the south and west.

[40] And great and mighty clouds, full of wrath and tempest, shall rise, to destroy all the earth and its inhabitants, and shall pour out upon every high and lofty place a terrible tempest,

[41] fire and hail and flying swords and floods of water, that all the fields and all the streams may be filled with the abundance of those waters.

[42] And they shall destroy cities and walls, mountains and hills, trees of the forests, and grass of the meadows, and their grain.

[43] And they shall go on steadily to Babylon, and shall destroy her.

[44] They shall come to her and surround her; they shall pour out the tempest and all its wrath upon her; then the dust and smoke shall go up to heaven, and all who are about her shall wail over her.

[45] And those who survive shall serve those who have destroyed her.

[46]

And you, Asia, who share in the glamour of Babylon and the glory of her person --

[47] woe to you, miserable wretch! For you have made yourself like her; you have decked out your daughters in harlotry to please and glory in your lovers, who have always lusted after you.

[48] You have imitated that hateful harlot in all her deeds and devices; therefore God says,

[49] "I will send evils upon you, widowhood, poverty, famine, sword, and pestilence, to lay waste your houses and bring you to destruction and death.

[50] And the glory of your power shall wither like a flower, when the heat rises that is sent upon you.

[51] You shall be weakened like a wretched woman who is beaten and wounded, so that you cannot receive your mighty lovers.

[52] Would I have dealt with you so violently," says the Lord,

[53] "If you had not always killed my chosen people, exulting and clapping your hands and talking about their death when you were drunk?

[54] Trick out the beauty of your face!

[55] The reward of a harlot is in your bosom, therefore you shall receive your recompense.

[56] As you will do to my chosen people," says the Lord, "so God will do to you, and will hand you over to adversities.

[57] Your children shall die of hunger, and you shall fall by the sword, and your cities shall be wiped out, and all your people who are in the open country shall fall by the sword.

[58] And those who are in the mountains and highlands shall perish of hunger, and they shall eat their own flesh in hunger for bread and drink their own blood in thirst for water.

[59] Unhappy above all others, you shall come and suffer fresh afflictions.

[60] And as they pass they shall wreck the hateful city, and shall destroy a part of your land and abolish a portion of your glory, as they return from devastated Babylon.

[61] And you shall be broken down by them like stubble, and they shall be like fire to you.

[62] And they shall devour you and your cities, your land and your mountains; they shall burn with fire all your forests and your fruitful trees.

[63] They shall carry your children away captive, and shall plunder your wealth, and abolish the glory of your countenance."

4Ezra.16

[1]

Woe to you, Babylon and Asia! Woe to you, Egypt and Syria!

[2] Gird yourselves with sackcloth and haircloth, and wail for your children, and lament for them; for your destruction is at hand.

[3] The sword has been sent upon you, and who is there to turn it back?

[4] A fire has been sent upon you, and who is there to quench it?

[5] Calamities have been sent upon you, and who is there to drive them away?

[6] Can one drive off a hungry lion in the forest, or quench a fire in the stubble, when once it has begun to burn?

[7] Can one turn back an arrow shot by a strong archer?

[8] The Lord God sends calamities, and who will drive them away?

[9] Fire will go forth from his wrath, and who is there to quench it?

[10] He will flash lightning, and who will not be afraid? He will thunder, and who will not be terrified?

[11] The Lord will threaten, and who will not be utterly shattered at his presence?

[12] The earth and its foundations quake, the sea is churned up from the depths, and its waves and the fish also shall be troubled at the presence of the Lord and before the glory of his power.

[13] For his right hand that bends the bow is strong, and his arrows that he shoots are sharp and will not miss when they begin to be shot to the ends of the world.

[14] Behold, calamities are sent forth and shall not return until they come over the earth.

[15] The fire is kindled, and shall not be put out until it consumes the foundations of the earth.

[16] Just as an arrow shot by a mighty archer does not return, so the calamities that are sent upon the earth shall not return.

[17] Alas for me! Alas for me! Who will deliver me in those days?

[18]

The beginning of sorrows, when there shall be much lamentation; the beginning of famine, when many shall perish; the beginning of wars, when the powers shall be terrified; the beginning of calamities, when all shall tremble. What shall they do in these circumstances, when the calamities come?

[19] Behold, famine and plague, tribulation and anguish are sent as scourges for the correction of men.

[20] Yet for all this they will not turn from their iniquities, nor be always mindful of the scourges.

[21] Behold, provision will be so cheap upon earth that men will imagine that peace is assured for them, and then the calamities shall spring up on the earth -- the sword, famine, and great confusion.

[22] For many of those who live on the earth shall perish by famine; and those who survive the famine shall die by the sword.

[23] And the dead shall be cast out like dung, and there shall be no one to console them; for the earth shall be left desolate, and its cities shall be demolished.

- [24] No one shall be left to cultivate the earth or to sow it.
[25] The trees shall bear fruit, and who will gather it?
[26] The grapes shall ripen, and who will tread them? For in all places there shall be great solitude;
[27] one man will long to see another, or even to hear his voice.
[28] For out of a city, ten shall be left; and out of the field, two who have hidden themselves in thick groves and clefts in the rocks.
[29] As in an olive orchard three or four olives may be left on every tree,
[30] or as when a vineyard is gathered some clusters may be left by those who search carefully through the vineyard,
[31] so in those days three or four shall be left by those who search their houses with the sword.
[32] And the earth shall be left desolate, and its fields shall be for briers, and its roads and all its paths shall bring forth thorns, because no sheep will go along them.
[33] Virgins shall mourn because they have no bridegrooms; women shall mourn because they have no husbands; their daughters shall mourn, because they have no helpers.
[34] Their bridegrooms shall be killed in war, and their husbands shall perish of famine.
[35]

Listen now to these things, and understand them, O servants of the Lord.

- [36] Behold the word of the Lord, receive it; do not disbelieve what the Lord says.
[37] Behold, the calamities draw near, and are not delayed.
[38] Just as a woman with child, in the ninth month, when the time of her delivery draws near, has great pains about her womb for two or three hours beforehand, and when the child comes forth from the womb, there will not be a moment's delay,
[39] so the calamities will not delay in coming forth upon the earth, and the world will groan, and pains will seize it on every side.
[40]

"Hear my words, O my people; prepare for battle, and in the midst of the calamities be like strangers on the earth.

- [41] Let him that sells be like one who will flee; let him that buys be like one who will lose;
[42] let him that does business be like one who will not make a profit; and let him that builds a house be like one who will not live in it;
[43] let him that sows be like one who will not reap; so also him that prunes the vines, like one who will not gather the grapes;
[44] them that marry, like those who will have no children; and them that do not marry, like those who are widowed.
[45] Because those who labor, labor in vain;
[46] for strangers shall gather their fruits, and plunder their goods, and overthrow their houses, and take their children captive; for in captivity and famine they will beget their children.
[47] Those who conduct business, do it only to be plundered; the more they adorn their cities, their houses and possessions, and their persons,
[48] the more angry I will be with them for their sins," says the Lord.
[49] Just as a respectable and virtuous woman abhors a harlot,
[50] so righteousness shall abhor iniquity, when she decks herself out, and shall accuse her to her face, when he comes who will defend him who searches out every sin on earth.
[51]

Therefore do not be like her or her works.

[52] For behold, just a little while, and iniquity will be removed from the earth, and righteousness will reign over us.

[53] Let no sinner say that he has not sinned; for God will burn coals of fire on the head of him who says, "I have not sinned before God and his glory."

[54] Behold, the Lord knows all the works of men, their imaginations and their thoughts and their hearts.

[55] He said, "Let the earth be made," and it was made; "Let the heaven be made," and it was made.

[56] At his word the stars were fixed, and he knows the number of the stars.

[57] It is he who searches the deep and its treasures, who has measured the sea and its contents;

[58] who has enclosed the sea in the midst of the waters, and by his word has suspended the earth over the water;

[59] who has spread out the heaven like an arch, and founded it upon the waters;

[60] who has put springs of water in the desert, and pools on the tops of the mountains, to send rivers from the heights to water the earth;

[61] who formed man, and put a heart in the midst of his body, and gave him breath and life and understanding

[62] and the spirit of Almighty God; who made all things and searches out hidden things in hidden places.

[63] Surely he knows your imaginations and what you think in your hearts! Woe to those who sin and want to hide their sins!

[64] Because the Lord will strictly examine all their works, and will make a public spectacle of all of you.

[65] And when your sins come out before men, you shall be put to shame; and your own iniquities shall stand as your accusers in that day.

[66] What will you do? Or how will you hide your sins before God and his angels?

[67] Behold, God is the judge, fear him! Cease from your sins, and forget your iniquities, never to commit them again; so God will lead you forth and deliver you from all tribulation.

[68]

For behold, the burning wrath of a great multitude is kindled over you, and they shall carry off some of you and shall feed you what was sacrificed to idols.

[69] And those who consent to eat shall be held in derision and contempt, and be trodden under foot.

[70] For in many places and in neighboring cities there shall be a great insurrection against those who fear the Lord.

[71] They shall be like mad men, sparing no one, but plundering and destroying those who continue to fear the Lord.

[72] For they shall destroy and plunder their goods, and drive them out of their houses.

[73] Then the tested quality of my elect shall be manifest, as gold that is tested by fire.

[74]

"Hear, my elect," says the Lord. "Behold, the days of tribulation are at hand, and I will deliver you from them.

[75] Do not fear or doubt, for God is your guide.

[76] You who keep my commandments and precepts," says the Lord God, "do not let your sins pull you down, or your iniquities prevail over you."

[77] Woe to those who are choked by their sins and overwhelmed by their iniquities, as a field is choked with underbrush and its path overwhelmed with thorns, so that no one can pass through!

[78] It is shut off and given up to be consumed by fire.