

2 Esdras (Apocrypha)  
Selections

2Esdr. 5:1 “Now concerning the signs: lo, the days are coming when ***those who inhabit the earth shall be seized with great terror***, and the way of truth shall be hidden, and the land shall be barren of faith. 2 Unrighteousness shall be increased beyond what you yourself see, and beyond what you heard of formerly. 3 And the land that you now see ruling shall be a trackless waste, and people 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 begin to shine 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 inhabit the earth do not expect, and the birds shall fly away together; 7 and the Dead Sea 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, fire shall often break out, the wild animals shall roam beyond their haunts, and menstruous women shall bring forth monsters***. 9 ***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 One country shall ask its neighbor, ‘Has righteousness, or anyone who does right, passed through you?’ And it will answer, ‘No.’ 12 At that time people shall hope but not obtain; they shall labor, but their ways shall not prosper.

2Esdr. 7:26 “For indeed the time will come, when the signs that I have foretold to you will come to pass, that ***the city that now is not seen shall appear***, and the land that now is hidden shall be disclosed. 27 Everyone 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***.

2Esdr. 7:80 such spirits shall not enter into habitations, but shall immediately wander about in torments, ***always grieving and sad, in seven ways***.

2Esdr. 7:91 First of all, they shall see with great joy the glory of him who receives them, for they ***shall have rest in seven orders***.

2Esdr. 7:101 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.”

2Esdr. 9:23 “Now, if you will ***let seven days more pass*** – do not, however, fast during them,

2Esdr. 9:38 When I said these things in my heart, I looked around, and ***on my right I saw a woman***; she was mourning and weeping with a loud voice, and was deeply grieved at heart; her clothes were torn, 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?”

2Esdr. 9:41 She said to me, “Let me alone, my lord, so that I may weep for myself and continue to mourn, for I am greatly embittered in spirit and deeply distressed.”

2Esdr. 9:42 I said to her, “What has happened to you? Tell me.”

2Esdr. 9:43 And she said to me, “***Your servant was barren*** and had no child, though I lived with my husband for thirty years. 44 Every hour and every day during those thirty years I prayed to the Most High, night and day. 45 And after thirty years God heard your servant, and looked upon my low estate, and considered my distress, and ***gave me a son***. 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.

2Esdr. 10:1 “But it happened that ***when my son entered his wedding chamber, he fell down and died***. 2 So all of us put out our lamps, and all my neighbors attempted to console me; I remained quiet until the evening of the second day. 3 But when all of them had stopped consoling me, encouraging me to be quiet, ***I got up in the night and fled, and I came to this field***, as you see. 4 And now I intend not to return to the town, but to stay here; I will neither eat nor drink, but ***will mourn and fast continually until I die***.”

2Esdr. 10:5 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 distress***. 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 From the beginning all have been born of her, and others will come; and, lo, almost all go to perdition, and a multitude of them will come to doom. 11 Who then ought to mourn the more, she who lost so great a multitude, or you who are grieving for one alone? 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, ‘Just as you brought forth in sorrow, so the earth also has from the beginning given her

fruit, that is, humankind, 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 town to your husband.”

2Esdr. 10:18 She said to me, “I will not do so; I will not go into the city, but I will die here.”

2Esdr. 10:19 So I spoke again to her, and said, 20 “Do not do that, but let yourself be persuaded – for how many are the adversities of Zion?—and ***be consoled because of the sorrow of Jerusalem.*** 21 ***For you see how 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 almost profaned; our children have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into exile, 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, worst of all, the seal of Zion has been deprived of its glory, and 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 respite from your troubles.”

2Esdr. 10:25 ***While I was talking to her, her face suddenly began to shine exceedingly; 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 ***she suddenly uttered a loud and fearful cry, so that the earth shook at the sound.*** 27 ***When I looked up, the woman was no longer visible to me, but a city was being built, and a place of huge foundations showed itself.*** 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.”

2Esdr. 10:29 While I was speaking these words, the angel who had come to me at first came to me, and when he saw me 30 lying there like a corpse, deprived of my understanding, 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?”

2Esdr. 10:32 I said, “It was because you abandoned me. I did as you directed, and went out into the field, and lo, what I have seen I saw, and can still see, I am unable to explain.”

2Esdr. 10:33 He said to me, “Stand up like a man, and I will instruct you.”

2Esdr. 10:34 I said, “Speak, my lord; only do not forsake me, so that I may not die before my time. 35 For I have seen what I did not know, and I hear what I do not understand 36 – or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming? 37 Now therefore I beg you to give your servant an explanation of this bewildering vision.”

2Esdr. 10:38 He answered me and said, “Listen to me, and I will teach you, and tell you about the things that you fear; for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you. 39 He has seen your righteous conduct, and 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 whom you began to console 42 (you do not now see the form of a woman, but there appeared to you a city being built) 43 and who told you about the misfortune of her son – this is the interpretation: 44 **The woman whom you saw is Zion, which you now behold as a city being built.** 45 **And as for her telling you that she was barren for thirty years, the reason is that 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, ‘My son died as he entered his wedding chamber,’ and that misfortune had overtaken her, this was the destruction that befell Jerusalem.** 49 So 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 because no work of human construction could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed.

2Esdr. 10:55 **“Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor or the 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 to be with the Most High as 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 inhabit the earth in the last days.” So I slept that night and the following one, as he had told me.

2Esdr. 11:1 On the second night *I had a dream: I saw rising from the sea an eagle that had twelve feathered wings and three heads.* 2 I saw it spread its wings over the whole earth, and all the winds of heaven blew upon it, and the clouds were gathered around it. 3 I saw that out of its wings there grew opposing wings; but they became little, puny wings. 4 But its heads were at rest; the middle head was larger than the other heads, but it too was at rest with them. **5 Then I saw that the eagle flew with its wings, and it reigned over the earth and over those who inhabit it.** 6 And I saw how all things under heaven were subjected to it, and no one spoke against it – not a single creature that was on the earth. 7 Then I saw the eagle rise upon its talons, and it uttered a cry to its wings, saying, 8 “Do not all watch at the same time; let each sleep in its own place, and watch in its turn; 9 but let the heads be reserved for the last.”

2Esdr. 11:10 I looked again and saw that the voice did not come from its heads, but from the middle of its body. 11 I counted its rival wings, and there were eight of them. 12 As I watched, one wing on the right side rose up, and it reigned over all the earth. 13 And after a time its reign came to an end, and it disappeared, so that even its place was no longer visible. Then the next wing rose up and reigned, and it continued to reign a long time. 14 While it was reigning its end came also, so that it disappeared like the first. 15 And a voice sounded, saying to it, 16 “Listen to 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 have ruled, not even half as long.”

2Esdr. 11:18 Then the third wing raised itself up, and held the rule as the earlier ones had done, 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 I kept looking, and in due time 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.

2Esdr. 11:22 And after this I looked and saw that the twelve wings and the two little wings had disappeared, 23 and nothing remained on the eagle’s body except the three heads that were at rest and six little wings.

2Esdr. 11:24 As I kept looking I saw that 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 Then I saw that these little wings planned to set themselves up and hold the rule. 26 As I kept looking, one was set up, but suddenly disappeared; 27 a second also, and this disappeared more quickly than the first. 28 While I continued to look the two that remained were planning

between themselves to reign together; 29 and while they were planning, one of the heads that were at rest (the one that was in the middle) suddenly awoke; it was greater than the other two heads. 30 And I saw how it allied the two heads with itself, 31 and how the head turned with those that were with it and devoured the two little wings that were planning to reign. 32 Moreover this head gained control of the whole earth, and with much oppression dominated its inhabitants; it had greater power over the world than all the wings that had gone before.

2Esdr. 11:33 After this I looked again and saw the head in the middle suddenly disappear, just as the wings had done. 34 But the two heads remained, which also in like manner ruled over the earth and its inhabitants. 35 And while I looked, I saw the head on the right side devour the one on the left.

2Esdr. 11:36 Then I heard a voice saying to me, “Look in front of you and consider what you see.” **37 When I looked, I saw what seemed to be a lion roused from the forest, roaring; and I heard how it uttered a human 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 that 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 great terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have lived on the earth with deceit. 41 You have judged the earth, but not with truth, 42 for you have oppressed the meek and injured the peaceable; you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the homes of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm. 43 Your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One. 44 The Most High has looked at his times; now they have ended, and his ages have reached completion. 45 Therefore you, eagle, will surely disappear, you and your terrifying wings, your most evil little wings, your malicious heads, 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.’”

2Esdr. 12:1 While the lion was saying these words to the eagle, I looked 2 and saw that the remaining head had disappeared. The two wings that had gone over to it rose up and set themselves up to reign, and their reign was brief and full of tumult. 3 When I looked again, they were already vanishing. The whole body of the eagle was burned, and the earth was exceedingly terrified.

Then I woke up in great perplexity of mind and great fear, and I said to my spirit, 4 “You have brought this upon me, because you search out the ways of the Most High. 5 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 tonight. 6 Therefore I will now entreat the Most High that he may strengthen me to the end.”

2Esdr. 12:7 Then I said, “O sovereign Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, and if I have been accounted righteous before you beyond many others, and if my prayer has indeed come up before your face, 8 strengthen me and show me, your servant, the interpretation and meaning of this terrifying vision so that you may fully comfort my soul. 9 For you have judged me worthy to be shown the end of the times and the last events of the times.”

**2Esdr. 12:10 He said to me, “This is the interpretation of this vision that you have seen: 11 The eagle that you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom that appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. 12 But it was not explained to him as I now explain to you or have explained it. 13 The days are coming when a kingdom shall rise 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 one of the twelve. 16 This is the interpretation of the twelve wings that you saw.**

2Esdr. 12:17 “As for your hearing a voice that spoke, coming not from the eagle’s heads but from the midst of its 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 its wings**, this is the interpretation: **20 Eight kings shall arise in it, whose times shall be short and their years swift;** 21 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.

2Esdr. 12:22 “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 because 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.

2Esdr. 12:29 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.

2Esdr. 12:31 ***“And as for the lion whom you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproofing 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 offspring of David, and will come and speak with them. He will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will display before them their contemptuous dealings. 33 For first he will bring them alive before his judgment seat, and when he has reproofed them, then he will destroy them. 34 But in mercy he will set free 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, 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 as for you, wait here seven days more, so that you may be shown whatever it pleases the Most High to show you.”*** Then he left me.