

2 ESDRAS

- 1) Probably written 5½ centuries after Ezra, but attributed to Ezra who lived at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the Temple. First two and last two chapters were written in Greek and were almost certainly added later to the middle chapters, which were in Aramaic. Both Greek and Aramaic versions have vanished, but a Latin translation survived. The first two chapters were written by a Christian in 150 CE, last two by a Christian in 250 CE.
- 2) 3:1,2 – Since this was written in c 150 CE, this is probably the author's way of alluding elliptically to the fact that he was writing 30 years after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, i.e. in 100 CE. Perhaps he had just visited Rome and compared it to the desolation of Jerusalem at that time. /// Begins the first chapter of the original version.
- 3) 4:1 -- Uriel means "Light of God." One of the seven angels listed in Enoch. See note #5 in Tobit for the others. Milton in *Paradise Lost* has him in charge of the son.
- 4) 5:6-13 – All impossibilities, heralding the end of ordered Nature.
- 5) 6:42 – Columbus believed this, that the earth was 6/7 dry land and 1/7 water, so there couldn't be much water separating him from China. It wasn't until Cook's explorations in the 18th century that people realized that the earth 70% water, not 15%.
- 6) 7:28 – This is from the Latin translation. One Arabic translation says 1,000 years, as does the book of Revelation, 20:5-7. The Messianic kingdom in this version comes **before** the day of judgment.
- 7) 11:1 – See 12:1. In Daniel's time it represented the 10 Seleucid kings. Now the 12 wings are the 12 Roman empires under Julius, Augustus, Tiberias, Caligula, Claudies, Nero, Galba, Otis, Vitellius, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian. Because of the date of writing 2 Esdras, later emperors are not listed.
- 8) 11:29 – The one head awakening is Vespasian, the two heads it joins are his sons, Titus and Domitian. These three comprised the Flavian dynasty and it was Titus who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed it and the Temple in 70 CE. The events in vv 29-32 refer to Vespasian's takeover after Nero's assassination.
- 9) 11:37 – The Messiah. The Jewish revolution of 66-72 was fed by this passage and others. The Jewish population in Egypt, Cyrene and Palestine itself was largely destroyed over the next 100 years, completely reversing Ezra's prophecy.
- 10) 13:39 – The Jews are still dreaming, eight centuries after the fact, that the people of the northern kingdom were still extant and would someday come to the aid of the oppressed tribes of Benjamin and Judah.
- 11) **Chapter 14** – The early books of the Bible did indeed received their present form during the Exile and immediately afterward. It was the scribes, perhaps under Ezra himself who copied and edited the legends, laws, and rituals. Ezra may have been the Chronicler who continued the history of Israel from Joshua's time to the rebuilding of the Temple in 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. (See Nehemiah 8:1-8, 18) The rest of the Old Testament past Joshua was added to little by little, some not written until 150 BCE. Ezra is not credited with **writing** the Bible, merely restoring it to the condition it was in before Nebuchanezzar burned the Temple (v 21). The 24 books he was instructed make public are the present-day books of the Jewish canon. The remaining 70 are the Apocrypha.
- 12) Chps 15,16 – These last two chapters were probably added in the 3rd century CE, making

them the very latest passages anywhere in the Bible or Apocrypha. /// Vv 10-13 may be allegorical: “my people” may be the Christians, and “Egypt” may be Rome. The Jews had already been wiped out in Egypt and elsewhere in the East by 135 CE. But on the other hand, Egypt was struck by plagues in the following century. At the same time, Caracalla was offended in Alexandria and sacked the city. In the 3rd century the Roman Empire was declining. In 235 CE, Emperor Alexander Severus was murdered and for 50 years the realm fell apart. In 15:29-30 the Arabs and Carmanians may have convinced Christian mystics that the last days were at hand. The Sassanid Empire occupied what were the Parthian (Persian) lands in Moses’ time, Carmania being a large southern province of the Sassanid empire. Shapur of the Sassanids also invaded Asia Minor and 15:46-47 contain apocalyptic denunciations of that region, too. But neither of these visions of Ezra came true. Shapur was driven back, Claudius II began Rome’s recovery and under Aurelian and Diocletian was strong again. Constantine began his reign in 306 and soon Rome was officially Christian.