

The woman's second flight to the wilderness in Revelation 12

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In Revelation 12, John describes the woman (who represents the saints) fleeing to the wilderness twice, first in verse 6, and again in verse 14. In both verses, she has a place prepared for her by God. In both verses, she is nourished. In the woman's first flight to the wilderness, she stays in the wilderness for 1,260 days, corresponding to the time of the ministry of the two witnesses in the previous chapter. These time periods of Revelation are symbolic. The woman remains in the wilderness as long as the two witnesses continue their ministry. A beast, representing Satan, ascends from the bottomless pit, and makes war with the two witnesses, and overcomes them, and kills them. The war corresponds to the war mentioned in chapter 12. The bottomless pit is where Satan was cast after he was bound with a great chain by an angel from heaven, Revelation 20:2-3. This identifies the beast which ascends from the pit in Revelation 11:7 as Satan.

The dead bodies of the two witnesses are left exposed in the street of the city, which John labels Egypt, and Sodom, for three days and a half. These are both places from which God's people were delivered. The names are symbolic of worldly society.

Several points of comparison between the two witnesses of Revelation 11 and the woman of Revelation 12 are listed in the table below.

Comparing the two chapters suggests a reason for the second flight of the woman to the wilderness. Perhaps it is connected with the lifeless condition

Two witnesses

the two witnesses minister for 1,260 days
 a beast ascends from the bottomless pit
 the beast makes war with the witnesses
 their dead bodies lie in the street of the city
 the spirit revives the two witnesses
 great fear falls upon people
 the two witnesses ascend to heaven

Woman of chapter 12

the woman is nourished in the wilderness for 1,260 days
 a red dragon appears in heaven
 war erupts in heaven between Michael and the dragon
 a third of the stars are cast to the earth
 the saints overcome Satan
 the dragon persecutes the woman
 the woman is given two wings of an eagle

of the two witnesses, who are like corpses lying in the street of the city. In that condition, the two witnesses, which I take to represent the Spirit and the word of God, would be ineffective as witnesses to God, but instead are the objects of scorn and ridicule in the world. When the spirit of God revives the two witnesses, the woman flees to the wilderness for a second time.

The woman's second flight to the wilderness is associated with the *time, times and a half*, an expression which occurs in Daniel 7:25, and 12:7. In Daniel 7:25 it is the limit to the period when the saints contend with the little horn, which has *eyes like the eyes of a man*, and a mouth speaking great things against the Most High.

The phrase "eyes like the eyes of a man" depict a human viewpoint, which contrasts with the divine one. The two wings given to the woman in Revelation 12:14 suggest that when she possesses the wings she is empowered to figuratively soar at a great height, and view things from above, picturing the divine point of view of prophecy. The two wings of the eagle represent the gift of prophecy.

The wings of the eagle contrast with the little horn, as shown in the following table.

The woman's second flight to the wilderness corresponds to prophecies in the Old Testament about a second exodus, in which God's people are gathered from all parts of the world. The gathering pictures the unifying effect of the truth. The prophecies about Israel's restoration to the promised land apply to the saints possessing the spiritual things that the land represents, in prophecies such as Isaiah 10:24-27; 11:10-16; 19:19-25; 43:16-21; 48:20-

Little horn

time, times and a half
 appears among the 10 horns of the fourth beast
 eyes like the eyes of a man represent the human viewpoint

makes war against the saints

speaks great words against God

tries to change times and laws

Two wings of an eagle

time, times and a half
 two wings of a great eagle are given to the woman
 the woman views things from above, representing a divine point of view

the woman is persecuted and flies to the wilderness

the earth swallows up the serpent's flood

the woman's seed keep God's commandments

22; 51:9-11; 52:7-12; Jeremiah 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Ezekiel 20:34-38; Hosea 2:16-17; Micah 7:15-16, 19-20. These all allude to or foretell a second exodus, which eclipses the first one. These prophecies are not fulfilled by ethnic Jews migrating to Palestine in modern times.

The woman's second flight to the wilderness also corresponds to Paul's reference to the saints being delivered "from the power of darkness," implying that they walk in light and truth, in his epistle to the Colossians: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." [Colossians 1:12-14]

The apostle Peter described the saints as having "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." He wrote: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." [2 Peter 1:3-4]