

## The two wings of a great eagle

by Douglas E. Cox

In Revelation 12, the woman, who represents the Church, is described fleeing to the wilderness in verse 6, and again in verse 14, she flies to the wilderness with eagle's wings. A question arises, what is her destination? The Israelites, who escaped from Egypt, looked forward to dwelling in the land promised to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. After 40 years wandering in the wilderness, the people crossed the river Jordan and took possession of the territory of the Canaanites, one city at a time.

In the woman's flight to the wilderness her destination is not the earthly Canaan, but a "better country." Instead of Moses, Jesus is "the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." [Hebrews 8:6]

When Jesus said to his disciples, in the Olivet discourse, "look up, and lift up your heads," he meant, elevate your minds, and your thoughts, to a higher level. [Luke 21:28] Understanding the prophecy requires an elevated type of thinking, as prophecy is given in similitudes, visions, and the language of parables. [Hosea 12:10] The types and shadows of the Old Testament are intended for our benefit, and for our examples. The prophets ministered *unto us*, Peter said. [1 Peter 1:12]

When Jesus said, "let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains," how could he have meant they should escape to save their lives? [Matthew 24:16] Jesus had previously told his disciples, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." [Matthew 16:25]

Here, Jesus probably alludes to Zechariah 14:5, where the prophet, referring to the mount of Olives, says: "ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains." The context alludes to an earthquake that occurred in reign of king Uzziah, which suggests that the need to flee would be immediate, and urgent. But to flee *towards* the location of a violent earth movement, after the event,

makes no sense, because of potential hazards such as landslides, and aftershocks. Taken literally, Zechariah's prophecy of the mount of Olives cleaving in the midst seems to be a mere curiosity of prophecy, and an *enigma*. What use would there be for a prediction of an earthquake, that says to flee *after* it occurs? And the mount of Olives is not a serious obstacle for pedestrians; what would be the point of creating such a great valley?

On the allegorical meaning of Scripture, Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141) wrote: [1]

. . . the Divine Page, in its literal sense, contains many things which seem both to be opposed to each other and, sometimes, to impart something which smacks of the absurd or impossible. But the spiritual meaning admits no opposition; in it, many things can be different from one another, but none can be opposed."

Understood spiritually, the mount of Olives in Zechariah's prophecy represents the new covenant. The mountain becoming cleaved in the midst, and the two halves being displaced in opposite directions, represents the theories of preterism and dispensationalism, two opposite interpretations of the covenant that Christ confirms with many for one week. [Daniel 9:27] Preterism says the covenant was confirmed for seven literal years in the first century; dispensationalism says that the covenant will be between Antichrist and the Jews, in a future seven year tribulation.

In fact, the time in which Jesus confirms his covenant is not limited to seven *literal* years. Since the last half of the 70th week applies to the heavenly Jerusalem, earthly units of time, such as days, months, and years, do not apply to it. Jesus is building his church, and the time span allotted for it is unknown to men. The period is represented symbolically by the *time, times and a half* mentioned in Daniel and Revelation. The last half of the *week* in which Jesus confirms the covenant is the whole age of the church.

Revelation 12:14 says the woman is given *two wings of a great eagle*, which are symbolic, I think, of a renewal of her strength, and the power of a fresh perspective, *from above*, which is the divine perspective. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:28-31

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

An eagle soars at a great height, and so possession of the wings of an eagle suggests that the saints will be given a higher perspective. Prophecy, properly understood, represents the view *from above*, rather than man's perspective, and it represents the mind of the *spirit*, rather than that of the *letter*. A similar idea is suggested by climbing a high mountain. The view from a high mountain extends beyond the immediate surroundings to a great distance; and prophecy likewise provides a perspective that extends beyond the present world, to the one to come. Jesus said to flee to the mountains, as they represent the promises of God. Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:9

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

The gospel is *good news for all mankind*. Isaiah said:

Isaiah 11:9

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

## **References**

1. Jerome Taylor. *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor: a medieval guide to the arts*. Columbia University Press, 1999. p. 140.