



The period of the kings is the third stage in Israel's history. It follows the period of the Patriarchs (Abraham in the year 1750 B.C.) and that of the Exodus and the Conquest (Moses in the year 1250 B.C.).

David captured Jerusalem around the year 1000 B.C. After Solomon's death in the year 932 B.C., the kingdom of David and his son Solomon would be divided. The northern part, called the kingdom of Israel, would cease to exist as a nation two centuries later. The southern part, called the kingdom of Judah, would last until the year 587 B.C., the year of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and of the Exile to Babylon.

This period covers a total of four centuries. These four centuries of the kings are the most important in sacred history because this is the period during which God raised up prophets from among his people.

The greater part of Scripture was written during those four centuries. It was not only the major prophets who produced writings, e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah. There were also groups of prophets of lesser importance who wrote much of Israel's history, such as the greater part of the pages of Genesis and Exodus, the Books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings.

We can say that the period of the kings is the most important period in sacred history. It is also the time which we know with the greatest precision.

These four centuries would appear to be the time of the kingdom of Israel's decadence if we paid attention only to its wealth and power. But during these four centuries, through trials, persecutions and difficulties of all kinds, Israel's faith matured to the point of reaching, in the great prophets, a sublimity and clarity which only Christ would enhance.

The Book of Kings

In the beginning, the actual books of kings formed one book. This work is the fruit of the prophets' reflection and was edited during the exile in Babylon.

It is a religious history. And the events which other historians would consider important are deliberately omitted. For instance, it hardly discusses the important reigns of Omri and of Jeroboam II in Samaria. Its judgment on the kings of Israel (kingdom of Samaria) is always negative, blaming them for the division of the

ancient kingdom of David. Only a few kings of Judah are praised for their loyalty to Yahweh.

We can easily note three parts:

- the grandeur of Solomon's reign and of the temple;
- the history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah after their division;
- after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, the history of Judah until Jerusalem's destruction in the year 587 B.C.

The chapters referring to Elijah and Elisha form a unit apart: 1 Kings 17–19 and 2 Kings 2–8.

David's last years

1 ¹King David was already a very old man who could no longer keep warm even in very thick clothing. ²So his servants said to him, "They should get for my lord king a virgin girl to attend the king and nurse him. She could sleep with you, my lord king, and make you feel warm." ³And so they looked for a beautiful girl throughout the territory of Israel. They found Abishag the Shunamite, a very beautiful girl; and brought her to the king. ⁴She attended to him, but the king had no intimate relations with her.

Song
7:1

2S 3:4

⁵Now Adonijah, son of Haggith, had in mind that he would be king. So he provided himself with a chariot and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. ⁶His father had never interfered by questioning his conduct: "Why have you done this or that?" He was a very handsome man born of Haggith after Absalom. ⁷Adonijah conferred with Joab, son of Zuriath, and with Abiathar, the priest. These two sided with him; ⁸but Zadok, the priest, and Benaiah, son of Jehoiada; Nathan, the prophet; Shimei, Rei and David's warriors did not join Adonijah.

⁹Adonijah sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened calves at the stone Zoheleth, beside Engrogel, and invited his brothers, the king's sons, and all the royal officials of Judah to join him; ¹⁰but not Nathan the prophet or Benaiah, or the warriors, or his brother Solomon.

2S 11:3;
12:24

¹¹Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, "Have you heard that Adonijah, son of Haggith, acts as a king, unknown to David our lord? ¹²Let me then give you advice that could save both your life and Solomon your son. ¹³Go, see king David immediately and tell him this, 'Did

15:29

you not, my lord king, swear to your handmaid that Solomon, my son, would reign after you and sit on your throne? Why then does Adonijah act as king?' ¹⁴Then, while you are still speaking with the king, I will come in and confirm what you say."

¹⁵So Bathsheba went to the king, right into his room. (Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunamite was attending to him.) ¹⁶Bathsheba bowed in homage to the king who asked her, "What do you want?" ¹⁷She answered him, "My lord, you swore to your handmaid by Yahweh your God that Solomon, my son, would reign after you and sit on your throne. ¹⁸But now, Adonijah acts as king without your knowing it, my lord king. ¹⁹He has sacrificed oxen, fattened calves and plenty of sheep, inviting all the king's sons, Abiathar the priest, and Joab, commander of the army; but he did not invite Solomon your servant. ²⁰And now, my lord king, all Israel is waiting for your decision as to who shall reign as your successor. ²¹If this is not known when my lord the king passes away, I and my son Solomon will be numbered among the criminals."

2K 10:1;
1K 11:1

²²While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived ²³and they told the king: "Here is Nathan the prophet." When Nathan came in before the king, he bowed before him with his face to the ground, ²⁴and said, "My lord king, have you decided that Adonijah shall reign after you and sit on your throne? ²⁵For indeed, today he has gone down to sacrifice oxen, fattened calves and plenty of sheep. He has invited all the king's sons, Joab, the commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest. They are now eating and drinking with him and proclaiming, 'Long live king Adonijah!' ²⁶But he has not invited me, your servant, Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon. ²⁷Has my lord king decided this without having told us, your servants, who is to sit on your throne after you?"

David makes Solomon king

²⁸King David then answered, "Call Bathsheba to me." So she came to the king. As she stood before him, ²⁹the king swore an oath and said,

“As Yahweh lives, he who has delivered me from all adversity, ³⁰so will I fulfill today the oath I swore to you by Yahweh, the God of Israel, when I said: “Solomon, your son, shall reign after me; he shall sit on my throne in my place.” ³¹Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king as she said, “May my lord king David live forever!”

³²King David then said, “Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came to the king ³³who said to them, “Take with you the servants of your lord and make my son Solomon ride on my own mule. Then bring him down to Gihon ³⁴and let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king of Israel. Once this is done, sound the horn and proclaim, ‘Long live king Solomon!’ ³⁵Then he shall sit on my throne in your presence. From now on he will be king in my place for I have made him ruler of Israel and Judah.”

³⁶Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, answered the king, “Amen! May Yahweh, the God of my lord king, confirm this. ³⁷As Yahweh has been with my lord king, may he also be with Solomon and make his reign even greater than that of my lord king David’s.”

³⁸So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, together with the Cherethites and the Pelethites, went down and made Solomon ride on king David’s mule to Gihon. ³⁹There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil that was in the Holy Tent and anointed Solomon. ⁴⁰They then sounded the horn and all the people shouted, “Long live king Solomon!” They all went up after him playing on pipes; and their shouts were so great that the noise seemed to rent the earth.

⁴¹Adonijah and all his guests heard

this as they finished feasting. On hearing the sound of the horn, Joab asked, “What is all this commotion in the city?” ⁴²While he was still speaking, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest, arrived and Adonijah said, “Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news.” ⁴³Jonathan answered Adonijah, “Not at all, for our lord king David has made Solomon king. ⁴⁴The king sent him with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and Plethites who made him ride on the king’s mule.

⁴⁵Then Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed him king at Gihon. As they returned, all the city cheered; this is the noise that you have heard. ⁴⁶Solomon already sits on the royal throne ⁴⁷and the king’s servants came to congratulate our lord king David, saying: ‘May your God make the name of Solomon more famous than yours and his reign greater than yours.’ At this, the king bowed in worship on his bed and said, ⁴⁸“Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has granted one of my offspring to sit on my throne this day when I can still see it.”

⁴⁹All the guests of Adonijah trembled and left, each going his own way. ⁵⁰In his fear of Solomon, Adonijah went and held onto the horns of the altar. ⁵¹This was reported to Solomon, “Adonijah is so afraid of king Solomon that he has held onto the horns of the altar, and he says, ‘Let king Solomon swear to me today that he will not slay me with the sword.’”

⁵²Solomon replied, “If he proves to be a worthy man, not a hair of his head shall perish. But if he acts like a wicked man, he shall die.” ⁵³So king Solomon sent for him and they brought him down from the altar. He came before king Solomon and paid

him homage; after that, Solomon sent him home.

David's testament

2¹ When David was about to die, he gave his son Solomon this instruction, ²“I am about to go the way of all creatures. Be strong and show yourself a man. ³Keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in his ways. Keep his statutes, his commands, his ordinances and declarations written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in whatever you do and wherever you go. ⁴If you do so, Yahweh will fulfill the promise he made to me: ‘If your sons take care to walk before me faithfully with their whole heart and their whole soul, you shall always have one of your descendants on the throne of Israel.’

⁵Now you know what Joab, the son of Zeruiah did to me—how he dealt with the two commanders of Israel’s armies, Abner the son of Ner, and Amasa the son of Jether. These two he murdered, avenging, in time of peace, blood which had been shed in time of war. He has thus stained with innocent blood the belt I wear and the sandals on my feet. ⁶Act wisely, his blood must be shed before he dies of old age. ⁷As to the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, deal kindly with them and let them be among those who eat at your table, for they themselves treated me with similar kindness when I fled from your brother Absalom.

• **2.1** This first part of the Book of Kings straight away makes known the three institutions that are to shape the young nation: kings, prophets and priests. The priests in the person of Zadok, who is to supplant Abiathar, descendant of Heli (Is 3:32-35). The priests will be the strongest support of David’s descendants (2 K 11).

The prophets, represented here by Nathan, will develop the consciousness of God’s promises to David (2 S 7:12), which consciousness was not very significant at the beginning. People would slowly discover to what lengths God’s fidelity would go.

At the end of his life, David, who had already lost two sons in the pursuit of power (see 2 S 3:2), chooses the wife whose son would be heir to the throne. Bathsheba is therefore designated (1 K 1:17) as queen-mother and her son Solomon is to reign in place of his father David. From this day onward, aware of the importance of the Davidic dynasty in the history of salvation, the Books of Kings mention for each reign the wife who will be appointed queen-mother and whose son will be enthroned in Jerusalem (this was not

⁸With you also is Shimei, son of Gera, the Benjaminite from Bahurim who cursed me terribly the day I fled to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by Yahweh, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ ⁹Now therefore, you, being a wise man, shall not hold him guiltless. You will know what to do with him: his blood must be shed before he dies of old age.”

¹⁰Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹David reigned over Israel for forty years: seven years in Hebron and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ¹²So Solomon sat on the throne of David his father and his reign was firmly established.

Solomon affirms his power

¹³Then Adonijah, son of Haggith, came to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, who asked him, “Do you come in peace?” He answered, “In peace,” ¹⁴and added, “I have something to tell you.” She said, “Speak,” ¹⁵and Adonijah said, “You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Israel fully expected me to reign. But the kingdom has slipped from my hands and become my brother’s for it was given him by Yahweh. ¹⁶Now I have one thing to ask of you; and I beg you not to refuse me.” She said, “Speak,” ¹⁷and he continued, “Please ask king Solomon to give me Abishag the Shunammite for my wife. I know that he

done for the king of Israel in the dissident kingdom). When Jesus, the true descendant of David comes, the Gospel reveals the woman chosen among all, the mother whom God, in his sovereign authority, has destined to give birth to the Son and Heir (Lk 1:31, 42; Heb 1:2).

Keep the commandments of Yahweh your God (v. 3). This is the wisdom of the prophets: if the king and his people fulfill these laws, they will be prosperous.

Joab... Shimei... (vv. 5 and 8) David had pardoned them: why did he now ask Solomon to kill them? This has nothing to do with David’s holding grudges against them but rather with his being as superstitious as the people of his time. For them, the curse uttered by Shimei (2 S 16:6) (or by anyone else) remains active and can suddenly fall on David’s descendants. The most effective way to prevent the curse from harming them is to have it fall on Shimei himself and thus spare David’s descendants. In the same way, the blood shed by Joab (2S 3:28) *cries to heaven*, and it is better to eliminate him so that *God’s justice* may fall on him and not on David’s children.

cannot refuse you.”¹⁸ Bathsheba answered, “Very well, I shall speak to the king on your behalf.”

¹⁹So Bathsheba went to king Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. The king met her and bowed to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king’s mother who sat on his right.

²⁰She said, “I have one small request to make of you. Do not refuse me.” And the king answered her, “Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you.”²¹She then said, “Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as his wife.”²²King Solomon answered his mother, “And why do you not ask for the kingdom to be given to him! For he is my elder brother, and Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah are on his side.”

²³Then king Solomon swore this oath, “Yahweh do so to me and more if this request does not cost Adonijah his life!²⁴Now, therefore, as Yahweh lives, he who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has established a kingly line as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day.”²⁵So king Solomon sent Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who killed him.

²⁶Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, “Go to your estate at Anathoth. You deserve death but I will not put you to death, because you carried the Ark of God before my father David and shared in all his trials.”²⁷So Solomon removed Abiathar as priest of Yahweh, and fulfilled the word spoken by Yahweh in Shiloh concerning the descendants of Eli.

²⁸This news reached Joab, who had supported Adonijah but not Absalom. He fled to the tent of Yahweh and held onto the horns of the altar.²⁹When it was reported to king Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of Yahweh and was beside the altar, the king sent Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, with this command, “Go, strike him down!”

³⁰So Benaiah went to the tent of Yahweh and said to Joab, “The king commands: ‘Come forward.’” But he replied, “No, I will die here.”

So Benaiah went back to the king with this report, “This is what Joab answered.”³¹The king then replied, “Do as he has said. Strike him down and have him buried. With this, the guilt for the blood which

Joab shed will be lifted from me and from my father’s family.³²Yahweh will repay him for the blood he shed because, without my father David’s knowledge, he attacked and slew with the sword two men more righteous and better than himself, Abner son of Ner, commander of the Israelite army, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of Judah’s army.

³³Their blood shall be avenged on Joab and his descendants forever; but David and his descendants, his family and throne shall enjoy peace from Yahweh forever.”

³⁴Then Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, went up, struck Joab down and killed him. He was buried in his own house in the desert.³⁵The king put Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, over the army in place of Joab; and Zadok the priest, in place of Abiathar.

³⁶Then the king sent for Shimei and told him, “Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and stay there, and do not leave the place to go anywhere.³⁷On the day you leave and cross the brook Kidron, you shall surely die and you shall be responsible for your own death.”³⁸Shimei answered the king, “What you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has commanded.” So Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for many days.

³⁹Three years later, two of Shimei’s slaves ran away to Achish, son of Maa-cha, king of Gath. When it was reported to Shimei that his slaves were in Gath,⁴⁰he saddled an ass and went to Achish in Gath in search of his slaves.⁴¹When Solomon was informed that Shimei had left Jerusalem for Gath and returned,⁴²the king sent for Shimei and said to him, “Did I not make you swear by Yahweh and warned you severely that, on the day you left to go anywhere you would surely die? And you answered me: ‘What you say is good; I shall obey!’⁴³Why then did you not keep your oath to Yahweh and obey the command I gave you?”⁴⁴The king told Shimei, “Remember the evil you did to David my father. Now Yahweh will repay you for what you did.⁴⁵But king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall stand firm before Yahweh forever.”⁴⁶Then the king commanded Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, who went out and struck Shimei and killed him.

In this manner, Solomon firmly established his reign.

2S 3:29;
Mt
27:24;
Ezk 18

2S
15:24;
1S
22:20

2S 5:7 **3** • ¹Solomon entered into a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt. He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own palace, Yahweh's house and the wall around Jerusalem. ²Meantime, the people were sacrificing at the high places because the house for the Name of Yahweh had not yet been built.

2K 18:4 ³This is why Solomon also sacrificed and burnt incense at the high place, although he loved Yahweh and followed the commands of David his father.

Solomon's dream

1:3-12 • ⁴The king used to sacrifice at Gibeon, the great high place; on the altar there he had offered a thousand burnt offerings. ⁵It was in Gibeon, during the night, that Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what you want me to give you."

⁶Solomon answered, "You have shown your servant David my father a great and steadfast love because he served you faithfully and was righteous and sincere towards you. You have given him proof of your steadfast love in making a son of his sit on his throne this day. ⁷And now, O Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my

father, although I am but a young boy who does not know how to undertake anything. ⁸Meantime, your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen—a people so great that they can neither be numbered nor counted. Dt:7:7

⁹Give me, therefore, an understanding mind in governing your people that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this multitude of people of yours?" Wis 8:10; Pro 2:6

¹⁰Yahweh was pleased that Solomon had made this request. ¹¹And he told him, "Because you have requested this rather than long life or wealth or even vengeance on your enemies; indeed, because you have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I shall grant you your request. I now give you a wise and discerning mind such as no one has had before you nor anyone after you shall ever have. 2K 18:5; 23:25; Ecl 1:16; Sir 7:14

¹³"I will also give you what you have not asked for, both wealth and fame; and no king shall be your equal during your lifetime. ¹⁴Moreover, if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commands, as your Dt:5:33

- **3.1** The book shows Solomon in three activities which made a king famous:
 - his wisdom, Chapters 3–5;
 - his constructions, Chapters 6–8;
 - his enterprises, Chapters 9–10.

In Chapter 11, the story concludes with God's judgment on the kingdom: divisions and reversals are underway.

We already know that the daughter of Pharaoh was among Solomon's wives: proof of the fame which the small country of Israel had in those years, since the daughters of pharaohs were not given in marriage to just anyone.

It was said that he went to worship in the Sanctuaries called high places. This was to be prohibited later when the temple of Jerusalem would be the only one acceptable to Yahweh. For the moment, there is no such rule, and Solomon goes to Gibeon where there is a very ancient Sanctuary. He himself sacrifices the victims—an act which, before long, will be the privilege only of the priests of Levi's tribe.

- **4.** Solomon's "dream" is very famous. Perhaps this dream is only a parable by which the author of the book describes Solomon's disposition when he began his reign.

Ask what you want (v. 5). This is God's offer to the young Solomon, his beloved one. It is God's offer to any young person who is faced with responsibilities for the first time. Life will not be a destiny imposed upon him or her; rather, one way or another, God will give people what they desire. What do you seek? (see Jn 1:38).

You have shown your servant David my father a great and steadfast love (v. 6). The young king does not start from scratch. He owes everything he has to his ancestors, and everything he has from them came from God. Solomon knows that Yahweh committed himself to David forever: "I shall never reject your children."

Give me an understanding mind in governing your people (v. 9). Solomon is concerned about

father David did, I shall give you long life.”

¹⁵Solomon awoke and knew that this was a dream. So he went to Jerusalem and, standing before the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, he offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings, and gave a feast for all his servants.

The judgment of Solomon

• ¹⁶Then two harlots came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷One of the two women said, “Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was there with me. ¹⁸Three days after my child was born, this woman also gave birth. We were alone, and there was no one in the house but the two of us. ¹⁹Then this woman’s son died during the night because she lay on him. ²⁰So during the night, she got up, took my son from my side while I slept, laid it beside her and her dead son beside me. ²¹When I got up in the morning to nurse my child, I saw it was dead. But when I looked at it closely in the morning, I saw that it was not my child.”

²²The other woman said, “No, the living child is mine; the dead child is yours.” To this, the first replied, “Not so, the dead child is yours; the living child is mine.” And they quarreled this way in the king’s presence.

²³Then the king said, “One says: ‘This is my son who is alive; your son is dead’; the other says: ‘That is not so, your son is dead; my son is the live one’.” ²⁴And the king said, “Bring me a sword.” When they brought the king a sword, ²⁵he gave this order, “Divide the child in two and give half to one, half to the other.” ²⁶Then the woman whose son was alive said to the king out of pity for her son, “Oh, my lord, give her the living child but spare its life.” The other woman, however, said, “It shall be neither mine nor yours. Divide it!”

²⁷Then the king spoke, “Give the living child to the first woman and spare its life. She is its mother.” ²⁸When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had given, they revered him, seeing that God’s wisdom was in him to render justice.

Solomon’s grandeur

4 ¹King Solomon was king over all Israel 25 8:16 ²and had the following for his high officials: Azariah, son of Zadok, was the priest; ³Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha, were secretaries; Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was recorder; ⁴Benaiah, son of Jehoia-da, was general of the army; Zadok and Abiathar were priests; ⁵Azariah, son of Nathan, was head of the officers; Zabud, son of Nathan, was priest and the king’s personal adviser; ⁶Abishar was in charge of the palace; and Adoniram, son of Abda was in charge of forced labor.

carrying out his responsibilities and does not want the people to be robbed of their expectations.

Nevertheless, Solomon has in mind other forms of “wisdom” that were appreciated in those days:

- to prepare for himself a long and quiet life, not to have problems or troubles, and to be spared the sacrifices required by a noble life;
- wealth, enjoyment of life, “to become comfortable”;
- the death of his enemies, i.e., strength that leads to victory, satisfaction of one’s personal pride.

I now give you a wise and discerning mind: I will also give you what you have not asked for (v. 12-13). This is the same teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:33.

- 16. Here, the well-known judgment of Solomon gives evidence to the wisdom he received for the good of his people.

Let us look closer into Solomon’s conduct. He could have dismissed the two women, saying to himself, “These people are not interesting. Let them settle their own quarrel.” Solomon did not regard their condition as prostitutes, but sought a mother among them. So he invented a solution which was not provided for by law.

His action shows that justice cannot be rendered through mere juridical texts. Those with responsibility must look at the person with the same understanding with which God probes the depth of everyone’s heart.

⁷Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel who provided food for the king and his household; each one of them making provisions for one month during the year. ⁸These were their names: Benhur, in the hill country of Ephraim; ⁹Bendeker, in Makaz; Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elonbeth-hanan; ¹⁰Benhesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hephher); ¹¹Ben-abinadab, in all of Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, daughter of Solomon, for his wife); ¹²Baana, son of Ahilud, in Taanach; Megiddo and all of Beth-shean beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abelmeholah, as far as Jokmeam and beyond; ¹³Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair, son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, as also the region of Argob in Bashan, sixty big towns, walled and barred with brazen bars); ¹⁴Ahinadab, son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; ¹⁵Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath, daughter of Solomon, for his wife); ¹⁶Baana, son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; ¹⁷Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah, in Issachar; ¹⁸Shimei, son of Ela, in Benjamin; ¹⁹Geber, son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan. And there was also an attendant in the land of Judah.

²⁰The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore, eating and drinking, and making merry. ²¹Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms, from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, and on to the frontiers of Egypt. All these paid tribute and served Solomon during his lifetime.

²²Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour, sixty cors of meal, ²³ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed cattle, a hundred sheep, besides harts, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl. ²⁴He ruled over all the region west of the Euphrates, from Tipshah to Gaza and over all its kings, and he had peace on all frontiers. ²⁵Judah and Israel lived in security, from Dan to Beersheba, and everyone was safe

under his vine and under his fig tree, for as long as Solomon lived.

²⁶Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots and twelve thousand horsemen.

²⁷All these governors supplied provisions for king Solomon and for all his guests at table, each one providing during his assigned month, seeing that nothing was lacking. ²⁸They also brought barley and straw for the horses and swift studs wherever the king stayed, each one doing this during his appointed month.

²⁹God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sand on the shore, ³⁰so that his wisdom surpassed that of all the people of the east and of the Egyptians. ³¹He was wiser than any man; wiser than Ethan, the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcot and Darda, sons of Mahol; and his fame spread among all the surrounding nations. ³²He composed three thousand proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³He took his examples from all the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of the beasts and birds, and reptiles and fish.

³⁴People from all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon; all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom sent messengers to listen to him.

5 • ¹Now, Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that he had been anointed king in place of his father. For David had always been Hiram's friend. ²Solomon then sent this message to Hiram, ³"You know that David my father could not build a temple for Yahweh his God because his enemies were at war with him until the time when Yahweh gave him victory over them. ⁴But now Yahweh my God has given me peace on all sides and there is no enemy or calamity that afflicts us. ⁵And so I intend to build a temple for Yahweh my God as Yahweh told David my father, "Your son, whom I will set upon your throne, shall build the

9:26;
25 5:11

• **5.1** Wise in his judgment, wise in administering his territory, wise in composing proverbs, sayings and psalms.

Solomon brings writers together in his court to gather and write down the traditions of Israel, which until this time were scattered or transmitted merely by word of mouth. This was the time

when the most ancient books of the Scriptures were written. (See Introduction to Genesis.)

From Solomon, or from his writers comes the nucleus of the Book of Proverbs. Later, whoever would write a book on Wisdom would attribute the work to Solomon: hence, in the Scriptures, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and Wisdom

10:26;
1:14;
9:25

house for my Name.’⁶ Now, therefore, give orders to have cedars of Lebanon cut for me. My servants will join yours and I will pay your servants the wages you set, for you know that none of us can cut timber like the Sidonians.”

Ed 1:16

⁷When Hiram heard the answer of Solomon, he was exceedingly glad and said, “Blessed be Yahweh this day who has given David a wise son to rule over this great people.”⁸ Then Hiram sent a messenger to Solomon with these words, “I have heard the message you sent me and I am ready to do whatever you want concerning the cedar and cypress timber.⁹ My servants shall have it sent down to the sea from Lebanon. I will make it into rafts and deliver them by sea to the place you choose. I will have the rafts broken up there and you can take the timber away. You, for your part, will provide food for my household.”¹⁰ So Hiram supplied Solomon with all the cedar and cypress timber that he wanted,¹¹ while Solomon gave Hiram every year twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty thousand cors of pure oil.¹² Yahweh gave wisdom to Solomon as he had promised him, and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon who bound themselves by a treaty.

1S 8:11

¹³King Solomon conscripted thirty thousand men from all Israel for forced labor.¹⁴ He sent them to Lebanon in relays of ten thousand a month, so that they would be

in Lebanon for a month and at home for two months. Adoniram was in charge of the draft of laborers.¹⁵ Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stone cutters in the hill country,¹⁶ in addition to three thousand three hundred overseers in charge of the people engaged in the work.¹⁷ By order of the king, they quarried large and expensive stones to give the temple a foundation of hewn stones.¹⁸ Solomon’s builders and Hiram’s builders, along with the Gebalites did the hewing and prepared both timber and stone to build the temple. 2:2-3

Solomon builds the temple

6 • ¹In the four hundred and eighth year after the Israelites left the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, Solomon began to build the temple of Yahweh.² The house which king Solomon built for Yahweh was sixty cubits long, twenty wide, and thirty high.³ The vestibule fronting the Sanctuary was twenty cubits long from side to side, the width of the temple, and ten cubits deep in front of the house.⁴ He made windows with recessed frames for the house. 3:1-7

are attributed to Solomon though they were in fact written later.

• **6.1** Solomon’s first construction is the house of Yahweh, that is, the temple of Jerusalem, which will be counted among the wonders of ancient times.

The tent of the Ark in the desert had been the center of worship as practiced by nomadic tribes. From now on, the temple, somewhat similar to the Canaanite temples, will be the center of an urban and sedentary culture. The sacrifices and feasts celebrated there are inspired by Canaanite cults. Israel takes a new step forward in its culture, and worship is also adapted to a new situation.

Not God, but people need the temple (see 2 S 7:7).

– There is the sincere desire to honor Yahweh by giving him the most beautiful house of all. Hence, the temple is always called in the Scriptures, the house of Yahweh.

– On the other hand, the people want to show their prosperity and they feel proud to have a temple that can compete with those of other people.

– There is also the desire to have something beautiful which can be a visible image of the Glory of the invisible God. For the Israelites, the temple of Jerusalem was the pedestal of the invisible temple where Yahweh is in his glory. He forbade them to represent him by images of creatures; but at least the house could be adorned with gold and precious wood.

– Finally there is the concern to have God present to protect his people. Though Yahweh says that he has no temple but the entire universe (8:27), he wants to be present in the midst of his people (Dt 12:5). In Jerusalem, Yahweh is “in his holy dwelling” (Jer 25:30), to defend his people (Is 31:5).

Like Solomon, the Christian kings and authorities of past centuries wanted to adorn their churches with gold and silver. They believed that the house of God ought to be much more beautiful than their own. Let us respect their piety; but today we understand that the city of God is governed by criteria different from those of most people. The splendor of temples does not always help us to discover God’s greatness.

⁵Solomon had a structure built adjoining the walls all around the house and enclosing both Sanctuary and inner Sanctuary. He also made lateral rooms all around. ⁶The lowest story was five cubits wide; the middle, six cubits wide; and the third, seven cubits wide. Around the exterior of the temple, he made offsets on the wall so that the supporting beams would not be inserted into walls of the temple.

⁷The house was built with stones prepared at the quarry so that no hammer, or ax, or any iron implement was heard in the temple during the construction.

⁸The entrance to the lowest story was on the right side of the house. A staircase led up to the middle story; and from the middle story, to the third. ⁹So, Solomon built the house and finished it, making the ceiling of the house from cedar beams and planks. ¹⁰Each story of the structure which he built surrounding the house was five cubits high joined to the house with cedar timber.

¹¹The word of Yahweh was directed to Solomon, ¹²"If you observe my statutes, obey my ordinances, keep all my commands and follow them, I will fulfill everything I said to David your father regarding this house. ¹³There I will be in the midst of the Israelites and not forsake my people Israel."

• ¹⁴So, Solomon built the house and finished it. ¹⁵He covered the interior walls of the temple with cedar boards; so that in the interior from the floor of the house to the rafters of the ceiling only wood could be seen. The floor also was covered with cypress boards. ¹⁶Solomon covered twenty cubits of the rear of the house with

cedar boards from floor to rafter to serve as an inner Sanctuary—the Most Holy Place. ¹⁷The front of the house, that is the Sanctuary, was forty cubits long. ¹⁸In all the interior of the house, the cedar was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers; all was of cedar and no stone was to be seen.

¹⁹The inner Sanctuary in the innermost part of the building had been destined to house the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh. ²⁰It was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high, overlaid with pure gold. He also made an altar of cedar. ²¹Solomon overlaid the interior of the house with pure gold. He closed the inner Sanctuary with golden chains and overlaid it with gold. ²²Solomon overlaid the entire house with gold. He also overlaid with gold the whole altar in the inner Sanctuary.

²³In the inner Sanctuary, Solomon made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴The length of the wings of each cherub was five cubits each, hence, ten cubits from tip to tip. ²⁵Both cherubim had the same measurement and the same form, ²⁶both being ten cubits high. ²⁷When the cherubim were put in the innermost part of the house their wings were so spread out that a wing of one touched one wall, while a wing of the other touched the other wall. Their other wings touched each other at the center of the house. ²⁸The cherubim were also overlaid with gold.

²⁹Solomon had all the surrounding walls of the house carved with figures of

• 14. The most sacred part of the temple, the most holy place, contained only the Ark with the stone tablets on which the Covenant of Yahweh with his people had been confirmed. Before this room was another one, the holy place, where the sacred candlesticks burned and incense was kindled. Here, too, were placed the twelve loaves that were offered every week. (See 1 S 21:5.) An entrance hall completed the house and all around were wide and spacious courtyards where the people stood praying.

This arrangement of several rooms leading into the most sacred place is a common thing in many ancient religions. It teaches that we can-

not approach God without the required preparation. Even though Yahweh remains in the midst of his people, his mystery continues to be inaccessible.

This arrangement reflects in some way what is innermost to humans, the true Temple of God. There is, in us, a very intimate place where God is present (see Jn 14:23). When Jesus asks us to "meet the Father in secret" (Mt 6:6), it means not only to pray in a place apart, but to seek within our own selves the Most Sacred Place where the Spirit communicates his way of feeling and of thinking.

cherubim, palm trees and open flowers both in the interior and exterior rooms.³⁰ He also had the floor of the house, in both the interior and exterior rooms, overlaid with gold.

³¹Solomon had doors made of olive wood for the entrance to the inner Sanctuary of which the lintel and doorposts formed the fifth part. ³²He covered the two olive wood doors with carvings of cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. He then overlaid them with gold and spread gold on the cherubim and the palm trees.

³³He did the same for the olive wood doorposts at the entrance to the Sanctuary, which formed the fourth part of the door. ³⁴Both the right and left sides of the door had two folding panels of cypress wood. ³⁵He had cherubim, palm trees and open flowers carved on them and overlaid the carvings with gold evenly applied.

³⁶As for the interior court, Solomon had it built with three courses of hewn stone and one course of cedar beams.

³⁷In the month of Ziv of the fourth year, the foundation of Yahweh's house was laid. ³⁸In the month of Bul, the eighth month of the eleventh year, the House was finished, complete and according to all specifications. It took Solomon seven years to build it.

The palace and the temple

7 • ¹Solomon took thirteen years to build his own palace. ²He built the house of the Forest of Lebanon which measured one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. It was built on three rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars. ³It had a cedar ceiling, above the beams that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. ⁴There were three window frames at either end, each window

corresponding to another opposite it. ⁵All the doorways and windows had square frames and each window corresponded to the one opposite it.

⁶The Hall of Pillars measured fifty cubits long and thirty cubits wide. It had a porch in front, with pillars and a canopy over them. ⁷The Hall of the Throne where Solomon was to pronounce judgment, that is, the Hall of Judgment, was finished with cedar from floor to rafters.

⁸His own house, where he was to live, and which was in the other court behind the hall, was built in like manner. Solomon also made a house similar to this for Pharaoh's daughter whom he had taken in marriage.

⁹All these were made of costly stones, hewn according to measure, sawn on their inner and outer faces even from the foundation to the coping, and from the court of Yahweh's house to the big court.

¹⁰The foundation was of huge, costly stones of eighty and ten cubits. ¹¹Above were costly stones, hewn according to measure, and cedar wood. ¹²The great court was surrounded by a wall of hewn stones and a course of cedar beams, like the interior court of Yahweh's house and its vestibule.

¹³King Solomon sent for and brought from Tyre, Hiram, ¹⁴who was the son of a widow of Naphtali's tribe. His father was from Tyre and an artisan in bronze-work, and he himself was very knowledgeable and skilled in all kinds of bronze-work. Hiram came and did all the work that Solomon asked of him.

¹⁵He cast two brazen pillars, both of which measured eighteen cubits high and had a circumference of twelve cubits. Both were hollow and measured four fingers in thickness. ¹⁶He also made two capitals of

• **7.1** Solomon will build his palace on the mountain of the Temple beside the house of God. This transfer of the royal residence from the lower city to the mountain of the Temple might seem to be without interest to us. But hidden behind this is a new concept of the power that Solomon brings to Israel. David his father, this "king after God's heart," had built his palace in the midst of his people (2 S 5:9) and when he had raised an altar to Yahweh, he built it on the hill that dominated the town in the north. Solomon abandoned his father's palace and built his sumptuous residence on this hill beside the temple. It is a significant gesture. Henceforth God

and the king will reside on the holy mountain, and the people below.

Samuel had firmly warned Saul, the first king, that the demands of the law were valid for both king and people (2 S 12:14-15). Solomon turns a deaf ear; like so many princes and dictators, he intends to give his power absolute authority equal to that of God. He distances himself from the people and installs himself beside God. This deviation from the meaning of power would be criticized by the prophets (Jer 22:13-19), and Jesus will show by his own example that power lies in service (Mk 10:41-45).

molten bronze to set on the tops of the pillars, both measuring five cubits high. ¹⁷He also made two pieces of network with a chainlike mesh for each of the capitals on top of the pillars. ¹⁸Likewise, he made pomegranates arranged in two rows encircling each piece of network to cover each capital on top of the pillars. ¹⁹The capitals on top of the pillars in the vestibule had a lotus design measuring four cubits. ²⁰They were on the two pillars above the nodes and beside the network, encircled by two hundred pomegranates arranged in two rows.

• ²¹Hiram set up the pillars at the vestibule of the temple; one to the right called Yakin, and one to the left called Boaz. ²²In this way the work on the pillars was completed.

4:2-5

²³Hiram then cast the great round bowl called the “Sea,” measuring ten cubits from one brim to the opposite; it was five cubits high and had a circumference of thirty cubits. ²⁴Under its brim, it was encircled with gourds, ten for each cubit, arranged in two rows and cast along with the Sea. ²⁵This rested on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east, with their haunches towards the center. ²⁶It was a handbreadth in thickness, its brim resembling a cup or a lily flower, and had a capacity of two thousand baths.

²⁷Hiram also made ten brazen stands, each measuring four cubits long, four cubits wide and three cubits high; ²⁸and this was how the stands were constructed: they had framed panels ²⁹on which were lions, oxen and cherubim. On the frames above and below the lions and oxen were wreaths in relief. ³⁰Each stand had four brazen wheels and axles; its four feet had shoulderings under the basin. ³¹Its mouth measured one and a half cubits from where the shoulderings met the top; its mouth was round like a rest for a vessel; and on the mouth there were engravings, too. The crosspieces, however, were rectangular, not round. ³²The four wheels were below the panels; their axles being one piece with the stands. Each wheel was a cubit and a half high. ³³The wheels were made like

chariot wheels; their axles, rims, spokes and hubs were all of cast metal.

The four legs of each stand had cast braces supporting a basin and had wreaths on each side. ³⁴These four braces, extending to the corners of each stand, were of one piece with the stand.

³⁵On top of the stand was a round band half a cubit high, with supports and panels which were of one piece with the stand. This was topped by a crown one cubit high within which was a rounded opening, the way a pedestal is made, a cubit and a half deep. Its opening had carvings and its panels were square and not round. ³⁶On the surface of its supports, as also on its panels, and wherever there was space, were carvings of cherubim, lions and palm trees, with wreaths all around. ³⁷This was how the ten stands were made—all of them with the same cast, same measurement, and same form.

³⁸Hiram also made ten brazen basins, ^{4:6; 30:17} each holding forty baths and measuring four cubits. There was a basin for each of the ten stands. ³⁹He placed five of the stands on the south side of the house, and five on the north side. The Sea he placed at the southeast corner of the temple.

⁴⁰Hiram also made the bowls, shovels ^{4:11-18; 27:3} and basins, and thereby finished all the work that he had undertaken for king Solomon on Yahweh’s house. ⁴¹Hence, two pillars, two bowls on the capitals at the top of the pillars, ⁴²four hundred pomegranates for two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network to cover the two bowls of the capitals at the top of the pillars, ⁴³ten stands, ten basins on the stands, ⁴⁴the Sea, and twelve oxen underneath the Sea.

⁴⁵Now the bowls, shovels and basins—all these vessels which Hiram made in Yahweh’s house for king Solomon—were of burnished bronze. ⁴⁶The king had them cast in the plain of Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan. ⁴⁷Solomon left all the vessels unweighed since there were so many of them. And so the weight of the bronze was not known.

⁴⁸So Solomon made all the vessels that ^{4:7-8; 25:23} were in Yahweh’s house: the golden altar,

• 21. Yakin means: he has established. Boaz means: with strength. This refers at the same time to the temple and to the dynasty of David.

God however will someday cast down all this: everything he has given must someday give way to something better.

the golden table for the bread of Presence, ⁴⁹the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left in front of the inner Sanctuary; the flowers, lamps and tongs of gold; ⁵⁰the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans of pure gold; and the golden hinges for both the doors of the innermost part of the house, the Most Holy Place, and the doors of the Sanctuary of the house.

⁵¹When all the work that king Solomon did on Yahweh's house was completed, he brought in the things which David his father had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and the vessels—and stored them in the treasuries of Yahweh's house.

Dedication of the Temple

8 ¹Then Solomon assembled before him in Jerusalem the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, as well as the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites, to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh from the city of David, which is Zion.

²All the Israelites assembled near king Solomon in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month. ³When all the elders of Israel arrived, the priests carried the Ark of Yahweh ⁴and brought it up together with the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the tent. After the priests and Levites had brought them up, ⁵king Solomon with the entire congregation of Israel that had assembled before him and were with him before the Ark, sacrificed so many sheep and oxen that they could neither be counted nor numbered. ⁶Then the priests laid the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh in

its place in the inner Sanctuary of the house—the Most Holy Place—underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁷The cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the ark, providing a covering above the Ark and its poles.

⁸The poles were so long that their ends were seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner Sanctuary but not from the outside; and they remain there to this day. ⁹There was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses placed there at Horeb, where Yahweh made a Covenant with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, such a cloud filled Yahweh's house ¹¹that the priests could not continue to minister. Indeed, the glory of Yahweh filled his house.

¹²Then Solomon said, "Yahweh has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. ¹³So the house I have built you will be your house, a place for you to dwell in forever."

¹⁴The king turned and blessed the entire assembly of Israel, as they stood, ¹⁵saying, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled by his hand what he promised personally to David my father when he said, ¹⁶'Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city in all the tribes of Israel in which to build a resting place for my Name, but now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, as I chose David to be the king of my people Israel.' ¹⁷Now David my father wanted to build a house for the Name of Yahweh, the

• **8.2** On the day of the temple's inauguration, God makes his presence felt by means of the cloud. In Exodus, this was the visible sign of Yahweh's presence which protected the Israelites (Ex 14:19 and 40:34). Later on, the Israelites continued trusting in this presence of God accompanying them (Jer 7) from Jerusalem, wherever they were.

In the course of time, many indecent things occurred in the courtyards of the temple; they even built up altars to idols and practiced sacred prostitution according to pagan customs. (See 2

K 23:4-7.) Yet it is not said that Yahweh abandoned his Sanctuary where he remained out of fidelity to his Covenant.

It was only in the last years of the Kingdom that the prophet Ezekiel had a vision where the cloud left the temple: this meant that Yahweh would now live among his faithful ones exiled in Babylon (Ezk 9:3).

Much later, the apostle John will see this cloud in the heavenly temple (Rev 15:8) after having seen it over the person of Jesus during his transfiguration.

God of Israel; ¹⁸but Yahweh told David my father, 'You meant well to build a house for my Name. ¹⁹Nevertheless, not you but your son who shall be born to you shall build this house for my Name.'

²⁰Yahweh has fulfilled his promise, for I have succeeded David my father and am sitting on the throne of Israel; and, as Yahweh promised, I have built this house for the Name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. ²¹There I have provided a place for the Ark with the Covenant which Yahweh made with our fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."

Solomon's prayer

6:12-20 • ²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel. He raised his hands towards heaven ²³and said, "O Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no God like you either in heaven or on earth! You keep your Covenant and show loving-kindness to your servants who walk before you wholeheartedly. ²⁴You have foretold this day to your servant David, my father, and this day you have fulfilled your promise. ²⁵Now, O Yahweh, God of Israel, keep this other promise

you made to David when you said, 'You shall always have someone from your family on the throne of Israel, provided that your sons are careful to serve me as you have done.' ²⁶Now, therefore, O God of Israel, confirm the promise you have given to David my father.

²⁷But will God really live among people on earth? If neither heavens nor the highest heavens can contain you, how much less can this house which I have built! ²⁸Yet, listen to the prayer and supplication of your servant, O Yahweh my God; hearken to the cries and pleas which your servant directs to you this day. ²⁹Watch over this house of which you have said, 'My Name shall rest there.' Hear the prayer of your servant in this place.

• ³⁰Listen to the supplication of your servant and your people Israel when they pray in this direction; listen from your dwelling place in heaven and, on listening, forgive.

³¹When people charged with a crime against their neighbor come and take their oath before your altar

• 22. *Yahweh has fulfilled his promise* (vv. 20 and 25).

David had received two promises from God. The first was that his son would build the temple; the second, that his descendants would keep the throne of Israel.

It is worth noting how God, being the invisible God and Creator of the Universe, wills to be, in some way, at a definite place, Jerusalem, and among a definite people, David's descendants. This visible center of divine presence is now the Church. The kingdom of God is universal, yet the Church relates with Christ through a well-defined series of people: the Bishops and the Pope.

This prayer of Solomon, composed probably by a prophet at the time of the kings, emphasizes both the importance and the relativity of the temple. It is there that the "Name" of God resides, there God will hear the prayers of his people (vv. 30-53). And yet this temple built by human hands "could not contain God in his Glory." The invisible heavens "cannot contain him," how much less this earthly dwelling.

This vision of the temple will be continually present in the teaching of the prophets. However great, the temple will never be a "magic charm" for Israel. It is the sign and reminder of the presence of the holy God.

Gradually, because of this, all theology of Israel will be centered on the temple. The earth and the heavens belong to God, but on this earth

one country belongs to him in a very special way—it is the Land of a Promise. In this Promised Land all the towns are his; but one among them is especially dear. And in this city, in the heart of this city is the holy mountain on which Yahweh's dwelling place has been built.

The temple is thus like the pivot around which the whole universe revolves. For this reason it is understandable that its destruction in 587 was for the faith of Israel an unimaginable trial: without the temple of Jerusalem, the universe lost its center.

If the universe had by degrees been centered around the temple, with the New Testament, on the contrary, it is the Christ—the New Temple—who becomes the point of departure for the expansion of salvation: "You will be my witnesses, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

• 30. After making a request for his descendants, Solomon makes a request for his people. Let us underline some points:

Vindicate the righteous (v. 32). The first petition is in line with a custom of that period. (See Num 5:11.) If the truth in some crime could not be established, the accused had to swear that he was innocent and that he would accept any punishment from God if he had perjured himself. The people were convinced that God would not leave the liar unpunished.

Is 66:1;
Acts
7:48;
17:24

Dr12:11;
12:5

6:21-31

in this temple, ³²then hear from heaven and do justice. Condemn the guilty and let his evildoing fall upon him, but vindicate the righteous and reward him according to his righteousness.

³³When your people Israel are defeated by the enemy for having sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and acknowledge their sins, praying and making supplications to you in this house; ³⁴then listen from heaven and forgive your people Israel. Bring them back to the land which you gave to their fathers.

³⁵When the heavens are shut and no rain falls because they have sinned against you, and they pray in this place, acknowledging and repenting of their sin because you have afflicted them, ³⁶then listen from heaven and forgive your servants, your people Israel, and teach them the way to live; and send rain on your land which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

³⁷If there is famine in the land, or pestilence such as blight or mildew, locust or caterpillar; if their enemy attacks them in any of their cities; if they suffer from any plague or sickness; ³⁸whatever be the prayer or supplication of anyone showing repentance and raising his hands in the direction of this house, ³⁹then listen from heaven, your dwelling place, and forgive. Do to each, whose heart you know, according to his conduct (for you alone know the hearts of all) ⁴⁰so that they may fear you as long as they live in the land which you gave our fathers.

No rain falls because they have sinned against you (v. 35). Prayer is for people who are sinners and who know themselves to be such. They fear God's punishment but believe that God forgives; they believe that God cannot be won over by prayers and ceremonies but by repentance.

So that they may fear you (v. 40). In the Scriptures, to fear God means oftentimes: to

⁴¹Likewise, when a foreigner who is not from your people Israel, comes from a far country because of your Name ⁴²(for they shall hear of your great Name, your mighty hand and outstretched arm), and prays in this house, ⁴³listen from the heavens, your dwelling place, and do for the foreigner whatever he asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your Name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and may know that your name rests on this house which I have built.

⁴⁴If your people go to war wherever you send them, and they pray to Yahweh in the direction of the city which you have chosen and the house which I have built for your Name, ⁴⁵then from heaven listen to their prayers and supplications and defend their cause.

⁴⁶If they sin against you (and there is no one who does not sin), and, in your anger, you deliver them to an enemy who takes them captive into enemy territory, whether near or far off; ⁴⁷and if, in the land where they have been carried captive, they sincerely repent and plead with you and say, 'We have sinned and have acted wrongly and wickedly'; ⁴⁸if they do repent with sincerity while in the land of their captors and pray to you, turning towards the land which you gave to their ancestors, the city which you have chosen, and the house which I have built for your Name; ⁴⁹then listen from heaven, your dwelling place, to their prayer and supplication and defend their cause. ⁵⁰Forgive your people who have sinned against you; forgive all their offenses, and make their captors have compassion on them. ⁵¹(For they are your people—your heritage which you brought out of Egypt from the heart of the iron furnace).

⁵²Open your eyes to the pleadings of

take him seriously and to respect him. But it is also true that at times we need to fear God and his punishments because his love is not yet strong enough in us to protect us against our weakness.

When a foreigner comes from a far country (v. 41). This prayer was written centuries later, when the missionary efforts of the Jews had brought many pagans to their faith.

Lev
26:14;
26:17

Dt 11:17

Dt
28:21;
28:28

6:32-39

Dt 28:63

Dt 4:20

6:40

your servant and to those of your people Israel, and listen to them whenever they call on you. ⁵³For you took them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Yahweh God.”

⁵⁴When Solomon finished offering all this prayer and entreaty to Yahweh, he rose from before the altar of Yahweh where he had knelt with hands raised towards heaven, and, ⁵⁵standing, blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, ⁵⁶“Blessed be Yahweh who has given rest to his people Israel as he promised; for not one of his promises, given to Moses his servant, has been broken. ⁵⁷May Yahweh our God be with us as he was with our fathers. May he not leave or forsake us; ⁵⁸may he incline our hearts towards him and make us walk in all his ways, keeping his commands, his statutes and regulations which he commanded our fathers. ⁵⁹Let my prayer to Yahweh be with our God day and night. May he defend my cause and the cause of his people Israel in their daily life; ⁶⁰in this way all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh is God and there is no other. ⁶¹As for you, let your heart be wholly true to Yahweh our God, following his laws and keeping his commands as at this time.”

⁶²Then the king and all the Israelites with him offered sacrifices before Yahweh. ⁶³Solomon offered twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep as peace offerings to Yahweh. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated Yahweh’s house. ⁶⁴That same day, the king consecrated the middle of the court in front of Yahweh’s house, for it was there that he offered the burnt offerings, the cereal offerings and the fat of the peace offerings since the bronze altar that was before Yahweh was too small to receive the burnt offering, the cereal offering and the fat of the peace offerings.

⁶⁵So at this time Solomon, together with a large assembly of Israelites that gathered from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, celebrated the festival before Yahweh for seven days. ⁶⁶On the eighth day, Solomon dismissed the people.

After bidding farewell to the king, they went home rejoicing and happy because of all the kindness that Yahweh had shown to his servant David and to his people Israel.

Solomon’s activities

9 ¹After Solomon had finished building Yahweh’s house, the royal palace, and everything he wanted to build, ²Yahweh appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³Yahweh said to him, “I have heard the prayer and supplication you made before me. I have consecrated this house you have built, that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there forever. ⁴As for you, if you will live in my presence, the way your father David did, with sincerity and uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you and keeping my decrees and laws, ⁵I will affirm your kingship in Israel forever, as I promised your father David when I said, ‘You shall always have someone from your family on the throne of Israel.’

⁶But if you or your children refuse to follow me, and disobey my commands and laws which I have set before you; if they serve and worship other gods, ⁷then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and I will remove from my sight this house I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ⁸This house will be reduced to a heap of stones; and everyone passing by will be astonished and jeer: ‘Why has Yahweh done such a thing to this land and to this house?’ ⁹Then people will answer: ‘Because they abandoned Yahweh their God who brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt, and they followed other gods, worshiping and serving them. That is why Yahweh has brought all this evil on them.’”

¹⁰During these twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses—Yahweh’s house and the royal house—¹¹Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with as much cedar, cypress, timber and gold as he wanted. Then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. ¹²But when Hiram left Tyre to visit the cities which Solomon had given him, he was displeased ¹³and said, “What kind of cities have you given me, my brother?” And that is why, to this day, they are called the land of Cabul. ¹⁴Hiram, however, had sent the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold.

¹⁵This is the account of the forced labor imposed by king Solomon for the building of Yahweh’s house and his own palace,

Dt 7:6

Dt 12:10

Is 45:6

7:4-10

Num 7:1;
Ezra
6:17

7:11-21

Dt 12:5

Dt 6:2

Dt 28:15;
Jer 19:8;
22:9

8:1-6

the Millo as well as the wall of Jerusalem; the cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. ¹⁶(Pharaoh king of Egypt had captured and burned Gezer, putting to death the Canaanites who dwell there. Then he had given the city as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.) ¹⁷So Solomon rebuilt Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, ¹⁸Baalath and Tamar in the desert, in the land of Judah, ¹⁹all the store-cities that Solomon had, the cities for his chariots and those for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon wanted to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion.

^{8:7-10} ²⁰On all the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—²¹their descendants who were left in the land and whom the Israelites were unable to completely destroy—on all of these Solomon imposed forced labor and it remains so to this day. ²²Of the people of Israel, however, Solomon made no slaves. They were the soldiers, his officials, his commanders, his captains, his chariot commanders and horsemen. ²³The overseers of Solomon's work, in charge of those who were working, were five hundred and fifty.

^{8:11} ²⁴When Pharaoh's daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her, he began building the Millo.

^{7:12-16} ²⁵After Solomon had finished the house, he came three times a year to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built to Yahweh, burning incense before Yahweh. ^{8:17-18} ²⁶King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber,

near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷Hiram sent his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, to serve in the fleet, together with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸They sailed for Ophir and brought back to king Solomon gold amounting to four hundred and twenty talents.

The queen of Sheba visits Solomon

10 ^{9:1-12; Mt 12:42} ¹The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame, and came to test him with difficult questions. ²She arrived in Jerusalem with a vast retinue and with camels loaded with spices and an abundance of gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she told him all that she had on her mind ³and Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing that the king could not explain to her. ⁴And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the palace he had built, ⁵the food on his table, the residence of his officials, the attendance of his servants and their clothing, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings which he offered at Yahweh's house, it left her breathless.

⁶Then she said to the king, "All that I heard in my own land concerning you and your wisdom was true. ⁷But I did not believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. And what

• **10.1** Solomon undertakes business. He acquires a fleet of Tarshish ships for long journeys and he sends them to get gold and perfume from Africa. He sells Egyptian chariots to the Hittites in the north, and to the Egyptians, Hittite horses. The fame of his wealth and his wisdom reaches the queen of Sheba in southern Arabia.

In reality, Israel was very small compared to the two big empires of Egypt and Babylon. It happened that during the period of David and Solomon, these empires were peaceful and were practically dormant. This was enough to allow the Israelites to think of themselves as the first country in the world, and they saw in Solomon the most magnificent king of all times.

The queen of Sheba came to test him with difficult questions (v. 1). Scripture does not give

much importance to the commercial aspect of this visit which will only appear toward the end in the barter mentioned in verses 10 and 13.

Solomon's meeting with the queen of Sheba becomes a historical scene:

– The wise Solomon and his people discover the wealth and products of other countries. "So the world is bigger than we thought!" These contacts help the Israelites gain a broader religious vision. Yahweh is not only the God of a small nation, but is also sovereign over the wide universe.

– The queen of Sheba is a wealthy woman, but she is not satisfied. There is no mention of her husband. She is attracted by the divine wisdom manifested in the king, "the Beloved of Yahweh" (2 S 12:29). Jesus will later recall this visit in Matthew 12:42.

did I see! I was told only half the story; for your wisdom and wealth surpass the report I heard.

⁸Fortunate are your wives! Fortunate are your servants who are ever in your presence and hear your wisdom! ⁹Blessed be Yahweh your God, who has looked kindly on you and has put you on the throne of Israel! Because of Yahweh's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king so that you may dispense justice and righteousness."

¹⁰Then she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in abundance, and precious stones. Such an abundance of spices as those which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon was never again seen.

¹¹Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, also brought from Ophir a huge amount of almug wood and precious stones. ¹²The king used the almug wood to make supports for Yahweh's house and the royal palace, and also to make lyres and harps for the singers. Such almug wood has never again been brought or seen to the present day.

¹³King Solomon, in turn, gave the queen of Sheba all that she desired and all that he in his generosity wanted to give her. Then she went back to her own land together with her servants.

9:13-24

¹⁴Now the weight of gold that Solomon received in one year was six hundred and sixty-six gold talents, ¹⁵not counting that brought by traders, merchants, the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land. ¹⁶King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold, six hundred shek-

els of gold going into each shield. ¹⁷And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold with three minas of gold in each shield. And the king put them in the house of the Forest of Lebanon. ¹⁸The king also made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold. ¹⁹The throne had six steps, a rounded back, and on each side of the seat were arm rests with two lions standing beside the arm rests. ²⁰The six steps had twelve lions, one on each end of a step. Nothing like this was ever made in any kingdom. ²¹All of king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold and none of silver, for silver was not considered of much value in the days of Solomon.

²²The king had a fleet of Tarshish ships at sea with Hiram's fleet, and once every three years the fleet of Tarshish ships would bring gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks.

22:49;
Ezk
27:12

• ²³King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom. ²⁴And the whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom which God had put into his mind. ²⁵Everyone who came brought a present: articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses and mules, so much every year.

²⁶Solomon gathered together chariots and horses—fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁷The king made silver as common as stone in Jerusalem, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore in the lowland. ²⁸Solomon acquired his horses from Egypt and from Cilicia. The king's traders

1:14-17;
D1:17:16

• 23. For a while, the Israelites marveled at Solomon's wealth and the numerous chariots and horses that made up his army. Some centuries later, they saw how little this power had benefited them and how much it had cost the country: the politics of fame and of grandiose works demanded the imposition of forced labor on the people. This was one of the reasons why the kingdom split at the death of Solomon. This is why, afterward, they ceased to recall with

pride the splendor of his kingdom and showed greater appreciation for justice.

The believer who truly desires the prosperity of his nation, cannot be dazzled by illusions of grandeur. The church will always denounce the sin involved in military expenses or in expenses solely to acquire fame. Everyone knows the world's military budget far exceeds what would suffice to industrialize all countries.

purchased them from Cilicia at the prevailing price. ²⁹A chariot could be imported from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They were exported in the same way to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

Solomon turns away from Yahweh

11 • ¹King Solomon loved many foreign women besides the daughter of Pharaoh. There were Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian and Hittite women ²from nations about which Yahweh had commanded the Israelites, “You shall not marry them; nor shall they marry you, lest they win over your heart to their gods.” Solomon, however, imitated these peoples because of his love. ³He had seven hundred wives of royal birth, and three hundred concubines, and they won his heart.

⁴In Solomon’s old age, his wives led him astray to serve other gods and, unlike his father David, his heart was no longer wholly given to Yahweh his God. ⁵For he served Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites. ⁶He did what displeased Yahweh and, unlike his father David, was unfaithful to him. ⁷Solomon even built a high place for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, on the mountain east of Jerusalem and also for Molech, the idol of the

Ammonites. ⁸He did the same for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

⁹Yahweh became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, the God of Israel. ¹⁰Yahweh appeared to him twice and commanded him not to follow other gods. But he did not obey Yahweh’s command. ¹¹Therefore, Yahweh said to Solomon, “Since this has been your choice and you have kept neither my Covenant nor the statutes I commanded you, I will take the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. ¹²Nevertheless, I will not do this during your lifetime for the sake of your father David; I will take it from your son. ¹³But I will not take it all; I will reserve one tribe for your son for the sake of David my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen.”

Solomon’s enemies

¹⁴And Yahweh raised up an adversary against Solomon. This was Hadad, the Edomite of the royal house in Edom. ¹⁵Indeed, when David had defeated Edom, and Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, he slew every male in Edom. ¹⁶Joab and the Israelites remained in the place for six months until he had destroyed every male in Edom. ¹⁷However Hadad, then still only a boy, fled to Egypt together with some Edomites, his father’s servants. ¹⁸They left Midian for Paran; and, taking along with them some of the men

• **11.1** Scripture is not scandalized at Solomon’s having several wives. At that time, to have many wives was an indication of a man’s wealth. Scripture rebukes him for taking pagan wives. In this way, Solomon entered into an alliance with these people who did not know God, imitating them in their materialism.

Luxury corrupts wisdom. Solomon makes a show of his manliness, unaware of the fact that his wives are ordering him around. These foreign women arrive with their priests and their pagan cults that will draw Israel into idolatry and materialism.

The people thought that the king blessed by Yahweh had to be surrounded with luxury and

honors. Later the prophets would recall that power, wealth and luxury numb the heart of a ruler (Dt 17:14). All people in the course of history have had the same experience. Even in the Church, for centuries the faithful thought it fitting that their bishops and popes assume the appearance of nobles, and we are still paying the consequences of that error.

You have kept neither my Covenant nor the statutes (v. 11). Solomon’s real sin consists in directing his life and his nation without seeking God’s will. He lives like any other king and works out his own ambitions, thinking it is enough to ask Yahweh’s blessings.

from Paran, they went on to Egypt, to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house, promised him food and gave him land. ¹⁹Hadad pleased Pharaoh, who gave him as wife the sister of Queen Tahpenes, his own wife. ²⁰The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son, Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house, and who lived there, together with Pharaoh's sons.

²¹And so when Hadad heard in Egypt that David had slept with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was also dead, he said to Pharaoh, "Let me go back to my own country." ²²Pharaoh asked him, "What have I not done that you want to leave for your own country?" But he answered him, "Please, let me go." And he came back to his land. He ruled over Edom and hated Israel.

²³God raised up Rezon son of Eliada, another adversary, who had fled from his master Hadadezer king of Zobah. ²⁴Rezon gathered men around him and became the leader of a marauding band. After David fought them and killed some of them, they went to live in Damascus where they made Rezon king. ²⁵He was an adversary of Israel during Solomon's lifetime.

Ahijah foretells the division of the kingdom

- ²⁶ Jeroboam also rebelled against the king. He was the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah. His mother, Zeruah, had been left a widow. He was one of Solomon's officials. ²⁷This was the reason for his rebellion: Solomon was building the Millo and was closing up the breach of the city of David his father. ²⁸When he noticed that Jeroboam was a man of great personal

worth and an able worker, he put him in charge of all the forced labor of the tribes of Joseph.

²⁹Once, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh found him on the road. The two of them were alone in the open country ³⁰when Ahijah, who had a new garment on, clutched and tore it into twelve pieces. ³¹He then said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself for this is the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel:

'I am about to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hands ³²to give you ten tribes. Only one tribe shall be left to him for the sake of my servant David and Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. ³³For Solomon has forsaken me and worshiped Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Ammonites. Unlike his father David, he has not walked in my ways to do what is right before me and to keep my commandments and decisions.

³⁴Nevertheless, it is not from him that I will take the kingdom. I will let him reign during his lifetime for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who kept my commandments and statutes. ³⁵But I will take the kingship from his son's hand and make you king over ten tribes. ³⁶One tribe will be left for his son so that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my Name. ³⁷I will let you reign over

15:4;
2K 8:19;
2S
21:17

• ²⁶ Jeroboam also rebelled against the king. In the last years of Solomon, several of his opponents stir up rebellion. Now appears the man who will take most of the country from Solomon's son and definitively divide the people.

In the poem about the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), the division of the people was presented as the consequence of and punishment for arrogant politics. It will be the same for the Kingdom of Israel.

I am... to give you ten tribes (v. 32). Israel counts twelve tribes. In reality, one could speak of two. In the south, there is Judah with its

neighbor, Simeon, a very small group. In the north, there are the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, heading the other tribes of lesser importance. After David united them, Absalom, and others after him, stimulated the desire for autonomy in the north. Solomon's dictatorship, which weighed more heavily on the northern tribes, prepared for the separation.

The prophet Ahijah says that Yahweh will divide the kingdom to punish Solomon. This is a way of speaking. Everyone prepares his own punishment and the division comes directly from the errors and the sins of the king.

all you wish; you shall be king of Israel. ³⁸Now, if you obey all that I command you, follow me and do what is right in my eyes, if you keep my commandments and my statutes, as my servant David did, I will be with you and establish your family for a long time, as I did for David. I will entrust Israel to you. ³⁹In this way I will humble the family of David for a time.”

Ezk
37:22

⁴⁰Solomon wanted to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam took refuge in Egypt with Shishak king of Egypt, where he remained until the death of Solomon.

9:29-31

⁴¹Now the rest of the events of Solomon's reign, his deeds and his wisdom, are written in the book of the acts of Solomon. ⁴²Solomon reigned over all Israel in Jerusalem for forty years. ⁴³Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

The political schism

10

12 • ¹Rehoboam went to Shechem because all Israel had gathered there to make him king. ²When Jeroboam, son of Nebat, heard of this in Egypt, where he had fled from king Solomon and where he still remained,

he returned from Egypt. ³They called for him, and he came with all the assembly of Israel.

The people of Israel went to Rehoboam with this demand, ⁴“Your father made our yoke heavy. So now lighten the heavy yoke and the hard labor your father imposed on us and we will serve you.” ⁵Rehoboam answered them, “Leave now, but come back on the third day.” And so the people went their way.

⁶King Rehoboam sought advice from the elderly counselors who served his father Solomon while he was still alive, and he asked them, “How would you advise me to answer this people?” ⁷To this they replied, “If you attend to this people today, making yourself their servant, and speak to them with good words, they will serve you forever.” ⁸But Rehoboam disregarded the advice of the old counselors and asked the opinion of the greenhorns who had grown up with him and were in his service.

• **12.1** Soon after Solomon's death, what the prophet Ahijah announced comes true: the kingdom is divided. The author singles out the culpability and folly of Rehoboam. The king did not listen to the people (v. 15). Neither had Solomon listened to them, while he lived isolated in his splendor.

When the people of Israel separate, they lose the benefit of the promises that God made to David, and which he will not withdraw even from his guilty descendants. The kingdom of the north (or kingdom of Israel) will be given some great prophets: Elijah, Hosea. But there will be no stability in power, and many usurpers will become kings without their descendants being able to maintain their kingship. It would seem that God treats each of them according to his own merits.

On the contrary, during this time in Judea, the kings—descendants of David, good and bad—succeed each other without interruption during four centuries: their history is governed and dominated by God's promise. The letter to the Hebrews says that the events of the Old Testament prefigure what happens with Jesus and the Church (Heb 9). Here we have a picture of the divisions that have torn apart the unique church of Christ.

During the fifteenth century the Church was like an empire with more human interests than humble service of God. Its leaders, often urged by the desire to leave behind them an indestructible witness to their own greatness, crushed the faithful with taxes in order to finance the building of magnificent basilicas, rather than respond to the spiritual thirst of believers. These rebelled in the name of greater fidelity to the Gospel, and gave rise to Protestantism.

However, while recognizing all that is good with the protestants and evangelists, it is clear that after separation from the successors of the apostles, they have had to face continual divisions, always seeking a union they have been unable to find. The Catholic Church has known many crises for which she bears full responsibility, and yet it would seem that God has treated her according to his promises, and not according to her merits, in order to put her again on the right path. The Church must of course recognize these aspects of her structures and present practice far from the spirit of the Gospel, even as she knows she may count on the promise of Christ. The Church is the center, the place of communion, around which all must one day be reunited (see Ez 16:52-59; Ps 87).

⁹He asked them, "What do you say we should answer this people who tell me: 'Lighten the yoke which your father imposed on us?'" ¹⁰The greenhorns who had grown up with him answered, "Since these people said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you should now lighten it for us,' tell them this: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loin. ¹¹My father laid a heavy yoke on you, but I will make it heavier yet. My father chastised you with whips, but I will fix iron points to the lashes."

¹²On the third day, Jeroboam, together with the people, went back to Rehoboam just as the king said, for he had said to them, "Come back on the third day." ¹³Ignoring the advice given him by the elderly counselors, ¹⁴the king answered the people harshly in the way the greenhorns had advised him. He said, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will make it even heavier. My father chastised you with whips, but I will fix iron points to the lashes." ¹⁵The king did not listen to the people. It was, indeed, Yahweh who brought about this fateful event, fulfilling the word he had spoken to Jeroboam, son of Nebat, through Ahijah the Shilonite.

¹⁶All Israel realized that the king refused to listen to them, and they answered the same way, "What have we to do with David? Is the son of Jesse from our tribes? Let the son of David deal with his own; and you, people of Israel, go back to your homes!" And so the Israelites left for their homes. ¹⁷Only the Israelites who

dwelt in the cities of Judah let Rehoboam reign over them.

¹⁸Rehoboam sent Adoram, taskmaster of the forced labor, but the Israelites stoned him to death; and king Rehoboam had to mount his chariot and flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to the present time.

²⁰Once Jeroboam had returned and was with them at the assembly, having been called by them, they made him king of Israel. And so, with the exception of the tribe of Judah, no one followed the house of David.

²¹When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, ^{11:1-4} he called together all the people of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, numbering a hundred and eighty thousand select warriors, to fight against the people of Israel in a bid to restore the kingship of Rehoboam, son of Solomon. ²²But the word of God was directed to Shemaiah, the man of God, ²³"Give Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, and all the people of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, this message from Yahweh: ²⁴'You shall not go ^{14:30} up to fight against your kinsmen, the Israelites. Let everyone return to his home for I am the author of this.'" When they heard this word they went back home according to what Yahweh had ordered.

²⁵Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. Then, he set out to fortify Penuel.

The religious division

• ²⁶Jeroboam thought, "The kingdom could return to the house of David. ²⁷Should this people go up to offer sacrifices in Yahweh's house in Jerusalem, their heart would turn again to their master, Rehoboam king of Judah. They would kill me and go back to him."

• 26. The twelve tribes are united by the same religion, but Jeroboam realizes that his authority will be weak as long as the Israelites go up to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices there. He ensures political separation through a schism, that is, a religious separation. He has a calf made to represent Yahweh in spite of the

prohibition against making a representation of the invisible God and reducing him to the level of an animal.

In narrating the deeds of the kings of Israel in the north, Scripture constantly repeats: "They followed and committed the sin of Jeroboam." Thus Scriptures emphasized the need

²⁸And so the king sought advice and made two golden calves. Then he said to the people, "You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." ²⁹He put one of these in Bethel, the other in Dan. ³⁰This caused Israel to sin; the people went to Bethel and Dan to worship the calves.

³¹Jeroboam also built temples on high places, appointing priests who were not from the Levites. ³²Jeroboam also appointed a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in imitation of the feast in Judah, and he himself offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel; and sacrificed to the calves that he had made. There he placed priests for the high places he had made. ³³On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the month which he had arbitrarily chosen, he ordained a feast for the Israelites and went up to the altar to burn incense.

The story of Judah's man of God

13 ¹A man of God came out of Judah following a command of Yahweh; and he arrived at Bethel while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. ²The man shouted, cursing the altar, "O altar, altar, thus says Yahweh: 'There shall be born to the family of David a son by the name of Josiah. He shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you; and human bones shall be burned on you.'"

2K
23:15

³And at once the man gave a sign. He said, "This is the proof that Yahweh has spoken. The altar shall be torn down and the ashes on it shall be scattered."

⁴When the king heard the man of God shouting and cursing the altar of Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, "Arrest him!" ⁵Immediately the hand which he pointed out against the man dried up and he could not draw it back. The altar itself crumbled; and the ashes on it were scattered, according to the sign that had been given.

⁶And so the king said to the man of God, "Entreat the favor of Yahweh your God and pray for me so that my hand may be restored." The man of God entreated Yahweh and the king's hand was restored as it had been before.

1S 7:5;
Jer 37:3

⁷The king then said to the man of God, "Come home with me and refresh yourself. I will give you a reward." ⁸But the man of God answered the king, "Even if you give me half your house, I will not go in with you; nor will I eat or drink in this place, for this was commanded me by Yahweh. ⁹He precisely said to me: 'You shall neither eat bread nor drink water, nor return by the way you came.'" ¹⁰And the man did not return by the way he had come to Bethel, but he went another way.

¹¹Now there was an old prophet living in Bethel; and his sons came to tell him what the man of God had done on that day in Bethel, and everything he had said to the king. ¹²Their father then asked them, "Which way did he

to remain united to the center which God established in Jerusalem. It is not enough to think: "We serve the same God," "We serve in our own way."

Jeroboam is the model of other rulers who, much later, tried to establish national churches: in England, at the time of the Reformation; in France, after the Revolution; in China and socialist countries, after a communist revolution. Many Catholics were persecuted and died

for remaining faithful to the only church which ought to be catholic, or universal.

• **13.1** Obedience is worth more than sacrifice (1 S 15:22). Such was Yahweh's word when he renounced Saul in similar circumstances.

The present text highlights various aspects of true obedience which pleases God. The prophet himself should have remained firm, knowing that God does not change his orders.

go?” and they told him which way the man of God from Judah had taken. ¹³He then said to his sons, “Saddle the ass for me;” and they did so. ¹⁴He took off after the man of God whom he found sitting under an oak tree. He asked him, “Are you the man of God from Judah?” He answered, “Yes, I am.” ¹⁵He then said to him, “Come home with me and eat something.” ¹⁶But he replied, “I can’t go back with you or eat and drink with you in this place, ¹⁷for this was the command of Yahweh: ‘You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor shall you return by the way you came.’” ¹⁸But the old prophet from Bethel said to him: “I am also a prophet as you are; and an angel told me on behalf of Yahweh: ‘Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.’” ¹⁹The old prophet in fact, was lying. And so the man of God went back with him and ate and drank in his house.

²⁰As they sat at table, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who had brought him back. ²¹And he said in a loud voice to the man of God who came from Judah, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘You have disobeyed me and have not observed the command I gave you. ²²Instead, you have come back and eaten and drunk although I told you not to eat bread or drink water. Because of this, your body shall not be laid in the tomb of your ancestors.’”

²³After he had eaten and drunk, the old prophet who had brought him back saddled the ass for him and the prophet from Judah went away. ²⁴But a lion met him on the road and killed him. His body was thrown on the road with the lion beside it. ²⁵People who

passed by saw the body thrown on the road with the lion standing by; and they reported this in the city where the old prophet lived.

²⁶When the prophet heard of this, he said, “It is the man of God who disobeyed the word of Yahweh. Yahweh has delivered him to the lion which has torn and slain him just as Yahweh had told him.” ²⁷Then he said to his sons, “Saddle the ass for me.” ²⁸They saddled it and he went and found the body thrown on the road, with the ass and the lion standing beside it. ²⁹The lion had neither eaten the body nor torn the ass. And so the prophet took up the body of the man of God, laid it on the ass and brought it back to the city to mourn and to bury him. ³⁰He laid the body in his own grave and they mourned over him with the lament, “Alas, my brother!”

³¹After that, the old prophet said to his sons, “When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried and lay my bones beside his bones. ³²For everything he said at Yahweh’s command, cursing the altar in Bethel and all the Sanctuaries of the high places in the cities of Samaria, will be fulfilled.”

³³After this, however, Jeroboam ^{12:31} did not abstain from doing evil. Instead he made priests for the high places from among the people. He consecrated anyone who wanted to be a priest for the high places. ³⁴And this became the sin of the family of Jeroboam for which it was to be cut off and destroyed from the face of the earth.

Ahijah’s prophecy against Jeroboam

14 • ¹At that time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, fell ill. ²So the king

1S 28:8;
1K 11:29

• **14.1** Ahijah’s words announce the first coup d’état in the history of Israel. There will be many others and, each time, the relatives

and sons of the one overthrown will be killed. Following this episode is the history of the two kingdoms during their first fifty years.

told his wife. "Go, disguise yourself so that no one may recognize you as Jeroboam's wife. Go to Shiloh where you will find Ahijah the prophet who foretold that I would be king over this people. ^{1S 9:7} ³Take with you ten loaves, a few cakes, and a jar of honey. Enter his house and he will tell you what shall happen to the child."

⁴Jeroboam's wife did as she was told and left for Shiloh. She entered the house of Ahijah who was now so old that he could not see.

⁵But Yahweh had told Ahijah, "Jeroboam's wife is coming to consult you about her sick son, and this is what you must tell her. She will be coming in disguise." ⁶And so when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps, as she entered the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why have you disguised yourself? I have been told to give you unpleasant news. ⁷Go, therefore; bring Jeroboam this message of Yahweh, the God of Israel: ⁸I made you rise from the midst of the people and established you as the leader of Israel. I took the kingdom from David's family to give it to you. Yet you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with his whole heart, doing only what was pleasing to me. ⁹You have done worse than anyone before you. You have made me angry with your strange gods and the images you have made; and you have forsaken me.

^{21:2} ¹⁰Now, I shall bring disaster on the family of Jeroboam. I will cut off every male in Jeroboam's line, whether slave or freeman in Israel, and I will wipe out the descendants of Jeroboam just as they wipe out the dung till all is gone. ^{16:4} ¹¹He who dies in the city will be devoured by dogs; he who dies in the field, by the birds of the sky. So Yah-

weh has spoken!' ¹²Leave now, and go back home! As soon as you enter the city, the child will die. ¹³All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He alone of Jeroboam's line will be buried, for in him alone has Yahweh, the God of Israel, found something good. ¹⁴Yahweh himself will raise up for himself a king of Israel; it is he who will destroy Jeroboam's family.

¹⁵Yahweh will strike Israel like a reed tossed about in the water; and root them out from this good land which he gave to their ancestors. He will scatter them beyond the river Euphrates because they made him angry with the sacred poles they set up. ¹⁶Yahweh will scatter Israel because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and by which he dragged Israel into sin."

¹⁷So Jeroboam's wife went home. On her arrival at Tirzah, and as soon as she crossed the threshold of her house, the child died. ¹⁸The child was buried and all Israel mourned over him just as Yahweh had prophesied through his servant the prophet Ahijah.

Rehoboam, king of Judah

¹⁹The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, his achievements in war and his reign, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁰Jeroboam reigned for twenty-two years. When he rested with his fathers, his son Nadab succeeded him as king.

²¹As for Rehoboam, son of Solomon, he was forty-one when he began to reign over Judah. He reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which Yahweh chose out of all the tribes of Israel to put his Name there. His mother Naamah was an Ammonite. ^{12:13-14}

²²The people of Judah did what displeased Yahweh and, by their sins, angered him even more than their ancestors had done. ²³They also built for themselves high places, pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree. ^{Jer 2:20} ²⁴They even had male cult prostitutes in their land. Judah followed all the abominable practices of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out before the Israelites.

12:2, 9-11
10:16
25 In the fifth year of the reign of king Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem 26 and looted everything, including the treasures of Yahweh's house and of the royal palace. As he had taken the golden shields made under Solomon, 27 Rehoboam replaced them with brazen shields and entrusted them to the officers of the guard who watched at the door of the king's palace. 28 Every time the king went into Yahweh's house, the guards took them out and then brought them back to the guardroom.

12:16
29 The rest of the events of Rehoboam's reign, including his deeds, are all written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. 30 There was incessant war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. 31 Then Rehoboam rested with his fathers and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David. His mother Naamah was an Ammonite. His son Abijam succeeded him as king.

Abijam, king of Judah

13:1-2
15 1 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, Abijam became king of Judah 2 and reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah, daughter of Abishalom. 3 He imitated all the sins his father had committed before him and, unlike his ancestor David, was not wholly faithful to Yahweh, his God. 4 Yet Yahweh had promised David that he would keep his lamp burning in Jerusalem. He would raise his descendants after him and establish Jerusalem. 5 This was because David had pleased Yahweh and did not disobey any of his commands as long as he lived, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. 6-7 The rest of the events of Abijam's reign and everything he did are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8 When Abijam rested with his fathers, he was buried in the city of David, and his son Asa reigned in his place.

2K 8:19
13:2
13:23

Asa, king of Judah

14:1-3
Dt 23:18
9 In the twentieth year of the reign of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Asa, king of Judah, began to reign and 10 was king for forty-one years, ruling in Jerusalem. His grandmother was Maacah, daughter of Abishalom. 11 Asa did what was right before Yahweh, just as his ancestor David had done. 12 He rid the land of male cult prostitutes and

removed all the idols his ancestors had made. 13 He also deposed his grandmother Maacah as queen mother, for having made an abominable image for Asherah. Asa destroyed Asherah's image and burned it at the brook Kidron; 14 he did not, however, close down the high places. Nevertheless, Asa remained faithful to Yahweh for the rest of his life. 15 He brought into Yahweh's house both the votive gifts of his father and his own: silver, gold and vessels.

15:16-18
2K 23:4

16 Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, were at war during their reigns. 17 Baasha, king of Israel, attacked Judah and fortified Ramah to cut off all communication with Asa, king of Judah. 18 Asa, in the meantime, collecting all the silver and gold remaining in the treasuries of the temple of Yahweh and the royal palace, entrusted them to his servants whom he sent to Ben-hadad, son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Syria who reigned in Damascus. 19 He sent him this message, "Let us together make a treaty just as my father and your's did. I am sending you silver and gold; so please break your treaty with Baasha, king of Israel that he may withdraw from my territory."

20 Ben-hadad acceded to king Asa's request and sent his officers to harass the cities of Israel, capturing Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, all the land of Chinneroth and the region of Naphtali. 21 On hearing this, Baasha stopped the fortification of Ramah and moved to Tirzah, where he lived. 22 Then king Asa issued an order to all of Judah, excluding no one, to take away the stones and timber which Baasha had been using to fortify Ramah. With these materials, king Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. 23 The rest of Asa's reign, his bravery, his deeds and the cities which he built are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. In his old age, Asa suffered from a foot disease. 24 Asa then rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his ancestor. His son Jehoshaphat reigned in his place.

16:11-14

Nadab and Baasha, kings of Israel

25 Nadab, son of Jeroboam, began to reign over Israel in the second year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah. 26 He reigned over Israel for two years, doing what displeased Yahweh and dragging Israel into sin as his father had done.

27 Baasha, son of Ahijah of the family of

Issachar, plotted against him and struck him down at Gibbethon of the Philistines when Nadab and the Israelites were laying siege to this city. ²⁸Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah and reigned in his place. ²⁹As soon as he was king, he killed off the entire family of Jeroboam, leaving him no one alive, but wiping them out according to the word which Yahweh had spoken through his servant Ahijah, the Shilonite. ³⁰This happened because of Jeroboam, who aroused the anger of Yahweh, the God of Israel, by sinning and dragging Israel into sin.

³¹The rest of the events of Nadab's reign and his achievements are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ³²Asa and Baasha were at war during their reigns.

³³In the third year of the reign of Asa king of Judah, Baasha, son of Ahijah, began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah where he reigned for twenty-four years. ³⁴He did what displeased Yahweh and sinned just as Jeroboam, who dragged Israel into sin, had done.

16 ¹Yahweh spoke to Jehu, son of Hanani, to condemn Baasha. He said, ²"I have raised you from the dust to make you rule over my people Israel, but you have made me angry by going the way of Jeroboam and dragging my people Israel into sin. ³I will therefore sweep away Baasha and his family and deal with them as I did with Jeroboam, son of Nebat. ⁴Dogs will devour those of Baasha's line who die in the City, the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country."

⁵The rest of the events of Baasha's reign, his deeds and achievements are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ⁶Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried at Tirzah, while Elah his son reigned in his place. ⁷Yahweh indeed spoke through the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, to condemn Baasha and his family, not only for doing what displeased Yahweh, making him angry as Jeroboam had done, but also because he murdered the family of Jeroboam.

Elah, king of Israel

⁸In the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah, Elah, son of Baasha, began to reign over Israel in Tirzah and was

king for two years. ⁹But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, plotted against him. While Elah was getting himself drunk in the house of Arza, governor of Tirzah, ¹⁰Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him. This happened in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah. Then Zimri reigned in his place.

¹¹As soon as Zimri began to reign, he had the entire family of Baasha killed, leaving him not a single male relative or friend. ¹²Zimri wiped out the entire house of Baasha according to Yahweh's pronouncement against him as spoken by Jehu, the prophet. ¹³And this happened because of the sins which Baasha and his son had committed, dragging Israel into sin and making Yahweh angry with their idols. ¹⁴Now the rest of the events of Elah's reign and all his deeds are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

Omri, king of Israel

¹⁵It happened in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah, that Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah.

¹⁶For the army was besieging Gibbethon of the Philistines when Zimri plotted against Elah, and, on hearing that he had killed the king, they proclaimed Omri, commander of the army, king of Israel. ¹⁷Omri went up with the Israelites from Gibbethon and attacked Tirzah. ¹⁸When Zimri saw that the city was to be captured, he went into the citadel of the royal palace. He set the royal palace on fire, and he died. ¹⁹He died thus because of the sins he had committed, doing what displeased Yahweh and going the way of Jeroboam by dragging Israel into sin. ²⁰The rest of the acts of Zimri and his plot are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²¹The Israelites were then divided. Half of them followed Tibni, son of Ginath to make him king; half followed Omri. ²²Those who followed Omri overcame those who followed Tibni, son of Ginath. And so, Tibni died and Omri became king. ²³In the thirty-first year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel. He reigned for twelve years, six years of which he reigned in Tirzah. ²⁴Then he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver. He built a city on the hill and called it Samaria, after Shemer, the owner of the hill.

14:9;
15:34

²⁵Omri did what displeased Yahweh, even more than all those who preceded him. ²⁶He went the way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and dragged Israel into sin, thereby provoking the anger of Yahweh, the God of Israel, by their idols. ²⁷The rest of the acts of Omri and his bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁸Then Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria while Ahab, his son, reigned in his place.

Ahab, king of Israel

• ²⁹Ahab, son of Omri became king in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-two years. ³⁰Ahab, son of Omri did what displeased Yahweh, even more than all those who preceded him. ³¹Apparently the example and the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat were not enough for him. He even married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians. So he served Baal and worshiped him. ³²He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria ³³and proceeded

• **16.29** *Ahab, son of Omri did what displeased Yahweh, even more than all those who preceded him (v. 30).* Starting with this text and in the following six chapters, the story enlarges on the rule of Ahab in Israel. For this was the time when Israel's faith was saved by the greatest of the prophets, Elijah, and his successor, Elisha.

He even married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians (v. 31). The Tyrians and Sidonians were an ancient and prosperous people living in the northern ports of Palestine; they were also called Phoenicians. Their king, Hiram, had been David's ally but, from their cities, pagan influences reached Israel. The reign of Ahab brought to Israel years of prosperity and military glory but the crisis of faith reached its highest point as well.

By his victories, David had integrated numerous Canaanite groups into his kingdom. They held onto their pagan practices which contaminated Israel's faith. Fervor visibly diminished. When the culture of the Tyrians, who were of the same religion as the Canaanites, strongly entered, it suddenly became clear that this religion had supplanted the people's faith in Yahweh: the Israelites allowed themselves to be dragged to the table of Baal and Asheroth.

to make an Asherah. So Ahab did everything that could make Yahweh angry, even more than any of the kings of Israel who ruled before him.

³⁴During his reign, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. On laying its foundation he sacrificed Abiram, his first-born. And when he set up the gates of the city, he sacrificed his youngest son, Segub, in accordance with the word of Yahweh spoken through Joshua, son of Nun. Jas 6:26

The prophet Elijah

17 • ¹Now Elijah, the prophet from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As Yahweh, the God of Israel whom I serve lives, neither dew shall drop nor rain fall except at my command." Jas 5:17;
Rev 11:6

²Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah, ³"Leave this place and go eastward. Hide yourself by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook and, for your food, I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." ⁵So Elijah obeyed

The Baals were gods, masters of life, sex, rain and the seasons (see Introduction to Judges). Believing that these gods had control over fecundity, people made vows to them about meeting prostitutes consecrated to them. Because of this the word prostitution in Scripture refers both to licentiousness and to abandoning Yahweh by prostituting oneself to other gods. Not everything was bad in this very permissive religion: it did not err in celebrating life. Nevertheless, it kept the people at the level of their instincts.

Jezebel uses her power to bring about a bloody persecution. First to be assassinated are Yahweh's prophets. These are the fellow prophets whom we presented in 1 Samuel 19:18 and 2 Kings 2:15. They are opposed by rival communities of the prophets of Baal.

Hiel sacrificed his youngest son, Segub (v. 34). With the influence of pagan cults, the practice of sacrificing children increased.

• **17.1** Now Elijah appears; his name will remain the greatest among the prophets. At Jesus' transfiguration, Elijah will be beside him (Mk 9:2).

Elijah's name is symbolic, meaning: Yahweh is my God. He is from Tishbe, a town beyond the Jordan. This poor and remote region, protected

the word of Yahweh and went to live by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁶There the ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

The widow of Zarephath

• ⁷After a while, the brook dried up because no rain had fallen in the land.

⁸Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah, ⁹“Go to Zarephath of the Sidonites and stay there. I have given word to a widow there, to give you food.” ¹⁰So Elijah went to Zarephath. On reaching the gate of the town, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He called to her and said, “Bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink.”

¹¹As she was going to bring it, he called after her and said, “Bring me also a piece of bread.” ¹²But she answered, “As Yahweh your God lives, I have no bread left, but only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am just now gathering some sticks so that I may go in and prepare

something for myself and my son to eat—and die.”

¹³Elijah then said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go, and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me. Then make some for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For this is the word of Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘The jar of meal shall not be emptied nor shall the jug of oil fail, until the day when Yahweh sends rain to the earth.’”

¹⁵So she went and did as Elijah told her; and she had food for herself, Elijah and her son from that day on. ¹⁶The jar of flour was not emptied nor did the jug of oil fail, in accordance with what Yahweh had said through Elijah.

The widow’s son raised to life

• ¹⁷After this, the son of this housewife became ill. And such was his illness that he stopped breathing. ¹⁸She then said to Elijah, “What did you do, O man of God? Have you come to uncover past sins and cause my

16:8;
16:12

2K4:1-7;
Lk 4:
25-26

2K 4:
18-37;
Lk 7:
11-17;
8:55

from new influences, had remained faithful to his faith.

Facing apostasy, i.e., the infidelity of all the people, Elijah stands alone. He feels himself responsible for God’s cause, and acts without waiting for others to begin.

Neither dew shall drop nor rain fall (v. 1). Elijah, the man of faith, knows that his words come from God and will be true. With regard to this, see James 5:17 where Elijah is presented as a model of faith.

There will be neither dew nor rain: Drought is a natural event, of course. God, however, without directly intervening at every moment, arranges events. The faith of the believer is a force, like the physical laws of the universe, and when we ask of God the impossible, confident that he himself wants to give it, he is not without the means to make this happen.

The people consider the Baals as gods of rain and nature. The drought that comes will show them that Yahweh, God of Hosts, is also God of creation.

Elijah begins his mission as a prophet by attacking the greatest disorder: failing to place God above all.

• 7. *Go to Zarephath* (v. 9). The drought harms everybody, including Elijah who had asked God for this sign. But for the believer, the very plague is an opportunity to experience that the heavenly Father does not abandon the believer.

I have given word to a widow there to give you food. The prophet will receive his food, and he will also get comfort from God through discovering this believing woman. the poor widow has something to give the great prophet, and this is a grace for both of them.

Bring me a little water (v. 10) is a first step. *Bring me also a piece of bread* (v.11). Elijah tests her faith: “First you shall make me a little bread,” and the widow gives him this. This widow is similar to the one whom Jesus praises in Mark 12:41.

The jar of meal shall not be emptied (v. 14). God rewards this kind of faith which goes to the extent of risking everything one possesses.

• 17. This is the first resurrection we encounter in the Scriptures.

God usually directs the world and his church through the natural process of things, by the

son's death?"¹⁹ He answered, "Give me your son."

Taking him from her lap, he carried him to the upper room where he was staying and laid him on his own bed.²⁰ Then he called on Yahweh, "O Yahweh, my God, will you afflict even the widow with whom I am residing, by letting her son die?"²¹ Then he stretched himself on the child three times and called on Yahweh, "O Yahweh, my God, let this child's breath return to him."²² Yahweh listened to the pleading of Elijah; and the child's breath returned to him, and he lived.²³ Elijah then took the child and brought him down from the upper room. He gave him to his mother and said, "See, your son is alive."

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I am certain that you are a man of God, and that your words really came from Yahweh."

17:1

18¹After several days (in the third year) Yahweh spoke to Elijah and said, "Go, show yourself to Ahab that I may let it rain on the earth."² So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab.

³Now the famine in Samaria was severe. Ahab therefore called Obadiah, who was in charge of the household.⁴ (Obadiah was a faithful servant of Yahweh. When Jezebel slew the prophets of Yahweh he himself took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in caves, feeding them with

bread and water.)⁵ Then Ahab told Obadiah, "Let's go and check all the water springs and the valleys through the land, looking for grass so that the horses and mules may be kept alive and not perish."⁶ So Ahab and Obadiah divided the land between them and each of them went his own way.

⁷As Obadiah was going his way, Elijah met him. Recognizing Elijah, Obadiah fell on his face and said, "Is that you, my master Elijah?"⁸ He answered him, "It is I. Go tell your master that I am here."⁹ But Obadiah replied, "What evil have I done that you expose me to Ahab's anger? Surely you want me to die."¹⁰ By Yahweh, your God, there is no people or nation where my master has not searched for you; and if they said, 'Elijah is not here,' he would make them take an oath that they had not found you.¹¹ Yet now as soon as I leave to inform Ahab of your presence,¹² the spirit of Yahweh will transport your goodness elsewhere; and when Ahab fails to find you, he will kill me. But I have served Yahweh from my youth.¹³ Do you not know that when Jezebel had the prophets of Yahweh killed, I hid a hundred of them in two caves and fed them with bread and water?¹⁴ Now if I notify Ahab of your presence, as you want me to do, he will surely kill me!"

2K 2:16

¹⁵But Elijah said to him, "By Yahweh of Hosts whom I serve, I will show myself to him today."¹⁶ So Obadiah went to give Ahab this message and Ahab came to meet Elijah.

The sacrifice at Carmel

• ¹⁷On seeing Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, the plague of Israel?"

effect of the laws of nature which he himself established. He also reserves to himself the right to make exceptions to these laws sometimes: the water changes into wine, the bread is multiplied.

Have you come to uncover past sins and cause my son's death? (v. 18). The death of her only son is enough to arouse in the poor woman the unfounded fears of those who see God as an accuser who spies on people to punish them. She thinks that the prophet's presence has attracted Yahweh's attention to her house and that he is punishing her with this grief.

He stretched himself on the child three times (v. 21). In this gesture of the prophet, who communicates life with his own breath,

who would fail to recognize Christ who comes to unite himself closely with humanity to communicate to it the power of resurrection?

Yahweh listened to the pleading of Elijah (v. 22). Elijah is the man chosen to reverse a desperate situation and to upset all human foresight. Yahweh allows him to resuscitate the widow's son and, a little later on Mount Carmel, he will let him resuscitate the faith of his people.

• **18.17** The sacrifice on Mount Carmel is one of God's great manifestations in the Old Testament. Yahweh takes the initiative to stir up an indifferent people.

Baal or Yahweh? The people do not see clearly the difference between the two. They consider

¹⁸Elijah replied, “Who is troubling Israel? Isn’t it you and your family who have disobeyed the commands of Yahweh and followed instead the Baals? ¹⁹Now, therefore, give an order for the Israelites to gather before me at Mount Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who are sustained by Jezebel.”

²⁰So Ahab sent for all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets at Mount Carmel. ²¹Then Elijah addressed the people and asked, “How long will you follow two ways at the same time? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal is God then follow him.” The people remained silent.

²²So Elijah continued, “I am the only prophet of Yahweh left here to face Baal’s four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³Get us two bulls. Let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood; and I will do the same with the other bull. But we will not set it on fire. ²⁴Then you shall call on the name of your gods while I shall call on the name of Yahweh. The God who answers with

fire is the true one.” Then the people answered, “That is right.”

²⁵Then Elijah told the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many. Then call on the name of your god lest you are left without fire!” ²⁶So they took the bull and prepared it, and they called on the name of Baal, “Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice; and no one answered them while they went on, dancing on one foot around the altar they had built.

²⁷By noontime, Elijah began to mock them, “Shout out louder. Baal is a busy god; or he may have gone out, or perhaps he has gone on a trip, or he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸So they shouted louder gashing their skin with knives, as they are used to doing, until they bled. ²⁹It was already past noon and they were still raving on, until the time of the evening offering. But still there was no voice. No one answered or gave a sign of life.

³⁰Then Elijah said to the people, “Draw closer to me,” and the people drew closer to him. He then repaired

2K 3:20;
Dn 9:21

them as two powers or persons endowed with different capabilities but equally useful. Yahweh is God of the race, a sure help in combat. While Baal is at the service of the peasant: through offerings and feasts, they ask him for rain.

How long will you follow two ways at the same time? (v. 21). Elijah obliges the Israelites to make a decision. The believer should not have two masters:

- God or money (Mt 6:24);
- for Christ or against him (Mt 12:30);
- cooperating member of the church or part of a lukewarm audience whom God will one day vomit out of his mouth (Rev 3:6).

The God who answers with fire is the true one (v. 24). This will be the sign: the fire that destroys, purifies, transforms; the fire that effects the consecration of the sacrificial victims to God. Israel also needs to be transformed “by fire,” and later with Jesus, we shall be baptized, or rather purified and renewed “through fire and the Holy Spirit” (see Lk 3:16).

They called on the name of Baal... and no one answered them (v. 26). We who read about Elijah’s mockery of Baal, are we convinced that

God answers and hears our prayer? God is not obliged to satisfy all our desires, but we have the obligation to ask him in such a way and with such perseverance that he will manifest proofs of his presence among us.

You are turning back their hearts to you (v. 37). The fire, the miracle, the rain have no other purpose: Yahweh loves Israel and wants to awaken their love once more. He does not want to frighten them or make them marvel, but rather to make this people discover that God lives and is concerned about searching them out.

The victory at Carmel is Yahweh’s victory. It is also Elijah’s victory. God needs prophets and saves through them. We are shocked at the massacre that follows; but Elijah lived in a violent world where death was the normal lot of those conquered, and his thinking was in accordance with those times.

Besides, this brutal punishment teaches us that to lose one’s life is not as serious as to lose oneself serving false values, deceiving oneself and deceiving everyone.

the altar of Yahweh which had been thrown down. ³¹He took twelve stones corresponding to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob whom Yahweh had addressed saying, "Israel shall be your name." ³²With these stones, he built an altar to the Name of Yahweh; and dug a trench around it that would contain about thirty liters. ³³He then arranged the firewood, cut the bull in pieces and laid them on the wood. Then, he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the firewood." ³⁴He said, "Do it again;" and they did it again; "one more time," and they did it a third time. ³⁵The water ran around the altar and filled the trench.

³⁶When the time of the evening offering came, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel; and that I am your servant, doing all these things at your command. ³⁷Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me so that this people may know that you, O Yahweh, are God; and that you are turning back their hearts to you." ³⁸Then the fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the burnt offering, together with the wood, the stones also, and the dust; the water also dried up in the trench.

³⁹All the people witnessed this. Then they fell on their faces and said, "Yah-

weh is God! Yahweh is God!" ⁴⁰Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal and let none of them escape." And so they seized them. Then Elijah brought them down to the brook Kidron and had them slaughtered there.

⁴¹Elijah then said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for the sound of rain is rushing in." ⁴²So Ahab went up to eat and drink. Elijah, in the meantime, went to the top of Carmel, bowed to the ground and put his face between his knees. ⁴³Then he said to his servant, "Go up and look in the direction of the sea." The man went up, looked, and said, "There is nothing." Then Elijah said, "Go again;" and seven times he went. ⁴⁴At the seventh time, he perceived a little cloud, the size of a man's hand, rising out of the sea. Elijah told him, "Go, tell Ahab: Prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops you." ⁴⁵A little later the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and a strong rain fell. Ahab was riding on his way to Jezreel. ⁴⁶As for Elijah, the hand of Yahweh was on him, and tucking his cloak in his belt, he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah flees to Horeb

19 • ¹Ahab told Jezebel every- thing Elijah had done and how

• **19.1** *Elijah was scared and fled for his life* (v. 3). Thus, the miracle does not miraculously solve the problems of faith. The conversion of the people will be a long and painful work.

We can see on the map how Elijah crossed the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah from north to south. Carmel is 250 kilometers from Beersheba, the last town before the desert south of Judah.

The journey is too long for you (v. 7). Elijah only looks for the entrance to the desert to save himself, but God brings him much farther. He is given a mysterious bread which recalls the manna of the Hebrews in the desert and fore-

tells the eucharistic bread which Jesus will give for our spiritual journey (Jn 6:8).

He traveled for forty days and forty nights (v. 8; see Ex 24:18). Elijah goes to encounter Yahweh. Jesus himself will go to the desert as a necessary proof and we, too, at certain moments need "to go to the desert" (sometimes God himself puts us in the desert: Hos 2:16). Elijah's solitary journey shows the itinerary which those who seek God have to undertake. However, much as we need the support of our spouse, of our companions, of the Church, each one makes his or her own journey, and God calls people personally to seek this encounter with him.

24:4;
Jos 4:3;
Gen
32:29

3:6;
Mt
22:32;
Num
16:28;
Jn 12:28

Jas 5:16

2K 3:15

18:40

he had slain all the prophets with the sword.² Jezebel then sent word to Elijah, “May I be cursed if by this time tomorrow I have not dealt with you as you dealt with them.”

³Elijah was scared and fled for his life. He reached Beer-sheba of Judah and left his servant there. ⁴He himself disappeared into the desert going on a day’s journey. Then he sat down under a broom tree and prayed to die, “That is enough, Yahweh, take away my life for I am dying.”

⁵He lay down and went to sleep under the broom tree. Then an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” ⁶Elijah looked and saw, at his head, a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and went back to sleep. ⁷The angel of Yahweh came a second time to him, saying, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too long for you.” ⁸He got up, ate and drank, and on the strength of that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

The encounter with God

• ⁹On reaching the place, he came to the cave and stayed in it. Then the

word of Yahweh came to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰He answered, “I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of Hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken your Covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself and they are still trying to kill me as well.” ¹¹Then Yahweh said, “Go up and stand on the mount, waiting for Yahweh.” And Yahweh passed by.

There was first a windstorm, wild wind which rent the mountains and broke the rocks into pieces before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind. After the storm, an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake; ¹²after the earthquake, a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire; after the fire, the murmur of a gentle breeze. ¹³When Elijah perceived it, he covered his face with his cloak, went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Then he heard a voice addressing him again, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴He answered, “I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of Hosts, because the Israelites

24:18;
Num
14:33

34:1;
39:18

Gen 3:8

33:20;
Is 6:5

Rom
11:3

• 9. Thus Elijah arrives at Horeb: it is the other name of Sinai, where Yahweh had revealed himself to Moses four centuries earlier.

Go up and stand on the mount, waiting for Yahweh (v. 11). To him who is afire with a jealous love for God, God manifests his tenderness beyond all that we can imagine. Thus, Yahweh reveals himself in the gentle breeze more than in the hurricane or in the earthquake.

What are you doing here, Elijah? (v. 9). First, God asks a question and obliges the prophet to discover the depth of his heart. There is nothing in Elijah but his jealous love for Yahweh. Yahweh, in turn, reveals his infallible plans.

Hazael, Jehu, Elisha (vv. 15-16). Yahweh tells Elijah about the future of Israel with all its tragic truth: the kingdom, gloriously begun with David and Solomon, is destined to disappear. This will be the result of the people’s disobedience.

– Hazael, king of Syria, is the enemy king who will conquer and humiliate Israel.

– Jehu will destroy Ahab’s family and annihilate the worshipers of Baal.

– Elisha will transmit the menacing words of Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Israel will not totally disappear, for God reserves a Remnant, expressed in symbolic form by 7,000 Israelites who have not knelt before Baal.

This revelation clarifies the mission of the prophets of the Scriptures. The majority of them, and the greatest among them, lived during the three centuries in which Israel passed from the glory of Solomon to the Exile. So the prophets:

– tried to hold back the infidelity of the chosen people who were heading to their ruin;

– called for inner conversion, that of the heart;

– taught the marvelous future which God had reserved for the “remnant” of Israel, after the destruction of their material kingdom in the land of Palestine.

have forsaken your Covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself, yet they still seek my life to take it away.”

2K 8:7 ¹⁵Yahweh said to him, “Take the road back through the desert and go to Damascus, for you must anoint Hazael as king of Syria. ¹⁶You shall also anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king over Israel. And Elisha, son of Shaphat, from Abel Meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place. ¹⁷Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael will be slain by Jehu and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will execute. ¹⁸Yet I will spare seven thousand in Israel who have not knelt before Baal and whose lips have not kissed him.”

Rom
11:4-5

2K 2:13;
Lk 9:82

• ¹⁹Elijah left. He found Elisha, son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak over him. ²⁰Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah and said, “Let me say goodbye to my father and mother; then I will follow you.” Elijah said to him, “Return if you want, don’t worry about what I did.” ²¹However, Elisha turned back, took the yoke of oxen and slew them. He roasted their meat on the pieces of the yoke and gave it to his people who ate of it. After this, he followed Elijah and began ministering to him.

The siege of Samaria

20 ¹Ben-hadad, king of Aram, gathered together his entire army. With him were thirty-two kings. With horses and chariots, he went to Samaria and besieged it. ²He then sent messengers into the city

to Ahab, king of Israel, and said to him, “Thus says Ben-hadad: ³Your silver and gold are mine and so are your fairest wives and children.” ⁴The king of Israel answered, “As you say, my master, O king, I am yours with all that I possess.” ⁵Again Ben-hadad sent messengers to say, “I sent this message to you: ‘Hand over to me your silver and gold, along with your wives and children,’ ⁶but now I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time. They shall search your house and those of your officials and take with them whatever they want to take.”

⁷Then the king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said, “Look now and see how this man acts with evil intentions. He will send his officers to take my wives and children, and my silver and gold, although I agreed to deliver all to him.” ⁸The elders and the people said to him, “Pay no attention to him and do not agree to what he asks.” ⁹So the king of Israel told Ben-hadad’s messengers, “Tell my master, the king, I will do everything you first demanded of me, but now it is too much.” The messengers left and reported this to ¹⁰Ben-hadad who then answered, “May I be cursed if enough dust remains of Samaria to give a handful to all the people who follow me.” ¹¹But the king of Israel answered, “Let not he who puts on his armor boast like one who takes it off.” ¹²Ben-hadad was drinking with the kings in the booths when he heard this message. So he said to his officers, “Take your positions.” And they took their positions against the city.

¹³Then a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, “Have you seen this immense crowd? This is the word of Yahweh: ‘I will deliver it into your hands today and you shall know that I am Yahweh.’” ¹⁴Ahab asked, “Who is to win over him?” The prophet replied, “The guards of the governors of the districts, for this is Yahweh’s order.” Again the king asked, “Who shall begin the battle?” He replied, “You!”

¹⁵And so the king of Israel mustered the guards of the governors of the districts, numbering two hundred and thirty-two.

• *19. Elijah passed by Elisha and cast his cloak over him.* He calls him in the same way as Jesus will call his apostles: “Follow me.” Perhaps Elijah interprets the answer, “Let me embrace my parents,” as a hesitation on Elisha’s part to leave everything and, for this reason, he

answers him: “Go back if you want, it was nothing of importance.” But Elisha merely wanted to say goodbye to his relatives in a decent manner (see Lk 9:61). From now on, Elisha will be Elijah’s disciple and his successor in Israel.

After that, he mustered all the Israelites, numbering seven thousand.

¹⁶They set out at noon while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, together with the thirty-two kings who helped him. ¹⁷The guards of the governors of the districts went out first. Someone reported to Ben-hadad, "People are coming out from Samaria." ¹⁸He said, "If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if for war, take them alive as well."

¹⁹So the guards of the governors of the city went out, and the army followed them, ²⁰and each one began to kill his man. The Arameans fled, with the Israelites pursuing them. Ben-hadad, king of Aram was able to escape on a horse with horsemen, ²¹but the king of Israel captured horses and chariots and utterly defeated the Arameans.

²²Then the prophet came again to the king of Israel and said to him, "Courage, be on your guard and ponder well your next action, for next year the king of Aram will come up against you."

²³The officers of the king of Aram said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were stronger than us. ²⁴Let us fight against them on the plain and we shall overcome them. But you must also replace the princes with officers appointed by you. ²⁵When you have gathered an army like the one you have lost, with the same amount of horses and chariots, we will fight on the plain, then we shall see who is stronger." Ben-hadad listened to their advice and did just that.

Victory over the Arameans

²⁶In the spring, Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and set out for Aphek to fight against Israel. ²⁷The Israelites were also mustered; and they set out against the Arameans. As they encamped, the Israelites looked like two little herds of goats, whereas the Arameans filled the countryside. ²⁸A man of God approached the king of Israel and said to him, "Thus says Yahweh: 'Because the Arameans have said: "Yahweh is a god of the hills but not of the valleys," therefore I will deliver this immense crowd into your hands and you shall know that I am Yahweh.'" ²⁹And they encamped, facing each other for seven days.

On the seventh day, the battle was engaged; and that day the Israelites killed a

hundred thousand Aramean foot soldiers. ³⁰As the rest fled into the city of Aphek, the wall fell on the twenty-seven thousand men that were left. Ben-hadad himself fled and entered an inner room in the city. ³¹His officers said to him, "People say that the kings of Israel are merciful kings. Let us put sackcloth around our waists; perhaps he will spare your life."

³²So, putting sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their necks, they went to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant, Ben-hadad, pleads, 'Please, let me live.'" He then asked, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." ³³They quickly took up his word and said, "Yes, Ben-hadad is your brother." The king of Israel then said, "Go, bring him here."

Ben-hadad came to him and he let Ben-hadad get into his chariot. ³⁴Ben-hadad then said to him, "I will give back the cities which my father took from your father; and you may put up business establishments for yourself in Damascus, just as my father did in Samaria." He then made an agreement with Ben-hadad and let him go.

³⁵Now the word of Yahweh was directed to one of the fellow prophets, so he said to his companion, "Strike me, please." But his companion refused to strike him. ³⁶So he said to him, "Since you have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh, once you leave me, a lion shall kill you." And, indeed, as soon as he had left, a lion found him and killed him.

³⁷Then the fellow prophet found another man to whom he said, "Please, strike me." This man struck him, wounding him. ³⁸Then this prophet left, disguising himself with a bandage over his eyes, and waited for the king along the road. ³⁹When the king passed, he called to him and said, "O king! I, your servant, went into the thick of the battle, when a soldier left the line and brought me a man, saying: 'Guard this man. Should he escape, your life shall be in exchange for his, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.'" ⁴⁰While I was busy running around, my prisoner disappeared." The king of Israel said to him, "You yourself have said what your sentence shall be."

⁴¹At once the man removed the bandage DI 7.2 from his eyes and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. ⁴²Then the prophet told him, "Because you have released the man whom I have decreed to

die, your life shall be in exchange for his and your people for his people.”⁴³ And the king of Israel went back home to Samaria, resentful and sad.

Naboth's vineyard

21 • ¹Now Naboth, a man from Jezreel, owned a vineyard just beside the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. ²Ahab asked Naboth, “Give me your vineyard which is near my house that I may use it for a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange. Or, if you prefer, I will pay you its price.”

³But Naboth said to Ahab, “Yahweh forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.”

⁴So Ahab went home angry and sad because of what Naboth had told him, that he would not give him the inheritance of his fathers. So he lay down on his bed with his face turned toward the wall and refused to eat.

⁵His wife Jezebel came to him and said, “Why are you so angry that you refuse to eat?” ⁶He answered, “I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and asked him to sell me his vineyard or to exchange it for another one in exchange; but he answered: I will not give you my vineyard.”

⁷His wife Jezebel said to him, “Are you not king of Israel? Get up and eat and be joyful, for I will give you the vineyard of Naboth of Jezreel.”

⁸So Jezebel wrote letters using Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and important persons living

near Naboth. ⁹This is what she wrote in the letters: “Declare a fast and put Naboth on trial. ¹⁰Get two scoundrels to accuse him in this way: ‘You have cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

¹¹The people, the elders and the important persons who lived in his city did as Jezebel had instructed them in the letters she sent to them.

¹²They declared a fast and put Naboth on trial. ¹³The two worthless fellows came in and sat facing him, accusing Naboth before the people, “Naboth cursed God and the king!” So the people took him outside the city and stoned him to death. ¹⁴They then sent word to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned and was dead.

¹⁵As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, she told Ahab, “Now take possession of the vineyard of Naboth, the man of Jezreel who refused to sell it to you, for Naboth is now dead.” ¹⁶As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he went down to the vineyard of Naboth and took possession of it.

¹⁷Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah of Tishbe, ¹⁸“Go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, in Samaria. He is taking possession of the vineyard of Naboth. ¹⁹Say to him: ‘Have you killed and have taken possession at the same time?’ Then give him this word of mine: ‘Dogs shall lick your blood in the very place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth.’”

²⁰Ahab then said to Elijah, “Who,

• **21.1** Naboth keeps his vineyard, more out of respect for the inheritance received from his fathers than for his personal convenience.

Declare a fast (v. 9). Surely Jezebel takes advantage of a calamity of that time, a drought or a pestilence. The elders of the city must assemble all the people for a solemn fast and an assembly, where they will find out “who attracted this punishment of God.” The guilty one will

have to be Naboth and, in this way, Jezebel will have him killed legally.

Have you killed and have taken possession at the same time (v. 19)? Ahab's crime is no worse than David's who had Uriah killed so that he could take his wife (2 S 12). Elijah goes to Ahab in the manner that Nathan had gone to rebuke David.

better than my enemy, could find me here and now!" Elijah answered, "I have come to you because you have done what Yahweh abhors. ²¹This is Yahweh's word: 'I will bring disgrace on you. I will sweep you away and cut off every male of your family, from the lowliest to the greatest. ²²Your family will disappear like the families of Jeroboam and Baasa, because you have offended me and have dragged Israel into sin.' ²³There is another word of Yahweh to Jezebel: 'The dogs shall devour Jezebel within the territory of Jezreel.' ²⁴If anyone of Ahab's line dies in the city, he shall be devoured by dogs; if in the green country, the birds of the air shall feed on him."

²⁵There was no one like Ahab, urged by his wife Jezebel, in doing what Yahweh abhorred. ²⁶He did horrible things and ran after unclean idols just as the Amorites had done, from whom Yahweh had taken the land to give it to Israel.

²⁷On hearing these words, Ahab tore his clothes and put on sackcloth. He fasted as he lay in sackcloth and moved around despondently. ²⁸Then Yahweh said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself? ²⁹Because of this I will not bring about the disaster during his reign; during his son's reign disgrace will fall on his family."

• **22.1** In those times, war was something of a routine. A people could not exist without continually fighting with others. To fight, to kill and to die were but signs of life (see 2 S 11:1).

For once, the kings of Israel and Judah are united, but the writer speaks very differently about the two.

• 5. This Micaiah is not to be confused with the other prophet Micah of Moresheth (see Mic 1:1). The kings were seated by the entrance gate (v. 10). In those days, the entrance to the city was very often the gate of the wall surrounding the town. It was the place where people gathered, as they do today in the plaza. There, the tribunal executed judgment and cases were heard; there, the elders spent hours conversing in their seats.

The present text aims to teach two things:

– God's word condemning Ahab's family is realized infallibly: the lies of the prophets, the

22 • ¹There was no war between Aram and Israel for three years. ²But in the third year, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, came down to the king of Israel. ³The king of Israel then talked to his officers, "Have you forgotten that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us? Yet we do nothing to take it back from the Arameans." ⁴So he asked Jehoshaphat, "Will you come with me to conquer Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat answered the king of Israel, "I am with you, my people are with your people, and my horses with yours."

Micaiah and the false prophets

• ⁵Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, said to the king of Israel, "Let us consult Yahweh before setting out for war." ⁶So the king of Israel gathered all the prophets, numbering about four hundred men, and asked them, "Shall I go to conquer Ramoth-gilead, or shall I hold back?" They replied, "Go, for Yahweh will deliver the city into your hands."

⁷Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no other prophet of Yahweh around here whom we might ask?" ⁸The king of Israel answered, "There is still one through whom we may ask for Yahweh's counsel; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good about me but only evil. It is Micaiah, son of Imlah." Then Jehoshaphat said, "Don't speak

strategy of the king and unforeseen events come together to accomplish what had been announced: the king will die and the dogs will lick up his blood;

– the contradiction between true and false prophets.

False prophets are fellows who live at the king's expense and claim to be inspired. Actually they only think of pleasing the king in order to retain their livelihood and their privileges. The true prophets instead are servants of the word of God whatever the trials they have to endure. This is why Micaiah will say: *I will speak what Yahweh tells me to* (v. 14).

I saw Yahweh (v. 19). The vision of Micaiah tells us clearly that one should not trust in dreams and imaginings that come from one's own spirit.

Neither should one believe blindly those who pretend to be inspired, such as politicians, theorists, business people and all who promise to make us happy.

in this manner.”⁹ So the king of Israel called an official and told him, “Bring quickly Micaiah, son of Imlah.”

¹⁰ Meantime, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were seated on their thrones, fully robed. They were both at the threshing floor, by the entrance gate of Samaria, where the prophets continued to prophesy before them. ¹¹ There was Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah who made for himself horns from iron; and said, “Thus says Yahweh: ‘With these horns you shall strike the Arameans until they are destroyed.’”

¹² All the prophets said the same: “Go to Ramoth-gilead and triumph. Yahweh will deliver it into the hands of the king.”

¹³ The official who went to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look here, all the prophets agree to foretell a happy end to the king. You, too agree to speak favorably.” ¹⁴ But Micaiah replied, “As Yahweh lives, I will speak what Yahweh tells me to.”

¹⁵ When he had come, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go to conquer Ramoth-gilead or shall we hold back?” Then Micaiah answered, “Go and triumph! Yahweh will give the city into the hands of the king!”

¹⁶ But the king said to him, “How many times shall I ask you to speak seriously to me and tell me the truth in the name of Yahweh?” ¹⁷ Then Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. Then Yahweh said: ‘These have no master; so let each return to his home in peace.’”

¹⁸ So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good about me, but only evil?”

¹⁹ Micaiah replied, “Listen again to this word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne with the entire host

of heaven standing beside him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ Then Yahweh asked: ‘Who will entice Ahab that he may go and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ One said one thing and another, another thing. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh, saying: ‘I will deceive him.’ ²² Yahweh then asked him, ‘What will you do?’ To this, he replied: ‘I will go and make myself a lying spirit on the lips of all his prophets.’ Then Yahweh said, ‘You shall succeed. Go, and do just that.’

Ezk 14:9

²³ You must know that Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours because he willed to bring evil on you.”

²⁴ Then Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, approached Micaiah, struck him, and said, “Has the spirit of Yahweh left me to speak to you?” ²⁵ Micaiah replied, “You shall discover for yourself on the day you flee from house to house to hide.”

²⁶ Then the king of Israel ordered, “Seize Micaiah and take him back to Amon, governor of the city, and to Joash, the king’s son. ²⁷ Give them this order: ‘Throw this man in prison and feed him with scant fare of bread and water until I come in peace.’”

Jer 20:1

²⁸ Then Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, then Yahweh has not spoken through me.”

Jer 28:9

Death of the king of Israel

²⁹ So the king of Israel went up to Ramoth-gilead, together with the king of Judah. ³⁰ The king of Israel told Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself before the battle, but you wear your robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself before the battle.

18: 28-34

³¹ Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, “Attack no one, big or small, but only the king of Israel.” ³² When the captains of the chariots saw Jehosha-

Ezk 34:5; Mt 9:36

Is 6:1; Job 1:6; Ps 93:2

phat, they thought, "That surely is the king of Israel." So they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat shouted his cry of war, ³³the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel and they no longer pursued him.

³⁴In the meantime, one of the Arameans drew his bow, without knowing at whom he aimed, and hit the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. The king then ordered the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle for I am wounded." ³⁵The battle raged fiercely on that day. Meanwhile, the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Arameans, until the evening, when he died. The blood from his wound flowed down into the bottom of the chariot. ³⁶At about sunset, a cry went through the camp, "Everyone to his city, and everyone to his country!" ³⁷The king has died!"

The king was brought to Samaria and was buried there. ³⁸But they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria. So the dogs licked up his blood, while the harlots bathed in it, in accordance with the word spoken by Yahweh.

Am 3:15 • ³⁹The rest of the acts of Ahab, his deeds, the ivory house he built, and the cities he restored are all written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ⁴⁰So Ahab rested with his ancestors and his son Ahaziah reigned in his place.

⁴¹Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of the reign of Ahab, king of Israel. ⁴²He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³He conducted himself like his father Asa, and did what pleased Yahweh without hesitation. ⁴⁴Yet, he did not remove the high places where the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense. ⁴⁵Jehoshaphat had peace with the king of Israel. ^{20:31-21:1}

⁴⁶The rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, his bravery and his war exploits are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ⁴⁷He also removed from the land the remaining male cult prostitutes, completing the work of his father Asa. ^{2K 3:7}

⁴⁸There was no king in Edom but a governor ruled over it. ⁴⁹Jehoshaphat had Tarshish ships go to Ophir for gold, but the venture failed when the ships were wrecked at Eziongeber. ⁵⁰Then Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go in the ships with your servants." Jehoshaphat, however, refused. ⁵¹When Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, he was buried with them in the city of his ancestor David and his son Jehoram reigned in his place.

⁵²Ahaziah, son of Ahab, began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. He reigned over Israel for two years. ⁵³He did what displeased Yahweh, imitating the conduct of both his father and mother, as well as of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who dragged Israel into sin. He served Baal and worshiped him, offending Yahweh, the God of Israel, in the same way his father had done.

• 39. This remark referring to Ahab makes one think that he died a natural death. One notes that all previous passages spoke only about the king of Israel, and mentioned Ahab only once

in 22:20. Surely, this account referred in the beginning to Joram, son of Ahab (2 K 9:14-16), and in him Elijah's prophecy in 1 Kings 21:21 was fulfilled.



KINGS

2

The second Book of Kings continues to look at the progressive decline of the two kingdoms to the North and to the South, Israel and Judah.

It would be a mistake to believe that the nation prospered at first because it had good and just kings, David and Solomon, and that after them the bad kings ruined everything; or that the Jewish people who were destroyed by the Chaldeans were more sinful than David's contemporaries.

When we read attentively, we realize that the author of the book does not judge the founders of the kingdom and their successors with the same severity. Was Jeroboam II, who restored prosperity and independence to Israel and brought peace for forty years, inferior to Solomon? Was he, perhaps, less of a believer? And yet, the first Book of Kings delights in describing Solomon's luxury, vanity and greatness, whereas the second Book of Kings gives Jeroboam II only one paragraph, as if the fact of having a temple other than the one in Jerusalem was a priori a condemnation of all his achievements.

Here we must see God's way of teaching. At first he encourages his people with the possibility of achieving independence and prosperity, because they live in the historical moment when this conquest must be accomplished. God does not show them all the negative aspects of what they are doing; he does not point out Solomon's faults or the vanity of his luxury. But later, God invites his people to observe with a critical eye, and while the great dream of Solomon's kingdom is vanishing, God teaches them to seek another more lasting and important conquest, that of the Reign of Justice.

1 After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. ²In Samaria, king Ahaziah fell through the window from the second floor of his house and was badly injured. So he sent messengers to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, "Ask him whether I shall survive this accident."

³Then an angel of Yahweh said to Elijah of the town of Tishbe, "Arise, and go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria. You will say to them: Why have you come to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Is it because there is no God in Israel? ⁴Now Yahweh himself gives you this answer: 'You shall not rise again from the bed where you lay down, but shall die there.'" So Elijah went.

⁵Then the messengers returned to Ahaziah who asked, "How is it that you have returned?" ⁶They answered, "A man met us on the way, and he said to us: 'Return to the king who sent you and say to him in the name of Yahweh: Why do you send men to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Is there no God in Israel? Because of this, you shall not rise again from the bed where you lay down, but shall die there.'"

⁷The king asked them, "What was the appearance of the man who met you on the way and told you this?" ⁸They answered him, "The man wore a mantle of fur with a leather belt around his waist." The king then said, "He is Elijah from the town of Tishbe."

⁹Ahaziah sent a captain of fifty men who went up with his fifty men to get him. Elijah was seated at the top of the mountain. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king commands you to come down." ¹⁰Elijah answered the captain, "If I am a man of God, then may fire come down from heaven and devour you and your men." Fire came down from heaven and devoured him with his fifty men. ¹¹The king again sent to him another captain of fifty who went up and said to him, "Man of God, the king says that you are to come down at once." ¹²Elijah answered, "If I am a man of God, then may fire come down from heaven and devour you and your men." Fire came down from heaven and devoured them all.

¹³The king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third one went up, and, as he came, he fell on his knees before Elijah and said to him, "Man of God, I beg you to pardon me as well as my fifty men; we are all your servants. ¹⁴I have heard that fire came down from heaven twice and devoured the two captains with their fifty men. So now, do spare my life."

¹⁵Then the angel of Yahweh said to Elijah, "Go down with him and do not be afraid." ¹⁶So he stood up and went down with them to the king. And Elijah said to the king, "Listen to this word of Yahweh: 'Because you sent your messengers to consult Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, you shall not rise again from the bed on which you lie but shall die there.'"

¹⁷Ahaziah died according to what Yahweh had said through the mouth of Elijah; and since he had no sons, his brother Jehoram reigned in his place, in the second year of the reign of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. ¹⁸Everything referring to Ahaziah and his deeds is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

Elijah is taken up to heaven

2 • ¹Yahweh took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. It happened this way: Elijah and Elisha had left Gilgal, and Elijah said to Elisha, ²"I beg you to stay here, for Yahweh is sending me to Bethel." Elisha said, "I swear by Yahweh and by your life that I will never leave you." So they went down to Bethel together. ³The fellow prophets in Bethel went out to welcome Elisha and said to him, "Don't you know that today Yahweh will take your master away from you?" He answered them, "Yes, I also know it. So, be quiet."

⁴Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for Yahweh is only sending me to Jericho." Elisha answered, "I swear

• **2.1** The end of Elijah is one final testimony to the living God who gives life to humans.

Elijah, the solitary prophet, seems to live on high, far from human corruption. That is why

God does not let him die as others do. Like Moses, whose tomb was totally unknown (Dt 34:6), Elijah, too, will seem in a certain way, to evade death. These two pillars of the Old Testa-

Zec
13:4;
Mt 3:4

1K
17:24

Num
16:35;
Lk 9:54;
Rev
20:9

by Yahweh and by your life that I will never leave you.”⁵ So they went on to Jericho.

The fellow prophets in Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “Do you not know that Yahweh is to take your master away today?” Elisha answered, “Yes, I know it. Be quiet.”

⁶Elijah said once more to Elisha, “Stay here, I beg you, for Yahweh is only sending me to the Jordan.” But Elisha answered, “I swear by Yahweh and by your life that I will never leave you.” And as they went on their way, ⁷fifty fellow prophets of Jericho followed them at a certain distance.

When Elijah and Elisha stood by the Jordan ⁸Elijah took his mantle, rolled it, and struck the water with it. The water parted to both sides and they crossed over on dry ground.

⁹After they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “What shall I do for you before I am taken away from you? Ask me.” Elisha said, “May I receive a double portion of your spirit.” ¹⁰Elijah answered, “Your request is most difficult. Yet if you see me while I am being taken from you, then you shall have it. But if not, you shall not have it.”

¹¹As they were talking on the way, a chariot of fire with horses of fire stood

between them, and Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹²Elisha saw him and cried out, “Father, my father, chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”

When Elisha lost sight of him, he took hold of his own clothes and tore them. ¹³He then picked up the mantle which had fallen from Elijah and returned to the banks of the Jordan. ¹⁴He took the cloak that had fallen off Elijah, hit the water with it, and asked, “Where is the Yahweh, the God of Elijah?” When he hit the water again, it divided and Elisha crossed over.

¹⁵The fellow prophets of Jericho saw him from the other side, and said, “The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha.” And as they came to him, they bowed to the ground before him saying, ¹⁶“There are fifty valiant men here with us. Let them go in search of Elijah, for it may be that the spirit of Yahweh has left him on some mountain or some valley.” Elisha replied, “Do not send anyone.” ¹⁷But they insisted so much that Elisha let them go, and they sent fifty men to search for Elijah. ¹⁸After three days they had not found him and they returned to Elisha, who had stayed in Jericho. He commented, “Did I not tell you not to go?”

• ¹⁹The men of the city said to Elisha, “The location of this city is good, as my lord can see, but the water is bad, and

ment, Moses and Elijah, will be with Jesus during his transfiguration. Nothing, not even death can overcome the one who burned with jealous love for Yahweh, his God, and who fought for him alone.

Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (v. 11). When Scripture says that Elijah was taken up to heaven, we must not insist on the image of “going up” (as in the Ascension of Jesus). In those days, people believed that God lived on high, and God, who speaks to people of every age according to their own concepts, wanted Elijah to disappear visibly, as if taken up to heaven.

My father, chariots of Israel and its horsemen (v. 12)! The meaning of Elisha’s exclamation is made clear by Israel’s past. Before their Canaanite enemies who had war chariots and horses, the Israelites, poorly equipped, placed their trust in the Lord, who was their only

strength and who became for them the chariots and the horses at the same time. Here Elijah is taken up to heaven by the divine carriage.

Elijah’s strange disappearance will encourage the Jews who hope for the Lord’s triumphant coming to begin the definitive kingdom. The conviction arises among the Jews that Elijah will return at that time and prepare for the coming of the Lord (see Sir 48:1 and Mal 3:32). See what Jesus says to that effect (Mk 9:12).

Scripture leaves us in the dark as to what happened to Elijah. Thus, it prepares us for the announcement of Jesus’ resurrection and the faith of the church in the assumption of Mary, his mother.

• 19. Of all the people in the Scriptures, Elisha appears as the man most gifted in working miracles, but he is not considered greater than any others because of that. He lives among

1K
19:19

Is 61:1

1Mac
2:58;
Sir 48:
9, 12;
Gen
5:24;
Lk 24:51

13:14

Num
11:25;
Is 11:2;
1P 4:14

1K
8:12;
Ezk 9:14

Dt 34:6

so the land is unproductive.”²⁰ He said to them, “Bring me a new pot with salt in it.” When they brought it to him,²¹ Elisha went to the fountain and threw salt in it saying, “This is what Yahweh says: ‘I have healed this water, never more will it cause death or sickness.’”²² And the water has remained wholesome to this day, just as Elisha said.

²³From there, he went up to Bethel. He was on his way when some youths came out from the city and made fun of him saying, “Go up, bald head! Go up, bald head!”²⁴ Elisha turned around, looked at them, and cursed them in the name of Yahweh. At once, two she-bears came out of the forest and killed forty-two of them.²⁵ From there, Elisha set out for Mount Carmel, and from there, he returned to Samaria.

3¹ Jehoram, son of Ahab, began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and he reigned for twelve years.² He did what was displeasing to Yahweh, but not as his father or mother had done, for he removed the statue of Baal which his father had made.³ Nonetheless he clung to the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which had become the sin of Israel, and did not depart from it.

Expedition of Israel and Judah against Moab

⁴Mesha, the king of Moab, had flocks of sheep. He paid the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with their wool annually.⁵ But when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

⁶At that time, king Jehoram set out from Samaria to mobilize the whole of Israel.⁷ He also sent word to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah: “The king of Moab has rebelled against me; will you come with me to fight against Moab?” Jehoshaphat answered him, “I will go with you for you and I are one. My men and my horses are at your disposal.”⁸ Jehoram asked, “By which way shall we go up?” And he answered, “By the way of the desert of Edom.”

⁹The kings of Israel, of Judah and of Edom had been going around for seven days, and there was no water for the soldiers and for the animals that followed them.¹⁰ Then the king of Israel said, “Yahweh has called us three kings to give us into the hands of Moab.”¹¹ Then Jehoshaphat asked, “Is there no prophet of Yahweh here, through whom we may consult Yahweh?” One of the servants of the king of Israel said, “Elisha, son of Shaphat, is here. It was he who poured water on the hands of Elijah.”¹² And Jehoshaphat agreed, “Indeed, God’s word comes to him.” So the king of Israel, the king of Edom and Jehoshaphat went down to Elisha.

¹³Elisha said to the king of Israel, “What have I to do with you? Go see the prophets of your father or those of your mother.” But the king of Israel asked him, “Has Yahweh perhaps called us three together to deliver us into the hands of Moab?”

¹⁴Elisha replied, “Had not Jehoshaphat the king of Judah been before me, I swear by Yahweh God of Hosts whom I serve, that I would not attend to you nor look at you.

¹⁵Now, bring me someone who plays the harp.” As the musician played, the hand of Yahweh came upon Elisha¹⁶ and he said, “This is the word of Yahweh: ‘Dig trenches and more trenches in this valley,’¹⁷ for Yahweh says: ‘You shall not see wind or rain, but the valley shall be filled with water, and you, your troops and your livestock will drink.’”¹⁸ This is an easy thing for Yahweh, for he shall give Moab into your hands.¹⁹ You shall conquer all the fortified cities, cut down all fruit-bearing trees, close up all the springs of water, and scatter stones in all the plowed fields.”

²⁰In the morning, at the time of the offering, water came from the direction of Edom, and the whole country was flooded.

²¹The Moabites had learned that the kings had come to attack them, so they gathered together all the men able to bear arms and positioned them at the border.²² When they woke up in the morning, they saw the sun shining upon the water, and this appeared to them as if it were blood.

the sons of prophets, meaning fellow prophets. These are poor men, with a touch of fanaticism in their faith; living in religious communities with their wives and children. They will help Elisha in his mission (see 1 S 19:18).

Elisha receives Elijah’s spirit and continues his mission. Many of his miracles are related in the following chapters. Some may have been expanded or distorted by tradition for teaching purposes (as for example with the forty-two children).

²³ So the Moabites said, "Look at the blood; the kings have surely turned against one another and killed each other. Let us now go and gather the booty!" ²⁴ But when they came to the camp, the Israelites confronted, defeated and routed them. The Israelites pursued and entered Moab. ²⁵ They destroyed the cities of Moab; and each man threw stones on the fertile land, until it was covered. They closed up the springs of water and cut down fruit trees. Only Kir-hareseth was left with stones, but men armed with slings, surrounded the city and began harassing it.

²⁶ When the king of Moab saw that his enemies were winning, he gathered seven hundred warriors to break through the blockade, opposite the king of Edom. But they did not succeed. ²⁷ So he took his first-born son who was to succeed him as king, and sacrificed him in the fire upon the wall. The fury that came upon the Israelites was great, so they withdrew from there and returned to their own land.

The widow's oil

4 • ¹ The widow of one of the fellow prophets called Elisha saying, "You know that my husband feared God. But now his creditor has come to collect payment. And as we could not pay, he wanted to take my two sons as slaves." ² Elisha said, "What can I do for you? Tell me what you have in your house?" She answered, "I have but a little oil." ³ Elisha said to her, "Go and ask your neighbors for empty jars. ⁴ Get as many as you can. Then go into your house with your sons and close the door. Pour oil into

the vessels. And when they are filled, set them aside."

⁵ The woman went and locked herself in her house with her sons. They handed her the vessels and she filled them all. ⁶ She said to one of her sons, "Bring me another vessel," and he answered, "There are no more." Then the oil stopped flowing.

⁷ When she went back to tell this to the man of God, he said to her, "Go and sell the oil to pay for your debts. You and your sons can live on the money that is left."

The resurrection of the Shunammite's son

• ⁸ One day Elisha went to Shunem, and a rich woman invited him to eat. Afterward, whenever he went to that town, he would go to her house to eat.

⁹ The woman said to her husband, "See, this man who constantly passes by our house is a holy man of God. ¹⁰ If you want, we can make a small upper room for him, and place a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp in it. So when he comes, he may stay and rest."

¹¹ One day when Elisha came, he went to the upper room and lay down. ¹² Then he said to Gehazi, his manservant, "Call the Shunammite woman." She came when called and stood before Elisha.

¹³ Elisha said to him: "Say to her, 'You have taken all this trouble for us.

• **4.1** Of all the prophets of Israel, Elisha is the one nearest to the poor and marginalized of his time. It is in their midst and in their favor that he works most of his miracles. Because of this, the accounts handed down to us still keep the flavor and the colorful way these first witnesses have related them. Even if they belong more to legend than to history, these texts nevertheless tell us how these simple people recognized the power given by God to his prophet in order to help and console them.

• 8. All the elements of human tragedy are joined here: hope, happy life, death, the an-

guished heart of a mother who does not resign herself to the death of the son of her womb, her call of despair to the man of God.

We must meditate on the very moving resurrection at the hands of Elisha: mouth to mouth, eyes on eyes, hand in hand to communicate his warmth and restore life. It is an unusually concrete image of what Christ achieves in us when he "resurrects" us and fills us with life by his intimate touch. As St. Patrick, filled with enthusiasm in his missionary journeys, used to say: "Christ ahead of me, Christ behind me; Christ at my left; Christ at my right; Christ in me, Christ over me."

Dt 20:19

Jdg
11:30;
Mic 6:721:2;
Ne 5:1;
Mt 18:25

Tell me: what then can we do for you? Would you like me to say something to the king or the commander of the army for you?" But she answered, "I do not need anything in this land."¹⁴ So Elisha said to Gehazi, "What can we do for her?" The young man answered, "She has no children and her husband is now old."

¹⁵And so Elisha said to him, "Call her." The young man called her; and as the woman stood by the door,¹⁶Elisha said, "By this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms." She answered, "No, my lord, O man of God, you are deceiving your maid-servant."

¹⁷But the woman gave birth to a son precisely at the time Elisha had told her.

¹⁸The boy grew. One day, when he had gone out to his father among the harvesters, he had a severe headache. ¹⁹So the father ordered his servant, "Carry him to his mother."²⁰ The servant brought him to his mother, and the boy sat on her lap till noon, when he died.

²¹Then the mother went up and laid him on Elisha's bed and she left, closing the door. ²²Then she called her husband, "Send me one of the servants with an ass. I am going to the man of God, and I will come back."²³ He asked, "Why are you going to him? It is not the new moon yet nor the Sabbath." But she said, "Do not worry."

²⁴She saddled the ass, and said to her servant, "Lead on, and don't stop until I tell you."²⁵ So she set off and arrived at Mount Carmel where the man of God was.

Elisha saw her from afar, so he said to his servant, "Here comes our Shunamite. ²⁶Run to meet her and ask: Are you well? How is your husband? And your son?" She answered,

"Everything is all right."²⁷ She went to the man of God, and embraced his feet. Then Gehazi came to draw her away, but the man of God said to him, "Leave her, for her soul is in bitter distress, and Yahweh has not made known to me nor has he revealed it to me."

²⁸She said, "Did I ask, my lord, for a son? Why have you deceived me?"

²⁹Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready, take my staff and go. If you meet anyone, do not stop to greet him; and if someone greets you, do not greet him in return. And as soon as you arrive, place my staff on the boy's face."

³⁰But the boy's mother said, "I swear by Yahweh and by your life that I will not leave you." So Elisha arose and followed her.

³¹Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the boy's face, but the boy did not move or give any sign of life, so Gehazi returned to meet them and said, "The boy has not revived."

³²Elisha came into the house, and found the dead boy lying on his bed.

³³He entered, closed the door behind him, and prayed to Yahweh. ³⁴Then he lay upon the boy, put his mouth upon the boy's mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, his hands upon the boy's hands, and warmth returned to the boy's body. ³⁵Elisha came down and began walking to and fro. Then he went upstairs to stretch himself upon the boy, and the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

³⁶Elisha then called Gehazi and said, "Call the woman." And when she came, Elisha told her, "Take your son."³⁷ She bowed at his feet, then she took her son and went out.

³⁸Elisha returned to Gilgal. There was great scarcity of food in the region, and when the fellow prophets came to sit with Elisha, he said to his servant, "Take the big pot and prepare

Gen
18:10Gen
21:1;
Ps113:91K
17:17Lk 10:4;
4:171K
17:23;
Lk 8:55

some broth for the fellow prophets.”³⁹ One of them went out into the field to gather herbs. He found a wild plant, from which he gathered poisonous fruits, enough to fill his cloak. When he came back, he cut them into pieces and put them in the pot where the broth was being prepared, for he did not know what they were.⁴⁰ Then the broth was served to the men to eat. But as soon as they tasted the soup, they cried out, “Man of God, this is pure poison!” So they did not eat any more.⁴¹ Then Elisha said, “Bring me flour.” And he put it into the pot. Then he said, “Serve these men and let them eat.” And there was no longer anything harmful in the pot.

The multiplication of loaves

• ⁴² A man came from Baal-shalishah bringing bread and wheat to the man of God. These were from the first part of the harvest, twenty loaves of barley and wheat. Elisha told him, “Give the loaves to these men that they may eat.”

⁴³ His servant said to him, “How am I to divide these loaves among one hundred men?” Elisha insisted, “Give them to the men that they may eat, for Yahweh says: ‘They shall eat and

have some left over.’”⁴⁴ So the man set it before them; and they ate and had some left, as Yahweh had said.

Mt 14:20

Naaman healed of leprosy

5 • ¹ Naaman was the army commander of the king of Aram. This man was highly regarded and enjoyed the king’s favor, for Yahweh had helped him lead the army of the Arameans to victory. But this valiant man was sick with leprosy.

² One day some Aramean soldiers raided the land of Israel and took a young girl captive who became a servant to the wife of Naaman. She said to her mistress,³ “If my master would only present himself to the prophet in Samaria, he would surely cure him of his leprosy.”

⁴ Naaman went to tell the king what the young Israelite maidservant had said.⁵ The king of Aram said to him, “Go to the prophet, and I shall also send a letter to the king of Israel.”

So Naaman went and took with him ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces and ten festal garments.⁶ On his arrival, he delivered the letter to the king of Israel. It said, “I present my servant Naaman to you that you may heal him of his leprosy.

Gen 30:2; Dt 32:39; 1S 2:6

Lev 23:17

Mt 14:16

• 42. We should compare this multiplication of loaves with the two multiplications at the hand of Jesus; they are related in very similar ways and, yet, each has a different meaning (see especially Jn 6).

• 5.1 Naaman’s healing holds a special place among Elisha’s miracles. Here, we can easily discover a prefigurement of baptism which cleanses us from sin.

Even though Naaman is a famous general, he can do nothing about his leprosy. He wants to be renewed, to leave his contaminated skin behind and hope is offered to him: such miracles take place in Israel.

The girl said to her mistress (v. 2). It all begins with the word of a girl, Naaman’s servant. Similarly, any believer today has many opportunities to say something or to do something

which will bring about good to those who seek to be cured. The Good News is not only communicated and spread through the work of the great apostles. In the Gospel (Lk 4:27) Jesus points to the healing of this foreigner in preference to all the lepers in Israel, as a proof that God cares for everyone and not only for those who are officially the faithful.

Elisha then sent a message (v. 8). To the prophet, the great general is no more than any other person. He receives no privileges, nor special attention through a private consultation. Since he did not even get down from his chariot, Elisha does not go out to greet him.

Go to the river Jordan and wash (v. 10). Naaman expected something like “magic,” a gesture or words filled with divine power. Yet, his healing will come through simple contact with the waters flowing through the land of

⁷When the king read the letter, he tore his clothes to show his indignation, “I am not God to give life or death. And the king of Aram sends me this man to be healed! You see, he is just looking for an excuse for war.”

⁸Elisha, the man of God, came to know that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, so he sent this message to him: “Why have you torn your clothes? Let the man come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stopped before the house of Elisha. ^{Jn 9:7} ¹⁰Elisha then sent a messenger to tell him, “Go to the river Jordan and wash seven times, and your flesh shall be as it was before, and you shall be cleansed.”

^{Mt 8:3} ¹¹Naaman was angry, so he went away. He thought: “On my arrival, he should have personally come out, and then paused and called on the name of Yahweh, his God. And he should have touched with his hand the infected part, and I would have been healed. ¹²Are the rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar not better than all the rivers of the land of Israel? Could I not wash there to be healed?”

¹³His servants approached him and said to him, “Father, if the prophet

had ordered you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? But how much easier when he said: ‘Take a bath and you will be cleansed.’”

¹⁴So Naaman went down to the Jordan where he washed himself seven times as Elisha had ordered. His skin became soft like that of a child and he was cleansed. Lk 4:27

¹⁵Then Naaman returned to the man of God with all his men. He entered and said to him, “Now I know that there is no other God anywhere in the world but in Israel. I ask you to accept these gifts from your servant.”

¹⁶But Elisha answered, “I swear by Yahweh whom I serve, I will accept nothing.” And however much Naaman insisted, Elisha would not accept his gifts.

¹⁷So Naaman told him, “Since you refuse, let me get some sacks of soil from your land—the amount that two mules can carry. I shall use it to build an altar to Yahweh, for I shall not offer sacrifices to any other god but him.

¹⁸But may Yahweh pardon me: when my king goes to the temple of his god Rimmon, he leans on my arm, and I bow down with him. May Yahweh pardon me for this.” ¹⁹Elisha answered, “Go in peace.” And Naaman went.

God. Israel is a very small country, yet the riches of the Lord are hidden there.

If the prophet had ordered you to do something difficult, would you not have done it (v. 13)? People expect wonders: he only asks the simple following of a command. Jesus will proceed the same way (Jn 4:46). It is not important to achieve extraordinary things, but rather what God asks. We often miss his kingdom because we want to make great efforts instead of doing the simple things that God asks.

Healing is a gift. The fabulous treasure Naaman brought with him is useless. The Lord is the one who gives, he does not charge nor does he want us to pay him. All he asks is that if we discover his merciful love, we love him in return for his love.

When my king goes to the temple of his god Rimmon, ... I bow down with him (v. 18). Now

Naaman knows there is no other God than the God of Israel. But he cannot desert the world in which he lives and where other gods are honored. Elisha's answer shows that God understands the situation.

The same understanding toward people of good will who follow other religions is expressed in some texts of Genesis and Exodus which were precisely written by prophets of the same groups around Elisha (see Gen 20:1-7 and Ex 18:1-20).

Naaman represents a man of good will afflicted with an incurable disease, which is sin, who comes to the Church from far away because he discovers that there is a hidden source of life in it. The water of baptism does not work by itself; its effectiveness comes from the fact that it is through baptism that we join the people of Christ, the Church.

Naaman was already at a certain distance, ²⁰when Gehazi, Elisha's servant, thought: "Imagine that my lord refused to take the gifts that Aramean brought! As Yahweh lives, I will run after him and get some of them!"

²¹Gehazi went after Naaman and Naaman saw Gehazi running after him, so he jumped out of his chariot to greet him. ²²Gehazi said to him, "Pardon me, lord, my master sent me to say to you: 'Two young men from the community of the prophets have just come to me from the mountain of Ephraim, kindly give me a talent of silver and two new garments for them.'" Naaman replied, ²³"Please accept two talents of silver."

He insisted that Gehazi accept them, so he put the two talents of silver with two new garments in two sacks, and handed them over to two of his servants who carried them before Gehazi. ²⁴When they reached Ophel, Gehazi took them from their hands and put them away in his house. Then he sent the two servants of Naaman away, and they left.

²⁵When he appeared before his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" He answered, "Your servant has not been any place."

²⁶Elisha replied, "I was there in spirit when a man turned and got down from his chariot to meet you. This is not the proper time to accept silver or to accept clothes, olive groves, vine-

yards, sheep, cattle, and male and female servants. ²⁷Therefore, Naaman's skin disease will afflict you and your descendants forever!" When Gehazi went out from his presence, his skin was as white as snow.

Num
12:10

6 ¹Now the fellow prophets said to Elisha, "See, the place where we are gathered has become too small for us. ²Let us go to the Jordan, and let each of us get a log to build a shed where we can gather." Elisha answered, "Go." ³Then one of them said to him, "Why do you not come along with us?" ⁴So Elisha went with them. And when they arrived at the Jordan, they began to cut down the trees. ⁵But as one of them was cutting a tree, the iron ax blade fell into the water, and he exclaimed, "O my master, it was borrowed!" The man of God asked him, ⁶"Where did it fall?" And he showed Elisha the place. Elisha cut off a stick, threw it in there, and the iron piece floated. ⁷Elisha said, "Get it." The man reached out his hand and took it.

Elisha captures an armed band of Arameans

• ⁸At that time when the king of Aram was raiding Israel, he consulted with his officials, and told them, "Let us attack that people." ⁹But the man of God sent a message to the king of Israel, "Guard this place for the Arameans shall go there." ¹⁰So the

6:12;
1K 14:5;
Jn 1:48

• **6.8** We single out this narrative adorned by legends, which shows Elisha's intervention in the life of the nation. Elisha received the mission to change the king of Israel who was responsible for the religious infidelity of his people, as well as the king of Aram. Joram and Ben-hadad mentioned here will shortly be murdered.

The prophets of Israel are messengers entrusted by God with the salvation of Israel, and this salvation does not only mean that our souls go to heaven as many people believe, but rather that the entire life of a people must bring them to greater awareness and responsibility. The

people of Israel could not mature (and neither can people now) without a long experience of violence, injustice and lies as well as a way of covering these things.

Give them bread and water (v. 22)—a prophetic gesture: overcome evil through good.

Open his eyes... Blind them (vv. 17, 18, 20). These words show the contrast between those who see the situation as God does and those who get lost in their own wisdom. How much time we waste, how often we are paralyzed by our own fears, instead of taking risks and proceeded, in the trust that God cannot fail!

king of Israel sent men to the place indicated by the man of God, and they kept watch there. And this happened several times. ¹¹The king of Aram was worried because of these things, so he called his officials and told them, "Go and find out who is revealing our plans to the king of Israel." ¹²One of his officials said, "None of us has betrayed you, my king, but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, makes known to his king even the words you say in your bedroom."

¹³The king answered them, "Go then and find out where he lives, that I may send people to arrest him." When they told him that Elisha was in Dothan, ¹⁴he sent chariots, horses and strong troops, who arrived there by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵On the following day, when the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning, he went out and saw the Arameans surrounding the city with their chariots and horses. He said to Elisha, "O my master, what shall we do?" ¹⁶He answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷Elisha prayed and said, "Yahweh, open his eyes that he may see." Yahweh opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw the hill full of horses and chariots of fire around Elisha.

¹⁸As the Arameans came down to him, Elisha again prayed to Yahweh, "Blind them." So Yahweh made them unable to see as Elisha had asked. ¹⁹Elisha told them, "This is not the way nor is this the city. Follow me and I shall bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria. ²⁰When they had entered Samaria, Elisha said, "Yahweh, open their eyes

that they may see;" and they saw they were in Samaria.

²¹When the king of Israel saw them, he said to Elisha, "My father, should I kill them?" ²²He answered, "If you do not kill those whom you have captured with your sword and your bow, how can you kill these men? Give them bread and water so they may eat and drink, and let them return to their master."

²³So the king served them a grand banquet, and they ate and drank. Then he sent them away to their master. From that day on, the troops of Aram did not return any more to invade the territories of Israel.

Famine and the liberation of Samaria

²⁴Afterwards Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, gathered together all his troops and went to lay siege to Samaria. ²⁵There was great famine in Samaria; so great was the misery that the head of an ass was sold for eighty pieces of silver, and a half-liter of wild onions for five pieces of silver.

²⁶The king of Israel was walking by upon the wall when a woman cried out to him, "Save me, my lord King!" ²⁷The king answered, "In what way can I help you? If Yahweh does not give you bread, where shall I get it?" ²⁸What is the matter?" She answered, "That woman told me: 'give up your son that we may eat him today, and then we will eat my son tomorrow.' ²⁹So we cooked my son and ate him. But on the next day, when I said to her: 'Take your son that we may eat him', she had hidden him."

³⁰When the king heard the words of the woman, he tore his clothes. He was upon the wall, and the people saw

Gen
19:1;
Wis
19:17;
Acts
13:11

Lev
26:29

May God punish me, if the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, remains on his shoulders today (v. 31). The king's words tell us that Elisha had encouraged resistance to the Arameans while the leaders did not dare do so. If the

prophets who in their time witnessed the justice of God were not afraid of assuming responsibility in national problems, why should Christians, God's prophets today, be absent from the political life of their time?

that he was wearing sackcloth under his tunic. ³¹The king swore: "May God punish me, if the head of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, remains on his shoulders today." And the king sent a guard to Elisha's house.

³²Elisha was seated in his house and the elders were sitting with him. Before the messenger's arrival, Elisha said to them, "Do you not know that this murderer has ordered someone to cut my head off? Well then, when the messenger comes, shut the door and do not let him in. Behind him, I hear the sound of his master's footsteps." ³³He was still talking to them, when the king arrived. The king said, "If all this evil comes from Yahweh, why should I still trust him?"

7 ¹But Elisha answered, "Listen to the word of Yahweh: Tomorrow at this same time, at the gate of Samaria, a measure of flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, too." ²The shield bearer, on whose arm the king leaned, said to the man of God, "Even if Yahweh opens the windows of heaven for it to rain wheat, how could this thing be?" Elisha answered, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it."

³Four men were at the city gates, outside, at the other side of the wall. They were lepers. And on that day, they said to one another, "Shall we sit here until we die? ⁴If we decide to enter the city, there we shall die of hunger. But if we stay here, we die as well. So let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare our lives, then we live; and if they kill us, then let us die!"

⁵They arose as it was getting dark to go to the camp of the Arameans. But when they reached the camp, they found no one there. ⁶Yahweh had let the Arameans hear the noise

of chariots and horses, the sound of a great army. And they had thought: "The king of Israel has sent money to the kings of the Hittites and Moshrites to come and attack us."

⁷So they fled as it was getting dark to save themselves, abandoning their tents, their horses, and their asses, leaving the camp just as it was.

⁸When these lepers reached the camp boundary, they went into a tent. They ate and drank; they took the silver, gold and clothes, and hid them there in the ground. They entered another tent and took whatever they found, and hid them in the same way.

⁹Then they thought: "What we are doing is not good. Today is a day of good tidings, and if we keep silent until tomorrow, we shall be guilty. So let us go and tell this to the king's men."

¹⁰Returning to the city, they called out to the city guards, saying, "We went to the camp of the Arameans but no one was there, not a trace of anyone, only horses and asses tied, and the tents just as they were left." ¹¹The guards cried out the news and it was told within the king's household.

¹²The king arose in the night and said to his officials, "The Arameans know that we are hungry. They have left their camp and have hidden in the field, waiting for us to come out of the city that they may take us alive and then get into the city." ¹³One of the officials answered, "Let some men take five of the remaining horses for,

at any rate, these are also bound to die of hunger, as are all the people of this city. Dispatch them and see."

¹⁴So they took two chariots and their horses, and the king sent the horsemen after the Arameans. ¹⁵They went as far as the Jordan, and all the way was littered with clothes and equipment which the Arameans had thrown away in their flight.

The messengers returned and told this to the king. ¹⁶Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. A measure of flour was sold for a shekel and a double measure of barley was also sold for a shekel, as Elisha had said. ¹⁷The king had appointed his shield bearer to keep watch at the city gates. But he was crushed right there by the crowd, so that he died; ¹⁸just as Elisha had told him when the king had come down to see him.

For when Elisha had said to the king, "Tomorrow at this hour, at the gate of Samaria, two measures of barley as well as a measure of flour shall be sold for a shekel," ¹⁹the shield bearer had said to the man of God, "Even if Yahweh opens the windows of heaven for it to rain down wheat, what you say will not happen." Then Elisha had told him, "You shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it." ²⁰So it happened. The people ran over him and crushed him at the city gates, and there he died.

8 ¹Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had brought back to life, "Arise, and go with your family to live in another place, wherever it seems best for you, because Yahweh has called for a famine and it will come upon the land for seven years." ²The woman did what the man of God told her to do—she went with her family to the land of the Philistines and stayed there for seven years.

³At the end of the seven years, the woman came back to her land and went to ask the king for her house and field.

⁴The king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me all the marvelous things Elisha has done."

⁵As Gehazi was narrating how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman showed up, she whose very son Elisha had raised from the dead. She was claiming back from the king her house and field. Gehazi said, "This, my lord, is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha raised from the dead."

⁶The king asked her about what had happened, and she recounted it to him. Then the king immediately sent a palace official with her, and said to him, "See to it that all her properties are returned to her

with all the produce of her field from the day she left her land until now."

Elisha and Hazael of Damascus

⁷Elisha went to Damascus. Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, was sick. When he was told that the man of God had come, ⁸he said to Hazael, "Go to the man of God and consult Yahweh through him, that I may know if I shall recover from this sickness. But take with you a good gift."

⁹So Hazael went to see Elisha, taking with him all the best he could find in Damascus, forty camel loads of gifts. When he came before Elisha, he said to him, "Your son, Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, has sent me to ask you: 'Shall I recover from this sickness?'" ¹⁰Elisha answered, "Go and tell him that he shall recover. But Yahweh has shown me that he shall certainly die."

¹¹Then the face of the man of God became rigid, his gaze fixed; and he began to weep. ¹²Hazael asked him, "Why do you weep, my lord?" He answered, "Because I have just seen the evil you will do to the children of Israel: you shall set on fire their fortresses, kill their young men by the sword, crush their children, and rip open the womb of pregnant women." ¹³Hazael told him, "Who am I, your servant, that I should carry out such exploits?" Elisha answered, "I have just had a vision: Yahweh has made you king of Aram."

¹⁴Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master who asked him, "What has Elisha said to you?" He answered, "He has told me that you shall surely live." ¹⁵But on the following day, Hazael took a mantle, dipped it in water, and pressed it down on the king's face until he died. And so, Hazael succeeded him as king of Aram.

¹⁶In the fifth year of the reign of Joram, son of Ahab and king of Israel, Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah began to reign. ¹⁷He was thirty-two years old when he began his reign, and he reigned for eight years in Jerusalem. ¹⁸He followed the footsteps of the kings of Israel and acted in everything like the family of Ahab. Because he had married the daughter of Ahab, he acted very badly with Yahweh.

¹⁹However, Yahweh would not destroy Judah for the sake of his servant David, according to the promise he had made to keep his lamp burning forever, which referred to David's descendants.

15:16;
10:32;
12:18;
Am 1:13

21:5-7

1K
16:30

2S 7:11;
Ps
132:10;
1K
11:36

21:8-10 ²⁰In his days, the Edomites rebelled against the rule of Judah, and proclaimed a king of their own. ²¹Then Joram went to attack the city of Zair with all his chariots of war. Rising by night he managed to escape from the Edomites, who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but the troops had fled. ²²Thus Edom has rebelled against Judah to this day. At that time, the city of Libnah also rebelled.

21:20 ²³The rest of the deeds of Joram and his bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁴When Joram died, they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Ahaziah succeeded him.

Ahaziah, king of Judah

22:1-6 ²⁵In the twelfth year of the reign of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, began to reign. ²⁶Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began his reign, and he reigned for a year in Jerusalem. His mother was Athaliah, daughter of Omri, king of Israel. ²⁷He followed in the footsteps of Ahab and acted badly towards Yahweh like those in the family of Ahab had done, since he was related to Ahab's family. ²⁸He went with Joram, the son of Ahab, to make war against Hazael, the king of Aram, at Ramoth of Gilead. ²⁹But the Arameans wounded Joram who returned from Ramoth to Jezreel to recover from his wounds. After a while, Ahaziah, the king of Judah, went to Jezreel to visit him as he was recuperating.

9:14;
1K 22:3

Jehu is anointed king of Israel

9 • ¹The prophet Elisha called one of the fellow prophets, and said to him, "Prepare to go to the city of Ramoth in Gilead taking this bottle of oil. ²Look there for Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Make him leave his companions, and lead him to a place apart from them. ³There, you shall take the bottle and pour the oil on his head, saying: 'Yahweh has anointed you king of Israel.'" Then

1K
19:16

open the door and flee without delay." ⁴So the young man went to Ramoth.

⁵When he arrived, the commanders of the army were seated together; and he said, "I have to talk with you, commander." Jehu asked, "To which of us?" He answered, "To you, commander." ⁶So Jehu arose and went into the house.

Then the young man poured the oil on Jehu's head, and said to him, "Yahweh, the God of Israel, has consecrated you king of the people of Israel. Thus says Yahweh: ⁷You shall overthrow the kings of the family of Ahab, that I may avenge the blood of my servants, the prophets, whom Jezebel has murdered. ⁸I shall destroy the family of Ahab and all their men shall perish. ⁹The family of Ahab shall be like the family of Jeroboam and the family of Baasha. ¹⁰And regarding Jezebel, no one shall bury her, for the dogs shall devour her in the field of Jezreel.'" Then the young man opened the door and fled.

1K 21:
21-24

1K
14:10

¹¹Jehu came out to join the officers of the king. They said to him, "What happened? Why did that fool call you?" Jehu answered, "You know that fellow and you also know why he came." ¹²They said, "We do not know anything. Tell us what he said to you." He answered, "These are his exact words: 'Yahweh has consecrated you king of Israel.'" ¹³Then all the commanders, the companions of Jehu, took their cloaks and put them on a wooden platform in the shape of a throne. And with blast of trumpets, they proclaimed, "Jehu is king!"

1S
10:11;
Hos
9:7

¹⁴Thus Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram.

Mt 21:7

• **9.1** While the descendants of David continue to rule in Judah, in Israel there is one "coup" after another. Elisha is the one who had Jehu anointed, namely, consecrated with oil.

At that time, Joram was with the Israelites defending the city of Ramoth in Gilead against Hazael, king of Aram, ¹⁵but Joram had retreated to Jezreel to recover from the wounds he had received in battle.

Jehu said, "If it seems good to you, let no one leave the city, lest they go and tell the news to the king in Jezreel." ¹⁶Jehu then mounted his chariot and went to Jezreel, where Joram lay sick, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, had gone to visit him.

¹⁷The watchman at the tower in Jezreel saw the retinue of Jehu coming and said, "I see a company." Joram said, "Take your horse and run to meet them, and ask them if they have any news."

¹⁸So the man went out to meet them and said, "The king sent me to ask if you have any news." Jehu answered, "Do not worry about the news. Turn around and follow me." And the watchman immediately reported, "The messenger reached them, but he has not returned."

¹⁹They sent another messenger who came to them and said, "The king wants to know if you bring any news." And Jehu again answered, "Do not worry about the news, turn around and ride behind me." ²⁰Again the watchman reported, "He has reached them, but has not returned. The way of driving of him who comes resembles that of Jehu, son of Nimshi, for he drives like a madman."

²¹Joram then said, "Harness the horses of my chariot." And Joram, the king of Israel, went out with Ahaziah, the king of Judah, each in his

chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him in the field of Naboth of Jezreel.

Jehu murders Joram

²²When Joram saw Jehu, he asked, "Do you bring peace, Jehu?" Jehu answered, "Why do you ask for peace when the prostitution of your mother, Jezebel, and her many sorceries still continue?" ²³So Joram turned his chariot around and fled, saying to Ahaziah, "Treachery, Ahaziah!"

²⁴Jehu then drew his bow with all his strength and shot Joram in the back, so that the arrow pierced his heart. And Joram fell dead in his chariot.

²⁵Jehu said to his shield bearer Bidkar, "Take the body and throw it in the field of Naboth of Jezreel; for remember, when we served together in the cavalry of his father, Ahab, Yahweh pronounced this sentence against him: ²⁶'I swear that in this field, I shall take vengeance on you, for the blood of Naboth and for the blood of his sons which I saw you shed yesterday.' So take his body and throw it into the field according to the word of Yahweh."

²⁷As for Ahaziah, the king of Judah, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, crying out, "Kill him, too!" And they shot him in his chariot at the slope of Gur near Ibleam. He reached Megiddo, took refuge there and died. ²⁸His servants carried his body in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him with his fathers in the city of David. ²⁹Ahaziah had begun his reign in Judah in the eleventh year of the reign of Joram, son of Ahab.

Jezebel is killed

• ³⁰Jehu entered the city of Jezreel. When Jezebel learned this, she painted her eyes, adorned her neck, and looked out of the window. ³¹As Jehu entered the gates, she said to

• 30. Jehu will only be a good soldier. It seems that he was not even successful in his wars and lost the province to the east of the Jordan, the land of Gilead.

However, he was dedicated to the faith (see 10:22) and to the service of Yahweh and the

prophets expected that he would suppress all the influence of the foreign religions introduced by Jezebel, which he did.

Jezebel dies: she will be considered in the Scriptures as an example of a godless woman and a murderer of the servants of Yahweh (see Rev 2:20).

him, "Do you bring peace? Will you not have Zimri's fate after murdering your master?"

³²Jehu looked up to the window and cried out, "Who is on my side?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. ³³He ordered them, "Throw her down." They threw her down through the window, and her blood splashed on the walls and on the horses, and Jehu in his chariot ran over her.

³⁴Jehu entered Jezreel. After he had eaten and drunk, he gave these orders, "Take care of that cursed woman and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." ³⁵They went to bury her, but they found no more than her hands and feet with the skull. ³⁶When they told Jehu about it, he said, "This is what Elijah of Tishbe said in the name of Yahweh: 'In the field of Jezreel, the dogs shall eat Jezebel. ³⁷Her body shall be as dung on the land, so that no one can say: "This was Jezebel."'"

Ahab's family is wiped out

10 ¹The seventy sons of Ahab lived in Samaria. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the leaders of the city, to the judges and to those who took care of the sons of Ahab, saying, ²"As soon as this letter comes to you who have the king's sons, chariots of war and horses, fortified cities and weapons, ³select the best and most fit of your master's sons and make him sit on his father's throne; then prepare to defend the family of your lord."

⁴They were in great fear, and they said, "If the two kings were not able to stand up to him, how then can we resist him?" ⁵The palace chamberlain, the military commissioner of the city, the judges and the tutors sent this response to Jehu: "We are your servants, and we will do whatever you say. We will not proclaim anyone king; do whatever seems best to you."

⁶Then he sent them a second letter which said, "If you are on my side and among those who obey me, take the heads of the sons of the king, your lord, and come to talk to me tomorrow at this time in Jezreel."

The king had seventy sons and they were growing up in the houses of prominent families of the city.

⁷When they received the letter, they seized the king's sons and executed all seventy of them and placed their heads in large baskets which they sent to Jezreel.

⁸The messenger came to where Jehu was and said to him, "Here, they send you the heads of the king's sons." He answered, "Lay them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate of Jezreel until tomorrow."

⁹In the morning, Jehu went out and said to all the people, "Be fair, tell me: if I have conspired against my king and have killed him, who then has beheaded all these?"

¹⁰Know then, that none of the words Yahweh has spoken against the family of Ahab shall be without effect. Everything he said through the mouth of his servant Elijah has been fulfilled."

¹¹Jehu then killed all who remained loyal to Ahab in Jezreel—all his ministers, relatives, priests—without sparing anyone.

¹²Then he left for Samaria; and in Beth-^{22:8}eked of the Shepherds, ¹³he met the brothers of Ahaziah, king of Judah. He asked them, "Who are you?" They answered, "We are the brothers of Ahaziah, and we go to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen." ¹⁴Jehu said, "Take them alive." They took them alive and beheaded them all by the well of Beth-eked. They were forty-two men, and none was left alive.

¹⁵Setting out from there, he met Jehonadab, son of Rechab, who came out to meet him. Jehu greeted him and said, "Would you be faithful to me as I am to you?" Jehonadab answered, "Yes." So Jehu said to him, "Give me your hand." He gave him his hand, and Jehu took him up with him into his chariot, and said, ¹⁶"Come with me and see my zeal for Yahweh." And he had him ride in his chariot.

¹⁷When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all the survivors loyal to Ahab in that city, and he did not spare anyone. So the word Yahweh had said through the mouth of Elijah was fulfilled.

¹⁸Jehu gathered together all the inhabitants and said, "Ahab served Baal, but I will serve him still better." ¹⁹And he added, "Summon all the prophets of Baal, all his faithful followers and priests. ²⁰Let no one be missing at the solemn sacrifice I will

1K
21:23

Jdg 9:5

1K
15:29;
Hos 1:4

Jer
35:1-11

offer to Baal. Whoever is absent shall die.” Jehu did this with cunning, for he was determined to kill all who were faithful to Baal. They themselves proclaimed the sacred solemnity that Jehu had commanded. And Jehu, for his part, ²¹sent messengers throughout Israel for all the faithful of Baal to come without any exception.

When they entered the temple of Baal, they were so many that they hardly touched the ground. ²²Then Jehu ordered those in charge of the vestments to bring out the sacred vestments reserved for the faithful of Baal and to distribute these to them. ²³Jehu who was accompanied by Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, said insistently to the faithful of Baal, “Make sure that none of the faithful of Yahweh has entered with you, that there is no one here except all the true servants of Baal.”

²⁴Then they entered to prepare the sacrifice. But Jehu had stationed eighty men outside, and said to them, “Whoever of you lets anyone escape of those who must die shall pay with his own life.” ²⁵And when the sacrifice was finished, Jehu gave this order to the soldiers and officers, “Go in and kill all of them, let none of them escape.” So, they went in and put everyone to the sword, going as far as the Sanctuary of the house of Baal. ²⁶They pulled out the sacred pillar of the house of Baal and burned it. ²⁷They destroyed the altar and pulled down the temple, which remains a garbage dump to this very day.

²⁸This was how Jehu wiped out the name of Baal from Israel. ²⁹But Jehu did not turn aside from the sins which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit, for they kept the golden calves of Bethel and Dan. ³⁰In spite of this, Yahweh said to Jehu, “Since you have acted well, doing

what seems just to me, and have dealt with the family of Ahab according to my will, your sons until the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” ³¹But Jehu did not completely walk according to the Law of Yahweh, since he did not give up the sins into which Jeroboam had led Israel.

³²In those days, Yahweh began to reduce the land of Israel, and Hazael conquered the Israelites taking their territory ³³from the Jordan to the East, all the land of Gilead, of the tribes of Gad, Reuben, Manasseh, from Aroer by the brook of Arnon, all the land of Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴Now the rest of the story of Jehu, all that he did and his bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ³⁵When Jehu died, they buried him in Samaria, and his son Jehoahaz reigned in his place. ³⁶Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria for twenty-eight years.

Athaliah in Judah

11 • ¹When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son had died, she was determined to wipe out all the descendants of the king. ²But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash, her nephew, and brought him away from among the king’s sons who were about to be killed, and put him with his wet nurse in the bedroom. Thus she hid him from Athaliah, so that the boy was saved. ³And Joash remained hidden in the house of Yahweh for six years while Athaliah reigned over the land.

⁴In the seventh year, Jehoiada the

• **11.1** Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. When her son Ahaziah, the king of Judah dies, she thinks of taking over the kingdom by killing all her grandchildren. This would mean the end of David’s descendants, or the failure of Yahweh’s promises. Joash escapes death under miraculous circumstances. Six years later, the head of the priests succeeds in a plot with the help of the “people of the land,” that is to say, the free men who enjoy full rights as citizens (vv. 14, 18, 19...). These remain faithful to David’s family.

History shows that on several occasions the people have been the ones who preserve the faith when the authorities failed to do so. Thus,

in the fourth century A.D., the errors of Arius—who denied the divinity of Christ—were accepted by many bishops who were influenced by the Roman emperor. In a church where authority came from above but where, in fact, the emperor named the bishops, the situation seemed desperate in spite of the courage of a few great bishops such as St. Hilary and St. Athanasius. It was the resistance of Christian people that assured the victory of the faith.

The chief priest restores the child king and he also tries to give him directions. An agreement is signed according to which the people and the king commit themselves to be faithful to the Covenant of Yahweh.

chief priest, summoned the officers of the royal guard and of the Carites to the house of Yahweh. After concluding a pact with them under oath, he showed them the king's son.

⁵Then he gave them these orders, "One third of your men who come on duty on the Sabbath shall guard the king's house, ⁶another third shall be at the foundation gate, and the last third at the back gates. Keep watch continuously. ⁷Now about those who come off duty on the Sabbath, two divisions of them shall guard the house of Yahweh and surround king Joash. ⁸You shall be at his side, each with drawn weapons, and you will kill all who would cross your line. Take care of the king wherever he goes."

⁹The commanders of the guards did what Jehoiada the priest had told them to do; and they showed up with all their men, those who were to go off duty on the Sabbath as well as those who were to come on duty on that day. ¹⁰Jehoiada entrusted to the officers the spears and shields of king David which were in the house of Yahweh. ¹¹And then the guards stood from the southern corner of the house to the north, surrounding the altar and the house of Yahweh.

¹²Then Jehoiada, the priest, brought out the king's son, crowned him and put the bracelets on him, then proclaimed and consecrated him king. All clapped their hands, shouting and crying out, "Long live the king!"

¹³When Athaliah heard the noise of the people, she approached the crowd surrounding the house of Yahweh.

¹⁴The king was standing by the pillar, according to the custom, and the officers and the trumpeters were with him. The people were filled with joy and they were blowing trumpets. On seeing this, Athaliah tore her clothes and cried out, "Treason, treason!"

¹⁵Jehoiada the priest commanded the officers, "Surround her and bring her out to the courtyard, and kill anyone who tries to defend her." He gave this order, because he thought, "She should not die in the house of Yahweh."

¹⁶They brought her out, and when they reached the palace of the king, by the horses' entrance, there, they killed her.

¹⁷Jehoiada made a Covenant between Yahweh and the king and the people so they would be the people of Yahweh. ¹⁸All the citizens went to the temple of Baal and destroyed it. They broke the altars and the images into pieces, and killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, before his altar.

Then Jehoiada, the priest, posted guards over the house of Yahweh. ¹⁹He led the officers, the guards of the king, the Carites guards and the citizens, and they accompanied the king to the palace, passing through the Gate of the Guards. King Joash sat on the royal throne. ²⁰All the citizens were happy and the city was at peace. Now regarding Athaliah, she had died by the sword in the king's palace.

Reign of Joash in Judah

12 • ¹Joash was seven years old when he began his reign. ²It was then the seventh year of the reign of Jehu, and he reigned for forty years in Jerusalem. His

• **12.1** The following six chapters relate the history of the kingdom of Israel and Judah from Joash to the destruction of the kingdom of Israel (the northern kingdom) in the year 721 B.C., a period of over a hundred years.

In Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, there are only four kings, the first two rule for forty years each.

In Israel, at first the sons of Jehu suffer many setbacks. Their third descendant, Jeroboam II, will achieve a period of prosperity thanks to his victories.

Meanwhile, the powerful kings of Assyria conquer everywhere and soon threaten Israel with their armies and their power.

1S
21:10;
2S 8:7

2S 2:4;
1K 1:39

DI 4:20;
Jer 34:8

24:1-6

Dt
17:18;
Jer
18:18
14:4;
1K
22:43

mother was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. ³Joash did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh as long as the priest Jehoiada guided him. ⁴But he did not demolish the Sanctuaries on the hillsides where people continued offering sacrifices and burning incense.

⁵Joash said to the priest, "All the money from the sacred contributions which the people bring to offer in the house of Yahweh, the money in cash, that which is offered as personal assessment, and that which is freely and voluntarily given in the house of Yahweh—⁶all these you can receive. Let each one receive from the hand of those to whom he attends, but you are to repair the house of Yahweh, when anything needs to be repaired."

⁷By the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash, the priests had not yet carried out the repairs needed in the house of Yahweh. ⁸So the king summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests with him, and said to them, "Why have you not carried out the repairs of the house yet? From now on, you will no longer keep any money during your service, but shall set it aside for the repair of the house." ⁹The priests agreed that henceforth, they would not accept money from the people and would not be in charge of the repair of the house. ¹⁰So Jehoiada, the priest, had a box made with a hole in the cover. He placed this by the altar, to the right side of those entering the house of Yahweh, and the priests who were at the gates put in all the money offered in the house of Yahweh.

¹¹Whenever they saw that the box was full, a secretary of the king would come, and together with the high priest, they would take and count the money. ¹²Then they would turn the amount over into the hands of those responsible for the work of the house, who would, in turn, pay with this money the carpenters and bricklayers doing the repairs. ¹³From this amount, they also bought the stones, wood and everything necessary for the repair of the house of Yahweh. ¹⁴But of this money given for the house of Yahweh, they did not make any silver cups, or cutting tools, or water jars, or trumpets, or any golden or silver objects, ¹⁵but all the money was used to pay those who were repairing the house of Yahweh. ¹⁶Accounts were not asked from those responsible for paying the laborers, since they acted with great honor. ¹⁷Only

the money offered for the expiation of sins was for the priests.

¹⁸At that time Hazael, king of Aram, went up to fight against Gath. He captured it and was heading for Jerusalem. ¹⁹So Joash, king of Judah, took all the precious things that his fathers, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, kings of Judah, had consecrated, with all that he himself had consecrated, and all the gold he could find in the treasury of the house of Yahweh and in those of the king's house. Then he sent them to Hazael, king of Aram, who left Jerusalem with them.

²⁰Now the rest regarding Joash and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

²¹Some of his officials plotted a conspiracy against him, and they killed him in Beth-Millo, as he was going to Silla. ²²Jozacar, son of Shimeath, and Jehoabad, son of Shomer, struck him down, and he died. He was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Amaziah reigned in his place.

Jehoahaz, king of Israel

13 ¹In the twenty-third year of the reign of Joash, son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, began to rule over Israel from Samaria, its capital; he reigned for seventeen years. ²He acted badly towards Yahweh and persisted in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which had become the sins of Israel, without turning away from them. ³So the anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of Hazael, king of Aram, and into the hands of Ben-hadad, son of Hazael, throughout that time.

⁴But Jehoahaz prayed to Yahweh, and Yahweh listened to him for he had seen the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them. ⁵And Yahweh gave Israel a liberator who would free them from the oppression of Aram, so the Israelites could live peacefully in their homes as before.

⁶(But they did not turn away from the sins by which Jeroboam made Israel sin, for the sacred pillar still remained standing in Samaria.) ⁷No more than fifty horsemen, ten chariots of war and ten thousand soldiers were left of the army of Jehoahaz, for the king of Aram had wiped out all the rest like dust.

⁸The rest about Jehoahaz, all that he

24:
23-27;
2K10:32
1K
15:18

14:4;
1K
22:44

did and his bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ⁹When Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, they buried him in Samaria and his son Joash reigned in his place.

Joash, king of Israel

¹⁰ Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to rule over Israel in the thirty-seventh year of king Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria sixteen years. ¹¹He did what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh; he did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, made Israel commit. ¹²The rest about Joash and all that he did, his bravery and how he fought against Amaziah, king of Judah are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹³When Joash slept with his fathers, he was buried in Samaria, together with the kings of Israel, and Jeroboam sat upon his throne.

Death of Elisha

¹⁴When Elisha became very sick and was about to die, Joash, king of Israel, went down to him and went before him, saying, "My father! My father! Chariot and horses of Israel!" ¹⁵Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. ¹⁶Elisha then said to the king, "Draw the bow," and the king drew the bow. Then Elisha put his hand on the king's hand ¹⁷and said, "Open the window towards the east." He opened it. Elisha then said, "Shoot!" And he shot. Elisha said, "Yahweh's arrow of victory, arrow of victory over Aram! You shall defeat Aram in Aphek until you utterly destroy them!" ¹⁸And he added, "Take the arrows." And he took them. Elisha said to the king, "Strike the ground with them." He struck three times and stopped. ¹⁹So the man of God became angry at him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck down Aram completely. But now, you will strike down Aram only three times."

²⁰Elisha died and they buried him. A little later, a detachment of Moabites conducted a raid as they used to do at the beginning of every year. ²¹It happened that at that time some people were burying a dead man, when they saw the Moabites. So they quickly threw the body into the grave of Elisha, and then fled to safety. But as soon as the man's body touched

the bones of Elisha, the man revived and stood on his feet.

²²Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed the Israelites throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. ²³But Yahweh had pity and took compassion on them. He turned towards them because of his Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not utterly destroy them, or cast them far from his face. ²⁴Hazael, the king of Aram, died; and his son Ben-hadad reigned in his place. ²⁵Then Joash, son of Jehoahaz, again took from Ben-hadad the cities which Hazael had taken from Jehoahaz. Joash defeated him thrice and recovered the cities of Israel.

Amaziah, king of Judah

14 ¹Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, began to reign in the second year of the reign of Joash, king of Israel. ²He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. ³He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, yet not like his father David; rather he acted like his father Joash. ⁴The Sanctuaries on the hillside still stood. There the people continued to offer sacrifices and to burn incense.

⁵When the kingdom was firmly in his hands, Amaziah killed the officers who had murdered the king, his father, ⁶but did not kill the sons of the assassins, according to what is written in the Law of Moses where Yahweh gave this command: "You shall not put the fathers to death because of their sons, nor shall you put the sons to death because of their fathers, but everyone shall be punished on account of his own crimes."

⁷Amaziah conquered ten thousand Edomites in the valley of Salt, and conquered the Rock by arms, calling it Joktheel, which is its name to this day.

⁸Then Amaziah sent messengers to Joash, son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, to say to him, "Come up and let us see which of the two of us is better." ⁹Joash, king of Israel, sent as an answer to Amaziah, king of Judah: "A thorn bush of Lebanon sent this message to a cedar of Lebanon: 'Give me your daughter to be my son's wife.' But the wild beasts of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the bush. ¹⁰You now feel very proud since you

14:15-16

2:12

Jos 8:18

25:14

Dt 24:16; Ezk 18

25:11-12

25:17-28

conquered the Edomites. Be content with your fame and be quiet in your own house lest disgrace befall you and the people of Judah.”

¹¹But Amaziah did not listen. So Joash, king of Israel, came and confronted him in Beth-shemesh of Judah. ¹²Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone of them fled to his home. ¹³Joash, king of Israel, took Amaziah, son of Ahaziah, as prisoner in Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem.

He made an opening one hundred eighty meters wide in the wall of Jerusalem, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. ¹⁴He took all the gold and silver, all that he found in the house of Yahweh and in the treasuries of the king's house, and hostages as well, and then returned to Samaria.

^{13:12-13} ¹⁵Now the rest about Joash, about his bravery and how he fought against Amaziah, king of Judah, is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁶When Joash rested with his fathers, they buried him in Samaria with his ancestors, and his son Jeroboam reigned in his place.

¹⁷Now about Amaziah: he lived fifteen more years after the death of Joash, king of Israel. ¹⁸The rest of the history of Amaziah is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ¹⁹There were people who conspired against him in Jerusalem. So Amaziah took refuge in Lachish, but they pursued him and killed him in that city. ²⁰His body was brought from there in a chariot, and they buried him in Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David. ²¹Then, all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and proclaimed him king in place of his father Amaziah. ²²He rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah, after the king, his father, died.

Jeroboam II, king of Israel

• ²³Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria in the fif-

teenth year of the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah. He reigned for forty-one years, ²⁴and during his reign he acted badly towards Yahweh, for he did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, made Israel commit. ²⁵He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath up to the Dead Sea, according to the word which Yahweh, the God of Israel, had said through the mouth of his servant, the prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai from Gath-hepher. ²⁶Yahweh had seen the extreme bitter misery of Israel; there was no one left, neither slave nor freeman, who would help Israel. ²⁷But Yahweh did not

Dr:7:24

decide to wipe out the name of Israel from under the heavens, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, son of Joash. ²⁸Now the rest regarding Jeroboam, all that he did and his bravery, how he fought and restored Hamath and Damascus to Israel, is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁹When Jeroboam died, he was buried with the kings of Israel, and his son Zechariah reigned in his place.

Azariah, king of Judah

15 ¹Azariah, son of Amaziah, king of Judah, began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Jeroboam in Israel. ²He was sixteen years old when he began his reign. He reigned for fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

26:3-4

³He did what pleased Yahweh, like his father Amaziah had done. ⁴But the Sanctuaries of the hillsides were not demolished, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense on them.

⁵Yahweh struck down the king. He became sick with leprosy, and he remained a leper to the day of his death. He lived in an isolated house, while Jotham, his son, was head of the king's household and administered justice in the kingdom.

26:
21-23;
Lev
13:46

⁶Now the rest about Azariah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chroni-

• **14.23** Scripture dedicates only this paragraph to Jeroboam II, king of Israel (the years 783-743 B.C.), in spite of his having restored greatness and prosperity to the kingdom.

In Jeroboam's victories, the author only sees God's last favor for his humiliated people.

This prosperity, however, brings about the exploitation of the people. This is the time when the prophets Hosea and Amos announce—to

everyone's disbelief—that this prosperity will be brief because it is not based on justice. At the death of Jeroboam, the kingdom of Samaria comes to an end.

Religious division continues and the Israelites of the north, isolated from the religious center of Jerusalem, do not succeed in preserving their faith when confronted with pagan influence.

cles of the Kings of Judah. ⁷When Azariah died, they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Jotham succeeded him.

The last kings of Israel

⁸Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, its capital, in the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Azariah, king of Judah. For the six months that he stayed in power, ⁹he acted badly towards Yahweh, as his fathers had done, for he did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, made Israel commit.

¹⁰Shallum, son of Jabesh, conspired against him, and struck him down at Ibleam. He killed him and reigned in his place.

¹¹Now the rest regarding Zechariah is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹²In this way the promise Yahweh had made to Jehu was fulfilled: "Your sons until the fourth generation shall sit upon the throne of Israel." And so it was.

¹³Shallum, son of Jabesh, began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah, and he reigned for a month in Samaria. ¹⁴Then Menahem, son of Gadi, rebelled against him in Tirzah. He came to Samaria and killed Shallum in that city. Having killed Shallum, Menahem reigned in his place.

¹⁵Now the rest about Shallum and the conspiracy which he plotted is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

¹⁶Then Menahem seized Tappuah and killed its inhabitants, devastating its territory from Tirzah onwards, since they would not open the gates to him. And he ripped open all the pregnant women.

¹⁷Menahem, son of Gadi, began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of the reign of Azariah, king of Judah. He reigned for ten years in Samaria, ¹⁸and he, too, acted badly towards Yahweh, for he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he made Israel commit.

¹⁹In his days, Pul, the king of Assyria, invaded the land of Israel. And Menahem had to give him a thousand talents of silver so that the king of Asshur would receive him as an ally and keep him in power. ²⁰Menahem exacted the money from all the wealthy and prominent people of Israel to give to the king of Asshur: fifty pieces of

silver from each one. With this, the king of Asshur turned back and did not stay there in the land.

²¹Now the rest regarding Menahem and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²²When Menahem died, his son Pekahiah succeeded him.

²³Pekahiah, son of Menahem, began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the fiftieth year of the reign of Azariah, king of Judah. He reigned for two years, ²⁴during which he acted badly towards Yahweh. He did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, made Israel commit.

²⁵His officer Pekah, son of Remaliah, conspired against him. He and fifty Gileadites assassinated Pekahiah, as well as Argob and Arieh, in Samaria in the fortress of the royal palace. With the king dead, Pekah succeeded him.

²⁶The rest about Pekahiah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

²⁷In the fifty-second year of the reign of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah, son of Remaliah, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, its capital. He reigned for twenty years, and he acted badly towards Yahweh, ²⁸for he did not turn away from the sins which Jeroboam made Israel commit.

²⁹In the time of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and seized Iyon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, the territory of Gilead and Galilee, and the whole land of Naphtali, and deported their inhabitants to Asshur. ³⁰Then Hoshea, son of Elah, conspired against Pekah, son of Remaliah, killed him and reigned in his place. ³¹The rest about Pekah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

Jotham, king of Judah

³²Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, ^{27:1-4}began to reign in the second year of the reign of Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel. ³³Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jerusha, daughter of Zadok.

³⁴He did what pleased Yahweh, as his father had done, ³⁵but he did not abolish the Sanctuaries on the high places where the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense. Jer 20:2

27:7-9 He built the Upper Gate of the house of Yahweh. ³⁶The rest about Jotham and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ³⁷In those days, Yahweh began to send Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, against Judah. ³⁸When Jotham died, they buried him with his fathers in the city of his ancestor David, and his son Ahaz succeeded him.

Ahaz, king of Judah

28:1-4 **16** ¹In the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah, son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. ²Ahaz was then twenty years old and he reigned for sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what pleased Yahweh, his God, as his father David had done. ³He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even sacrificed his son in the fire, according to the hateful practices of those nations which Yahweh had expelled from the land, so the children of Israel could occupy their place. ⁴He offered sacrifices in the Sanctuaries on the hills, on the slopes and under every green tree.

28:5; Is 7-8 ⁵Then Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to fight Jerusalem. They surrounded it, but could not conquer it. ⁶At that time Rezin, king of Aram, recovered Elath for the Edomites, expelling the Jews from there. The Edomites then entered Elath and lived there until now.

28:16 ⁷Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, king of Asshur, to tell him, "I am your servant and your son. Come then and rescue me from the hands of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who wage war against me." ⁸Ahaz took the silver and gold that was in the house of Yahweh and the treasures from the house of the king, and sent them as a gift to the king of Asshur. ⁹The king of Asshur paid heed to him and went to attack Damascus; he seized that city and exiled its inhabitants to Kir, then he killed Rezin.

1K 15:18; 28:21 ¹⁰So king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet with Tiglath-pileser, king of Asshur. And when he saw the altar in Damascus, he sent to Uriah the priest, the measure-

ment of that altar, together with the design which he copied exactly in all its details.

¹¹The priest Uriah built the altar according to the design the king had sent him from Damascus. He finished it before king Ahaz arrived from Damascus. ¹²When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar, approached it and went up to it. ¹³He burned on that altar his holocausts and sacrifices. There he made his libation and shed the blood of his peace offerings. ¹⁴He removed the altar of bronze that was before Yahweh, from the front of the house, from between the new altar and the house of Yahweh, and he placed it on the north side of his new altar.

King Ahaz ordered the priest Uriah, ¹⁵"Upon this great altar you shall burn the morning holocaust and the evening sacrifice, the king's holocaust and his sacrifice, the holocausts of the people of the land, their sacrifices and libations. You shall shed upon it all the blood of the holocausts and sacrifices. But the bronze altar shall be mine for consultation." ¹⁶The priest Uriah did as the king had commanded him.

¹⁷The king dismantled the paneling of the stands, removed the washbasins from on top of them, took down the big bronze basin from the top of the oxen that supported it, and placed it upon the stone pavement. Now, about the throne which had been built within the house of Yahweh and the outer entrance for the king, ¹⁸he removed them from the house of Yahweh because of the king of Asshur.

¹⁹The rest regarding Ahaz and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰When Ahaz died, they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Hezekiah succeeded him.

End of the kingdom of Israel in the north

17 • ¹Hoshea, son of Elah, began to reign in Israel in the twelfth year of the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. He reigned for nine years in the city of Samaria, ²and he acted

• **17.1** Here we have the description of the fall of the northern kingdom. Samaria is captured in the year 721 B.C. The people are

deported to an extreme place of the Assyrian empire, and residents from those remote provinces are brought to Samaria to mix with the

badly towards Yahweh though not as badly as the previous kings of Israel.

³Shalmaneser, king of Asshur, came with his army to attack Hoshea, who surrendered to him and began paying taxes to him. ⁴But the king of Asshur discovered that Hoshea was plotting against him, for Hoshea had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt, and did not pay him the taxes as he had done every year. Shalmaneser arrested him, then put him in prison.

⁵The army of the king of Asshur subjected the whole of Israel, coming to Samaria and laying siege to it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria, exiled the Israelites to Asshur and made them settle in Halah, at the banks of Habor, the river of Gozan, as well as in the cities of the Medes.

Causes of the fall of Israel

• ⁷This happened because the children of Israel had sinned against Yahweh, their God, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, where they were subject to Pharaoh. But they had turned back to other gods. ⁸They followed the customs of the nations which Yahweh had driven out before them.

⁹The children of Israel introduced many innovations that offended Yah-

weh, their God. They built Sanctuaries in all the cities, from the watch-towers to the fortified cities. ¹⁰They placed images and sacred pillars on all the hills and under every green tree. ¹¹There they burned incense in their Sanctuaries on the hills, like the nations Yahweh had dispossessed for them.

They did wicked things, provoking Yahweh to anger. ¹²They served their filthy idols in spite of what Yahweh had told them: "You must not do such a thing." ¹³Yahweh warned Israel and Judah through the mouth of every prophet and seer, saying: "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and precepts according to the laws which I commanded your fathers and which I have sent to you by my servants, the prophets."

¹⁴But they did not listen and refused, as did their fathers, who did not believe in Yahweh, their God. ¹⁵They despised his statutes and the Covenant he had made with their fathers, and the warnings he had given them. They went after worthless idols and they themselves became worthless, following the nations which surrounded them, in spite of what Yahweh had said, "Do not do as they do."

¹⁶They abandoned all the commandments of Yahweh and fashioned two calves of bronze. They made sacred

people in the countryside. Such was the practice of the Assyrian conquerors: displacing and intermingling the people to prevent rebellion.

From that time on, the Samaritans, or the Israelites of the north, are racially and religiously mixed, and the Israelites of Judah never consider them as their equals. Seven centuries later, in Jesus' time, the Samaritans were still neighbors to be avoided, because the suspicions and the conflicts had overcome the common memories.

Thus, the most important of the kingdoms from David and Solomon disappears two centuries after Solomon's death. Among the Jews, the hope remains that when the Messiah comes he will reunite Judah and Israel and call all those scattered among the nations (see Ezk 37:15).

• 7. The kingdom of Israel disappeared when Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians. It was too small and isolated to resist its powerful neighbor. Scripture, however, makes us discover the deeper cause of this disaster: *they had sinned against Yahweh their God.*

They served their filthy idols (v. 12). Though the first meaning of idol was image, images of Christ and his servants the saints are not idols, as short-sighted believers think. An idol is everything that takes the place of the one God in our heart and our lives. He is the living God and gives life to those who serve him. The *filthy idols* bring sickness and confusion to the society which serves them. Whether they be gadgets, elements of a luxurious life, idols of flesh and

18:9-11

Dt
28:36;
Hos 9:3;
Am 5:2732:4;
Jdg 2:1;
Jer 2:6;
Mic 6:4;
Ps 811K
14:23Jer
18:11;
25:5;
Ezk
33:11

Jer 7:26

Jer 2:5

pillars and knelt before all the stars of heaven, and worshiped Baal.

16:3 ¹⁷They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire, practiced divination and magic, and sold themselves to evildoing in the sight of Yahweh, enkindling his anger.

¹⁸So Yahweh became indignant with Israel and cast them far away from his presence, leaving only the tribe of Judah.

¹⁹But neither did Judah keep the commandments of Yahweh, their God; on the contrary, they followed the customs practiced in Israel. ²⁰Because of this, Yahweh rejected the whole race of Israel. He humbled them and delivered them into the hands of plunderers, until the day came when he drove them far away from his presence.

²¹When he divided the kingdom of David, Israel chose Jeroboam, son of Nebat, as king: he made them commit a great sin by separating themselves from Yahweh. ²²The Israelites followed Jeroboam in his sins, and did not turn away from them ²³until Yahweh had removed Israel from his presence, according to the warning given them through his servants, the prophets. So Israel was exiled from its land to the country of Asshur until this day.

The origin of the Samaritans

- ²⁴The king of Asshur brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim, and he settled them in the

cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites. These people occupied the country of Samaria and resided in its cities.

²⁵When they first settled there they did not worship Yahweh, so Yahweh sent lions which killed many of them. ²⁶Then it was reported to the king of Asshur, "The people you deported and sent to Samaria to settle in its cities do not know how Yahweh, the God of the land, should be honored, so he has sent lions which are killing them." Ezk 5:17

²⁷So the king of Asshur commanded, "Let one of the priests we have banished from Samaria return there. Let him go and live with those people and teach them how to honor the God of that land." ²⁸So, one of the priests, who had been banished from Samaria, came back, and, staying in Bethel, taught these people how they should honor Yahweh.

²⁹Yet each of these nations made its own gods, and placed them in the Sanctuaries on the hills which the Samaritans had built. Each of these nations put their god in the city where they settled: ³⁰the Babylo-nians set up the idol Succoth, the inhabitants of Cuth made Negal, the inhabitants of Hamath made Ashima, ³¹those of Avva made Nibjaz and Tartak. Those of Sepharvaim burned their children in the fire in honor of Adrammelech and Anammelech, their gods.

³²They worshiped Yahweh, but they appointed for themselves priests from among their people, who served Yahweh in the Houses on the hills. ³³They honored Yahweh but at the same time, served their

blood, when we choose them we are always left sad and unclean.

Yet the idols had another significance for Israel, a small kingdom less advanced than the neighboring nations. The idols were the symbol and the instrument of a foreign and alienating culture. The Canaanite and Assyrian idols included the worship of sex, greed and violence. The Israelites who were enticed by them forgot the problems of their own society and lost a thirst for justice which was their inheritance.

It is the same now when people of a developing nation are enslaved by the idols of a consumerist society... When families are submissive to the T.V., religiously watching the advertising of greed, the erotic shows and whatever has been planned for them, they become unable to improve their own life in the context of their own reality. Then the building of a nation in justice become no more than a beautiful but unrealistic dream.

They went after worthless idols and they themselves became worthless (v. 15). Jeremiah will also say: "They served foreign gods and so I will send them to foreign lands as slaves" (Jer 16:11-13). See also Judges 3:7 and Romans 1:24.

- 24. The foreigners who are brought to Samaria meet with hardships which arouse religious restlessness in them: can the god of this land be angry with us because we do not offer sacrifices to him?

Answering the doubts of these basically religious people, the author highlights the demands of faith:

- it is not enough to honor the Lord along with the other gods, he is the only One and he asks us to destroy all the gods we have made for ourselves;

- it is not enough to offer sacrifices to the Lord: we must do his will.

own gods, according to the customs of the nations from where they had been banished.

³⁴Until this very day, they still observe the old customs. They do not honor Yahweh since they do not follow the precepts and customs, the law or the commandments which Yahweh had given to the children of Jacob, to whom he had given the name Israel. ³⁵Yahweh had made a Covenant with them, commanding them, "Do not honor other gods or bow down before them, or serve them or offer them sacrifices. ³⁶You shall honor Yahweh alone, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with the strength of his arm; before him you shall bow and to him alone shall you offer sacrifices. ³⁷Keep the precepts, the ordinances, the Law and the commandments he wrote for you. Fulfill them all your days and do not adore strange gods. ³⁸Do not forsake the Covenant he made with you and do not adore strange gods, ³⁹but adore only Yahweh, your God, and he shall free you from the hand of all your enemies." ⁴⁰But they did not pay attention; instead they followed their ancient customs.

^{Ezra 4:2} ⁴¹So these people honored Yahweh, but, at the same time, also served their idols; and after them, their children and their children's children continued doing what their fathers had done.

Hezekiah, king of Judah

^{29:1-2} **18** ¹In the third year of the reign of Israel's king Hoshea son of Elah, Ahaz's son Hezekiah became king over Judah.

²He was twenty-five years old then, and his reign in Jerusalem lasted for

twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, daughter of Zechariah. ³He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, like David, his ancestor.

⁴He did away with the Sanctuaries on the hills, demolished the standing stones and cut down the sacred pillars.

He also destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses had fashioned in the desert for, until that time, the Israelites were offering sacrifices to it and called it Nehushtan.

⁵He trusted in Yahweh more than any of the kings of Judah who preceded or succeeded him and he never departed from Yahweh. ⁶He kept the commandments Yahweh had given through Moses. ⁷For that reason, Yahweh was with him. He succeeded in all his undertakings. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and was no longer subject to him. ⁸He imposed his authority on the Philistines as far as Gaza, and seized their land from the watchtowers to the fortified cities.

⁹In the fourth year of king Hezekiah's reign (it was the seventh year of the reign of Israel's king Hoshea, son of Elah), king Shalmaneser of Assyria marched up against Samaria and besieged it. ¹⁰At the end of three years, he conquered it. In the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of the reign

• **18.1** Here begins the last part of the Book of Kings: the history of the kingdom of Judah. The fall of Samaria and the disappearance of the northern kingdom bring about a religious renewal in the south.

Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh (v. 3). This is the time when the prophet Isaiah is present at the side of king Hezekiah (the years 716–687 B.C.).

He did away with the Sanctuaries on the hills (v. 4). Here we note the effort on the part of the kings of Judah to see to it that the only place of worship would be the Jerusalem temple. In the many rural Sanctuaries, people went to offer their sacrifices to Yahweh in ways that were usually mixed with pagan practices. By highlighting the Jerusalem temple's monopoly

with its better educated priests and Levites looking after the purity of the faith, Hezekiah promotes religious reform.

As to the bronze serpent which Hezekiah destroyed, see Numbers 21:4.

It is also true that many fugitive priests had come from the north during the last days of Samaria. Some of them had succeeded in maintaining faith in Yahweh and religious unity. They brought along sacred books and kept many ancient traditions of Moses and Israel's past. This contribution would be extremely important for the writing of the Scriptures and also for Josiah's reform a century later (2 K 22).

The reforms of Hezekiah are told more in detail in 2 Chronicles 29–31.

of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was conquered. ¹¹The king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

¹²This happened to them because they did not listen to the voice of Yahweh, their God, and had broken his Covenant. They did not listen to nor put into practice what Moses, the servant of Yahweh, had commanded them.

Sennacherib's invasion

• ¹³In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up and invaded Judah. He laid siege to all the fortified cities and seized all of them. ¹⁴Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent a message to Sennacherib, who was in Lachish, "I have acted badly, stop your attack and I will do whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria demanded that Hezekiah give a contribution of

three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold.

¹⁵Hezekiah then handed over to him all the money that was found in the house of Yahweh and in the treasuries of the royal palace. ¹⁶It was at that time that Hezekiah ordered that the gold sheets, with which he himself had adorned the doorposts, be stripped from the gates of the house of Yahweh, and given to the king of Assyria.

¹⁷From Lachish the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army to king Hezekiah in Jerusalem. They halted at the channel of the Upper Pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. The field commander called for the king; and ¹⁸Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the palace administrator, went out to him, together with Sheb-nah, the secretary and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

¹⁹The field commander said to them, "Give Hezekiah this message from the

32:9-19;
Is 36:
2-22;
7:3

Is 22:15

32:1;
Is 36:1

• 13. In the year 701 B.C. Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem and Hezekiah had to pay a high price to keep him away.

Beginning with verse 7 to the end of Chapter 19, we have the story of the miraculous liberation of Jerusalem. Actually there are two stories that may correspond to two liberations from two Assyrian invasions.

In the year 701 B.C. he king of Assyria sends his generals from Lachish to demand Hezekiah's surrender. He is forced to return to his country and cannot carry out his threats. This story is in verses 17-19, and it concludes in 19:36-37.

In the year 690 B.C. there is another intervention related in 19:9-35. This time "the angel of the Lord came out and killed one hundred eighty-five thousand soldiers in the camp" (19:35). The famous pagan historian, Herodotus, relates the sudden destruction of this army by an epidemic. A most natural event! And yet, at the time when the Holy City is about to fall and when God's promises seem to fail, some rats are spreading the deadly virus. The biblical author makes no mistake in seeing this as a manifestation of God. Jerusalem was liberated as Isaiah had predicted.

These two chapters appear almost word for word in the book of Isaiah, Chapters 36-37. Here we only emphasize the story of the first

liberation, and in Isaiah 37, the story of the second one.

Make your peace with me and surrender (v. 31). The Assyrian king proposes peace under the condition that the people be deported. For the Jews this dispersal would mean the loss of their national and religious life by being dispersed in other lands. It would also mean that David's descendants are now deprived of power and, according to the mentality of that time, that Yahweh had been defeated by the gods of the conqueror. That is why God does something.

All along these two chapters, the prophetic account emphasizes the difference between the worthless gods of the nations and the God of Israel who knows the good time for him to reverse the course of history.

These events invite us to trust in God's help. When God commits himself to act, he cannot fail if we do not get tired of hoping in him. Against all human hope, Jerusalem remains untouched. This is the image of a ruler whom people want to depose because of his honesty but who remains steadfast. Or the student who stays firm even though his friends mock his faith. Or the young people who remain pure in a culture without morality. Or the church reduced to a few faithful which is seemingly defeated by political forces and yet remains victorious.

great king of Assyria: ‘How can you be so confident?’²⁰ You thought that words are as good as wisdom and replace strength in time of war? On whom are you relying that you rebel against me?²¹ You rely on Egypt, a broken staff which pierces the palm of him who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, for all who rely on him.²² Yes, you may say to me: “We rely on Yahweh our God.” But isn’t he the one whose altars and high places Hezekiah removed when he commanded Judah and Jerusalem: “You shall worship before this altar?”

Is 30:1-7

²³ Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king. I will give you two thousand horses if you are able to supply riders.²⁴ How could you ever repulse one of the least of my master’s generals? And you rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen!²⁵ Do you think that I have come to attack and destroy this land without consulting Yahweh? He himself said to me: ‘Go up to this land and conquer it!’”²⁶ Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, “Speak to your servants in Aramaic. We understand it. Do not speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of these people on the walls.”

Is 31:1

Is 7:17

²⁷ But the field commander said, “Do you think that my master sent me to speak these words only to your master and to you? Is it not also to the men on the walls who, with you, will have to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?”

²⁸ Then the field commander stood and cried out with a loud voice in Hebrew: “Hear the words of the great king of Assyria: ²⁹ Do not let Hezekiah deceive you! No, he will not be able to help you! ³⁰ Do not listen to him when he tells you to trust in Yahweh, saying, “Yahweh will save us. This city will not be given over to the king of Assyria.”” Do not listen to Hezekiah

but ³¹ to what the king of Assyria says, ‘Make your peace with me and surrender. Then I will let each of you eat of your vine and of your fig tree and drink the water of your cistern until I come again.’³² Then I will take you to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, of bread and vineyards, of oil and honey, that you may live and not die.

1K 5:5;
Hos
2:14;
Mic 4:4

Dt 17:13

Hezekiah is misleading you when he says that Yahweh will save you.³³ Have the gods of the nations rescued their land from the hands of the king of Assyria?³⁴ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah? And have the gods delivered Samaria from my hand?³⁵ Who among all the gods of these nations has been able to save his country from me? Do you think that Yahweh will deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”

³⁶ The people were silent and did not respond, for the king had ordered, “Don’t respond to him.”

³⁷ Then Eliakim, with Shebna and Joah came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him what the field commander had said.

19¹ When king Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and went to the house of Yahweh. ² He sent Eliakim, the overseer of the palace, Shebna, the secretary, and the elders among the priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz.

Is
37:1-7;
Gen
37:34;
2S 3:31;
1K21:27;
Es 4:1

³ And they said to Isaiah, “This is what Hezekiah says: ‘Today is a day of distress, rebuke and disgrace, as when children are at the point of birth and there is no strength to deliver them.’⁴ Would that your God might hear the words of the field commander, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent. May Yahweh your God rebuke

Hos
13:13

him for the words he said, insulting the living God. Therefore offer a prayer for the few of us that are left.”

⁵When king Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah, ⁶he said to them: “Tell your master this word of Yahweh: ‘Do not fear because of the words you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have insulted me. ⁷Listen! I will let him be frightened. Then he will return to his country, and there I will have him slain by the sword.’”

⁸The field commander returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. ⁹This was because king Sennacherib had heard that Tirhakah, the Cushite king of Egypt, was going out to fight him.

Sennacherib’s letter to Hezekiah

Again Sennacherib sent messengers to Hezekiah with these words, ¹⁰“Say to Hezekiah, king of Judah that his God in whom he trusts may be deceiving him in saying that Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria. ¹¹Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands they have destroyed! And will you be spared? ¹²Have their gods saved the nations that my fathers destroyed? Gozan and Haran, Rezep and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar? ¹³Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the kings of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena and Ivvah?”

¹⁴Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers, and when he had read it he went to the house of Yahweh; where he unrolled the letter ¹⁵and prayed saying, “O Yahweh, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim! You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made the heavens and the earth. ¹⁶Give ear, Yahweh, and hear! Open your eyes and see! Listen to all the words of Sennacherib who has sent men to insult the living God! ¹⁷It is true, Yahweh, that the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the countries of the earth. ¹⁸They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not true gods but gods made of wood and stone by human hands. ¹⁹Now, O Yahweh

our God, save us from his hand and let all the kingdoms of the earth know that you alone, Yahweh, are God.”

Isaiah intervenes

²⁰Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent word to Hezekiah: “You have called upon Yahweh and he has heard your prayer regarding Sennacherib, king of Assyria. ²¹This is what Yahweh has spoken against him:

‘The Virgin Daughter of Zion despises and scorns you; the Daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head behind you.

²²Whom have you insulted and blasphemed?

Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted up your eyes in arrogance? Against the Holy One of Israel!

²³Through your servants you have insulted Yahweh.

For you have said:

“With the enormous number of my chariots,

I have ascended the heights of the mountains,

the topmost recesses of Lebanon.

I have cut down its tallest cedars and its choicest fir trees.

I have climbed its remotest heights to the densest of its forests.

²⁴I have dug wells and drunk waters;

I have dried up with the soles of my feet all the streams of Egypt.”

²⁵Have you not heard

how I decreed it long ago, how I planned from days of old what now I have brought to pass?

Your ordained role was to lay waste fortified cities, to turn them into ruinous heaps.

²⁶Shorn of power, their inhabitants have been dismayed and confounded; they have been as the grass and green plants in the field, as the grass on the housetops, scorched before it has grown.

²⁷I know whenever you rise or sit, whenever you go out or come in; and I know your rage against me.

²⁸Because of your rage against me and your arrogance that I have heard of, I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.’

Is 37:8-9

Is 37:9-20; 32:17

Is 37:10

32:20

Jer 10:1; Dt 4:28

1K 8:60; 18:24

Is 37:21-35

Lm 2:15; Is 1:8

Ps 20:8

Is 10:7

²⁹This will be a sign for you, O Hezekiah: This year you will eat the after-growth grain, and next year what grows from that, but in the third year, sow and reap, plant vines and eat the fruit.

³⁰A remnant of the house of Judah shall take root below and produce fruit above.

³¹For a remnant will come from Jerusalem and survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of Yahweh of Hosts will accomplish this.

³²That is why Yahweh has said this concerning the king of Assyria: 'He shall not enter this city nor shoot his arrows. He shall not raise a shield to oppose it nor build a siege ramp against it. ³³He shall leave by the way he came and he shall not enter the city, word of Yahweh. ³⁴I will protect this city and so save it for my own sake and for the sake of David, my servant.' ³⁵It happened that the angel of Yahweh went out that night and struck one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people rose early next morning there were all the corpses.

³⁶So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, returned home and lived in Nineveh.

³⁷While he was worshiping in the temple of his god, Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer slew him with the sword and then escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon, his son, succeeded him as king.

Hezekiah's illness

20 ¹In those days Hezekiah fell mortally ill and the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, went to him with a message from Yahweh, "Put your house in order for you shall die; you shall not live."

²Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Yahweh, ³"Ah, Yahweh! Remember how I have walked before you in truth and wholeheartedly, and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

⁴Isaiah had still not reached the central courtyard when the word of Yahweh came to him, ⁵"Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, what Yahweh, the God of his father David, says: 'I have heard your prayer and I have seen your tears. And now I will cure you. On the third day you will go up to the house of Yahweh.

⁶See! I am adding fifteen years to your life and I will save you and this city from the power of the king of Assyria. I will defend it

for my sake and for the sake of David my servant."

⁸Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that Yahweh will heal me and that I shall go up to the house of Yahweh within three days?" ⁹Isaiah answered, "This shall be the sign for you in Yahweh's name, that Yahweh shall do what he has said: Do you wish the shadow of the second story to go forward ten steps or to go back?"

¹⁰Hezekiah said, "It is easy for the shadow to lengthen ten steps, but it shall be wonderful if the shadow goes back ten steps."

¹¹The prophet Isaiah called on Yahweh, and Yahweh made the shadow go back ten steps, line by line, on the ten steps it had covered on the stairway.

⁷Isaiah ordered, "Get a fig cake." So they did as he had ordered and placed it on the ulcerated sore, and he recovered.

¹²At that time Merodach-baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah after hearing that he was recovering from an illness. ¹³Hezekiah rejoiced, so he showed the envoys his treasure house—the silver, the gold, the spices, the fragrant oils, his weapons and all that was in the treasury. There was nothing in this palace, or in all he possessed that Hezekiah did not show.

¹⁴Then the prophet Isaiah went to the king and said, "What did these men say? Where did they come from?" The king answered, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon." ¹⁵Isaiah said, "And what have they seen in your house?" The king answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my treasuries that I did not show them."

¹⁶So Isaiah said to the king, "Listen to this word of Yahweh: ¹⁷The days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have stored up to this day shall be taken to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says Yahweh. ¹⁸Some of your own sons who are born of your blood shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." ¹⁹Hezekiah answered Isaiah, "What you say is a good word from Yahweh"; for he thought, "What does it matter, just so I have peace and security in my own lifetime?"

²⁰Now the rest regarding Hezekiah and all about his bravery, how he built the great reservoir and how it supplied water to the city is written in the Book of the Chronicles

Is 1:9;
4:2

32:21-
22;
Is 37:
36-38;
Gen
19:13;
12:23;
25:24;16

32:24;
Is 38:1-8

Jdg
6:17

Is 39;
32:23;
32:25-29

32:30;
Is 22:11;
Sir
48:17

of the Kings of Judah. ²¹When Hezekiah slept with his fathers, his son Manasseh reigned in his place.

Manasseh, king of Judah

^{33:1-10} **21** • Manasseh was twelve years old when he began his reign, and he reigned for fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hephzibah.

^{18:4} ^{17:16} ²He treated Yahweh very badly, imitating the wretched practices of the people Yahweh had driven out from the land in order to give it to the Israelites. ³He rebuilt the Sanctuaries on the hills, which had been destroyed by Hezekiah his father. He built altars to the god Baal and made a sacred pillar similar to the one Ahab, king of Israel, had made. He knelt before all the stars of heaven and worshiped them. ⁴He built altars in the courtyard of the house of Yahweh, about which Yahweh had said, "Jerusalem shall be the dwelling place of my Name."

⁵He built altars for all the stars of heaven in the two courtyards of the house of Yahweh. ⁶He sacrificed his son by fire. He practiced soothsaying and magic, he brought in seers and wizards, doing without ceasing what Yahweh condemned, and thus provoking his anger. ⁷He even put up the sacred pillar of the goddess Asherah in the house of Yahweh in spite of what Yahweh had said to David and to his son, Solomon: "I shall let my Name rest forever in this house, for I have chosen Jerusalem from among all the tribes of Israel. ⁸I shall no longer let Israel wander out of the land I gave to their fathers, provided that you try to live according to all the Law I gave you through my servant Moses."

⁹But they did not listen, and Manasseh led them into doing things worse than those nations had done whom Yahweh had expelled before the Israelites. ¹⁰So Yahweh spoke through the mouth of his servants, the prophets, saying,

¹¹"Manasseh, king of Judah, has multiplied the wretched practices and has acted worse than the Amorites. He has made the people of Judah sin with his repugnant images.

¹²Therefore, I shall bring upon Jerusalem and upon Judah an evil so great that the ears of those who hear of it shall buzz. ¹³Jerusalem and its kings shall suffer the fate of Samaria and of the family of Ahab. I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a plate to clean it, and then turns it upside down. ¹⁴I shall drive away the rest of my people and give them over into the hands of their enemies so that they shall become their prey and booty. ¹⁵For they did what displeased me and made me angry from the day when their ancestors came out of Egypt to this day."

¹⁶Manasseh also shed innocent blood in such quantity that it filled up Jerusalem from one end to the other, besides the sins which he made Judah commit, doing what is wrong in the sight of Yahweh. ¹⁷The rest regarding Manasseh, all that he did and the sins he committed, is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

¹⁸When Manasseh died, they buried him in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza, and his son Amon reigned in his place.

¹⁹Amon was twenty-two years old when he began his reign, and he reigned for two years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Meshullemeth, daughter of Haruz, of the city of Jotbah. ²⁰He treated Yahweh badly, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹He completely followed in the footsteps of his father—he served the idols his father had served and bowed down before them. ²²He abandoned Yahweh, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in the way of Yahweh.

²³The officials of Amon conspired against him, and murdered him in his house. ²⁴But the citizens killed all who had

• **21.1** The miraculous liberation of Jerusalem did not reverse, in fact, the decadence of the kingdom. Even before Hezekiah's death, Judah is totally submitted to Assyrian rule. This explains partly why Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, begins refraining, and then persecuting Yahweh's party which was the living spirit of Judah's nationalism.

Manasseh openly promotes idolatry and persecutes Yahweh's people as Jezebel had done in

Israel a century before. With his godless, crime-filled reign, Manasseh succeeds in destroying the hope placed in David's descendant by Hezekiah's reforms.

His reign lasted fifty-five years, during which both faithful and prophets had to remain silent or hide. The betrayal of Yahweh's Covenant was such that after Manasseh's death, the prophets considered him responsible for the fall of Jerusalem.

plotted against the king, and they proclaimed his son Josiah king in his place.

²⁵The rest regarding Amon and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁶They buried him in his tomb, in the garden of Uzza, and his son Josiah reigned in his place.

The Book of the Law is discovered

34:1-2

22 • ¹Josiah was eight years old when he began to govern, and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ²He did everything that was right in the eyes of Yahweh, and followed in the footsteps of David, his father, without turning aside either to the right or to the left.

12:3;
18:3;
Dt 22:7

34:8-18

³In the eighteenth year of his reign, king Josiah sent his secretary Shaphan, son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, to the house of Yahweh, saying, ⁴“Go up to the high priest Hilkiah and give him the amount of money which the people offer for the house of Yahweh, and that which the gatekeepers have collected, and when these have been smelted down, ⁵let them turn it over to those in charge of the house of Yahweh. ⁶It shall be given to those carpenters and construction workers who do the repairs of the house. In the same way, they shall buy the wood and stones needed for the repair of the house. ⁷But do

12:10

not ask from them any account of the money, for they are honorable men.”

⁸At that moment Hilkiah, the high priest, said to Shaphan, the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of Yahweh.” And he entrusted the Book to Shaphan who read it. ⁹Then Shaphan went to the king and said, “We have gathered the money in the house, and this has been turned over to the caretakers of the house to make the repairs.”

Dt
28:61;
Jos 1:8

¹⁰And Shaphan added, “The priest Hilkiah has turned over a book to me.” And Shaphan read the book to the king. ¹¹When the king heard the contents of the book, he tore his clothes and ¹²commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, the secretary Shaphan, and Asaiah, his minister, to do the following, ¹³“Go and consult Yahweh about the threats in this book which you have found. Consult him for me, for the people and for the whole of Judah, since our fathers did not listen to what this book says nor to its ordinances. This is why the anger of Yahweh is ready to burn against us.”

34:19-28

1K 22:7;
Jer 21:2

¹⁴The priest Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to consult the prophetess Huldah, wife of Shallum, son of Tikva, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the new city.

15:20;
Jdg 4:4;
Ne 6:4;
Lk 2:36

¹⁵She answered them, ¹⁶“You will say to the one who sent you to me: This is what

• **22.1** *Josiah followed in the footsteps of David, his father* (v. 2). In the last days of the kingdom of Judah, a king “like David” dedicates himself to renewal of the faith and Yahweh’s Covenant, to the reconquest of his ancestors’ territories.

Following the death of the kings who persecuted them, the faithful slowly awaken. In the year 622 B.C. the accidental discovery of the “law” shakes the kingdom.

I have found the book of the law in the house of Yahweh (v. 8). During the previous kingdoms, the sacred books had been forgotten or hidden. What was discovered was certainly most of Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy. This

last book had been brought by the Levites and the priests who had come from the north when Samaria fell. It insisted on fidelity to the Covenant, declaring without hesitation that it was a matter of life or death for the people of God.

We can see the impact of the sacred word. From then on, Josiah (who was then twenty-six years old) focuses on shaping his life, and that of his people, according to the demands of the law. He realizes that the Lord’s protection is the only thing that can save his people from the great powers. The description of all that had to be destroyed gives us an idea of the wave of paganism which had invaded every aspect of life in Manasseh’s days.

Yahweh says: 'I shall bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants according to all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read, ¹⁷for this people have abandoned me and they have burned incense in honor of other gods. Because of all they have done, I am angry about this place, and the fire of my anger will not be quenched.'

¹⁸You shall deliver this answer to the king of Judah, who has sent you to consult Yahweh: Yahweh, the God of Israel says this—'The warnings in this book shall not reach you, ¹⁹for your heart has been touched and you have done penance in the presence of Yahweh when you heard what I have said against this place and its inhabitants, that this place shall be desolate and cursed. You have torn your garments and wept before me, and I have heard you, says Yahweh. ²⁰Therefore, you shall join your fathers; you shall die and be buried in peace, without seeing any of the evils I shall send against this place.'

Josiah's religious reform

^{34:29-31} **23** ¹The king summoned to his side all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. ^{24:7} ²Then he went up to the house of Yahweh, followed by all the people of Judah and Jerusalem. The priests with the prophets and all the people went with him, from the youngest to the oldest. When all were gathered, he read to them the Book of the Law found in the house of Yahweh.

^{DI 4:29} ³The king stood by the pillar; he made a Covenant in the presence of Yahweh, promising to follow him, to keep his commandments and laws, and to respect his ordinances. He promised to keep this Covenant according to what was written in the book with all his heart and with all his soul. And all the people promised with him.

^{34:3-5; 2K 21:3} ⁴Then the king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, as well as the priests of lesser rank, and all the gatekeepers, to bring out all the objects which had been made for Baal, Asherah and for all the stars of heaven. He had them

burned outside Jerusalem, in the idle land of Kidron, and had their ashes brought to Bethel.

⁵The kings of Judah had appointed pagan priests who offered sacrifices in the Sanctuaries on the hills, in the different cities of Judah and in the suburbs of Jerusalem. Josiah did away with them and with those who offered incense to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the stars and all the heavenly hosts. ⁶The Sacred Pillar that was in the house of Yahweh was brought out of Jerusalem and was taken to the brook Kidron, where it was burned and its ashes thrown on the public grave.

⁷The king demolished the house of the effeminate men who dedicated themselves to prostitution (as was done in the cult of Asherah). This was within the courtyards of the house of Yahweh, and in this house too the women wove veils for Asherah.

⁸Right after this, he made all the priests from the cities of Judah come to Jerusalem, and he destroyed all the Sanctuaries on the hills where they had offered sacrifice from Beersheba in the south to Geba in the north. He destroyed the Sanctuary of the Gates that was at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the city governor. It was on the left side of the entrance gate to the city.

⁹The priests who had served in the Sanctuaries on the hills could not offer sacrifices in the house of Yahweh; they only ate the unleavened bread with the priests of Jerusalem. ^{DI 18:6}

¹⁰The king had the place for burning human sacrifices in the valley of Ben-hinnom destroyed, so that no one could sacrifice his sons or daughters in the fire according to the ritual of Molech. ¹¹The horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the were removed from the entrance of the house of Yahweh; these were in the atrium, near the house of the palace official, Nathanmelech. And the chariots of the sun

Jer 19:13 were burned. ¹²There were altars which the kings of Judah had built on the roof of the palace of Ahaz. There were also altars built by Manasseh in the two courtyards of the house of Yahweh. Josiah had them all destroyed and reduced to dust, which was thrown into the brook Kidron.

18:4 ¹³The king destroyed the Sanctuaries on the hills facing Jerusalem, to the south of the Mount of Olives. Solomon, king of Israel, had built them for Ashtoreth the idol of the Sidonians, for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, and for Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites. ¹⁴The king broke in pieces the images of the false gods, cut down the sacred pillars, and filled the places in which these had been with human bones to make them unclean.

Lev 21:1; Num 9:6

• ¹⁵There was also the Sanctuary of Bethel, with the altar which Jeroboam, king of Israel, had made. This cult had been the sin of Israel. The king destroyed it. He set the Sanctuary on fire and burned the sacred pillar. ¹⁶Looking around on all sides, Josiah saw the tombs on the mountain; he had the bones taken out of the tomb and burned on the altar. So the word of Yahweh was fulfilled which the man of God had proclaimed when Jeroboam was standing by the altar during a feast. Josiah noticed the tomb of this man of God, ¹⁷and he said, "What is that monument that I see?" The people of the city said to him, "That is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah to announce what you have just done with the altar of Bethel." ¹⁸The king commanded, "Leave the tomb in peace, and let no one touch his bones." And his bones, together with the bones of the prophet of Samaria, were not touched.

1K 12:33

¹⁹Josiah also removed all the Sanctuaries on the hills in the cities of Samaria. These Sanctuaries had been made by the kings of Israel and they had provoked the anger of Yahweh. The king destroyed

them and did to them as he had done to the temple of Bethel.

²⁰He slaughtered upon the altars all the priests of the Sanctuaries on the hills who were found there, and he burned human bones on the altars. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

²¹The king gave this order to all the people, "Celebrate the Passover in honor of Yahweh, our God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant."

35:1

²²A Passover like this had not been celebrated since the days of the Judges who had governed Israel, or during the time when the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah reigned. ²³This Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of the reign of king Josiah.

35:18-19

²⁴Josiah obeyed all the words of the Law written in the book which the priest Hilkiyah had found in the house of Yahweh. He immediately did away with the mediums and seers, the small household gods and the idols, and all those loathsome things seen in the lands of Judah and Jerusalem.

Dt 18:11; Gen 31:19; Hos 3:4

²⁵There had never before been a king like him who returned to Yahweh with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength, observing all the law of Moses; nor was another like him seen again.

Dt 6:5; Mk 12:30

²⁶In spite of this, Yahweh did not turn from the fire of his anger. He was angry with Judah because of all the evils Manasseh had done. ²⁷So Yahweh declared, "I shall also cast Judah away from my presence as I have cast Israel; I shall no longer take Jerusalem into consideration, though it is the city I have chosen and there is the house of which I have said: My Name dwells here."

Dt 12:5

• ²⁸The rest regarding Josiah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁹In those days, the Pharaoh Neco crossed the river Euphrates and went to join the king

35:26-27

35:20-24

• **23.15** Taking advantage of the decadence of the Assyrian empire, Josiah reconquered part of the land of Israel to the north which had become an Assyrian province a hundred years before. There, too, he destroyed all the Sanctuaries, idols and practices that offend Yahweh and go against his demands.

For a few years the prophets believed that Yahweh's threats predicting the total destruction of Israel would not be fulfilled. In the reconquest,

they even saw a sign of the happy times when the Messiah would reunite again Judah and Israel as one people with one Covenant (Jer 31:31).

• **28.** Josiah, the reformist king, dies a victim of a political mistake. For centuries, Israel had been squeezed between Egypt and Assyria (or Asshur). Assyria was the most brutal and cruel nation of those days. When Babylon began to destroy Assyrian power, the Pharaoh, worried

of Asshur. King Josiah set out to confront him, but Neco killed him in Megiddo when he saw him.³⁰ Josiah's servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem, and they buried him in his tomb. Then the people took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, to anoint him and make him king in place of his father.

Josiah's sons

³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for three months in Jerusalem. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.³² He did what displeases Yahweh, imitating his ancestors.³³ The Pharaoh Neco bound Jehoahaz in chains in Riblah, in the land of Hamath, since he did not want him to reign in Jerusalem. Then he imposed on the land a contribution of one hundred talents of silver and ten of gold.³⁴ And he installed as king another son of Josiah, Eliakim, as the successor to his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, where Jehoahaz died.

³⁵ Jehoakim gave the silver and gold to the Pharaoh to pay the contribution which the Pharaoh himself exacted from him, through a tax imposed on all the land. Everyone had to pay his quota according to what he possessed. So Jehoakim collected from all the people the gold and silver demanded by the Pharaoh.

³⁶ Jehoakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother was Zebidha, daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.³⁷ He did what displeased Yahweh, imitating his fathers.

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion

24¹ In those days, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became subject to him for three years, after which he rebelled.

by the dynamism of this new "great" power, wanted to help the weakened Assyria, forgetting the old rivalry.

Josiah refused to allow it. Jewish consciousness longed for the destruction of "the cruel nation" (see Nahum's prophecies).

How could God allow the death of Josiah, the holy king of the reforms? It was such a stumbling block for Jewish consciousness that the author of this book prefers to say nothing about it. Much later, they tried to justify Josiah's tragic

² Yahweh then sent against Jehoiakim, bands of Chaldeans, Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites. They raided the land of Judah and destroyed it according to the word Yahweh had spoken through his servants, the prophets.

³ All this happened only because Yahweh had ordered it so. He willed to cast the people far away from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh, and all the evils he had done.⁴ And also because of the innocent blood he had shed that filled Jerusalem. Because of all this, Yahweh would not pardon them.

⁵ The rest regarding Jehoiakim and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.⁶ When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin succeeded him.

⁷ The king of Egypt did not leave his own land again because the king of Babylon had conquered all that belonged to the king of Egypt, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

The first exile

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he succeeded his father, and he reigned for three months in Jerusalem. His mother was Nehushta, daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.⁹ Jehoiachin treated Yahweh badly, as his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time, the officials of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to attack Jerusalem, surrounding the city.¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar came while the city was being besieged by his men.

¹² Jehoiachin, king of Judah, surrendered, together with his mother, his servants, his leaders and the palace officials. It was the eighth year of

end by a mistake he would have made (2 Chr 35:21). His death, in part, inspires the great prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 and, in the Scriptures, the name Megiddo becomes the symbol of a curse (Rev 16:16).

• **24.8** The destruction of the kingdom of Judah takes place in two stages:

– The year 598 B.C. Jehoiakim has just died. His son, Jehoiachin surrenders in the city under siege. First exile of the elite to Babylon. The

36:1

36:24

Jer
22:13

36:5

36:6-8

Is 5:26;
Jer 1:14

21:16

36:9-10

20:17 the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹³Nebuchadnezzar captured them and he took away the treasures of the house of Yahweh and of the king's house. He also destroyed all the objects of gold which Solomon, king of Israel, had made for the Sanctuary of Yahweh. So the word Yahweh had spoken, was fulfilled.

Jer 52:28 ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar carried off into exile all the leaders and prominent men, the blacksmiths and locksmiths, all the men of valor fit for war. A total of ten thousand were exiled to Babylon. Only the poorest sector of the population was left. ¹⁵Nebuchadnezzar also carried away Jehoiachin, with his mother, his wives, the ministers of the palace, and the prominent men of the land.

¹⁶So all the prominent people, numbering seven thousand, the blacksmiths, numbering a thousand, and all the men fit for war were deported to Babylon by the king of Babylon.

¹⁷He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king of Jerusalem, in place of Jehoiachin. And he changed his name to Zedekiah.

36:11-13; Jer 52:1-3 ¹⁸Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. ¹⁹He did what displeased Yahweh, as Jehoiakim had done; ²⁰so the punishment of Yahweh fell on Jerusalem and Judah, until he cast them far away from his pres-

ence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

The Chaldeans conquer and destroy Jerusalem

25 ¹In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched with his entire army and laid siege to Jerusalem. They camped outside the city and built siege works all around it. ²The city was under siege up to the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah.

³On the ninth day of the fourth month famine became a serious problem in the city, and throughout the land there was no bread for the people. ⁴When the city was opened by a breach in the wall, the Judean army fled through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, while the Chaldeans were still around the city; and they fled towards the Arabah. ⁵The Chaldeans followed in hot pursuit of king Zedekiah and caught up with him in the plains of Jericho. All his army deserted him and scattered.

⁶The Chaldeans seized the king and led him away to Riblah in the territory of Hamath and there the king of Babylon passed sentence on him. ⁷There at Riblah the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah in his presence. He then put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with a

Chaldeans (people of Babylon) force Zedekiah to be king.

– The year 587 B.C. Zedekiah rebels against the Chaldeans who come to destroy Jerusalem and its temple. Second exile to Babylon.

Scripture states that this destruction—as that of Samaria—would not have occurred, because God is faithful to his Covenant, if there had not been such an accumulation of sins and rebellions. To the very last moment, everything could have been saved if Zedekiah had listened to the warnings of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 38).

However, against all hope, the Jewish nation

rises from its ashes sixty years after its destruction. History shows that the great empires—the Hittites, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans—disappeared forever. We find their statues in museums and their archives recovered after thirty centuries of complete oblivion. The people of Judah, however, go back to their land. Purified by their trials and encouraged by the prophets, they return seeking a new Covenant, a more sincere and interior one, with their God. They come back from the exile under the guidance of Zerubbabel, a descendant of king Jehoiachin and Jesus' ancestor.

double bronze chain and took him to Babylon.

Jer 52: 12-27; 39:8-10
 8 On the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, commander of the captain of the royal guard and servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem and 9 set fire to the house of Yahweh and the royal palace, as well as to all the houses in Jerusalem. 36:19
 10 The Chaldean army under the commander of the bodyguard completely demolished all the walls around Jerusalem.

Jer 21:9
 11 Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard, carried off into exile the last of the Jews left in the city, those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the remainder of the artisans. 12 But he left those among the very poor who were capable of working in vineyards and cultivating the soil.

36:18; 1K 7:15
 13 The Chaldeans broke into pieces the bronze pillars, and the big bronze basin called the "Sea" in the house of Yahweh and carried off all this bronze to Babylon.

14 They also took the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, the spoons and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. 15 The

commander of the bodyguard took the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots, lampstands, ladles and bowls—all that was made of gold or silver.

16 The two pillars, the Sea, the movable stands which king Solomon had made for the house of Yahweh—all this bronze was of immeasurable weight. 17 The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a bronze capital; the height of the capital was three cubits; latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, were on the capital all around. The second pillar had the same, with the latticework.



**KINGDOM OF DAVID
AND SOLOMON**

¹⁸The commander of the bodyguard took captive Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the next priest in rank, as well as three doorkeepers.

¹⁹He also took from those in the city a eunuch in command of the fighting men, five personal advisers to the king who were discovered in the city, the commander's secretary, responsible for military conscription, and sixty of his men who were found in the city. ²⁰Nebuzaradan took all these away to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹There at Riblah in the territory of Hamath the king of Babylon had them put to death. So Judah was taken away captive from its own land.

²²As for the remnant of the people whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had left behind, he appointed Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as their governor. ²³When the commanders of the troops and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they went to him at Mizpah. These were Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, Johanan, son of Kareah, Seraiah, son of Tanhumeth, from Natophah, Jaazaniah the Macaathite, with their men. ²⁴Gedaliah told them and

their men most solemnly, "Do not be afraid of submitting yourselves to the Chaldeans. Live in the country obeying the king of Babylon, and all will be well with you."

²⁵In the seventh month, however, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, who belonged to the king's family, came with ten of his men and killed Gedaliah as well as the Judeans and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶Then all the people, from the greatest to the least, set out with the commanders of the troops and took refuge in Egypt, in fear of the Chaldeans.

²⁷On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, Evil-merodah, king of Babylon, in the year he came to the throne pardoned Jehoiachin king of Judah and released him from prison. ²⁸He spoke kindly to him, and gave him more honorable treatment than the other kings who were with him in Babylon. ²⁹Jehoiachin put aside his prison garment and for the rest of his life ate at the king's table.

³⁰Day by day, for as long as he lived, he was maintained by the king of Babylon.

Jer
40:5;
26:24

Jer
40:7—
41:18

Jer 42

Jer 52:
31-34

1K 2:7

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