



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 treats 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 ^{8:9} After the death of Ahab, Moab rebelled against Israel. ² In 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." ³ Then an angel of ^{1K 17:1} 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? ⁴ Now 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.

⁵ Then the messengers returned to Ahaziah who asked, "How is it that you have returned?" ⁶ They 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."

⁷ The king asked them, "What was the appearance of the man who met you on the way and told you this?" ⁸ They 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."

⁹ Ahaziah 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." ¹⁰ Elijah 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. ¹¹ The 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." ¹² Elijah answered, "If I am a man of God, then may fire come down

Zec
13:4
Mt
3:4

1K
17:24

Num
16:35

Lk 9:54
Rev 20:9
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 the 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-zebul, 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 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 by Yahweh and by your life that I will never leave you.” ⁵So 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, “Grant that I may have the best 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

• **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 Testament, 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.

Yahweh took Elijah up to heaven in whirlwind. 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! 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

1K
19:19

Is
61:1

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

13:14 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. ¹⁴There he struck the water with the mantle, but it did not part. So he asked, "Where is Yahweh, the God of Elijah?" And as he struck the water again it parted. Elisha crossed over.

Num 11:25 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 in some mountain or 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 so the land is unproductive." ²⁰He said to them, "Bring me a new pot with salt in it." When they brought it to him, ²¹Elisha 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." ²²And 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, baldhead! Go up, baldhead!" ²⁴Elisha 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. ²⁵From there Elisha set out

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).

The Bible 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 Bible, Elisha appears as the man most gifted in working

for Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria. ^{3:11}

3 ¹Jehoram, son of Ahab, began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and he reigned for twelve years. ²He 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. ³Nonetheless he clung to the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which had become the sin of Israel, and did not depart from it. ^{1K 12:28}

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. ⁵But 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. ⁷He 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." ⁸Jehoram asked, "By which way shall we go up?" And he answered, "By the way of the desert of Edom." ^{1K 22}

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. ¹⁰Then the king of Israel said, "Yahweh has called us three kings to give us into the hands of Moab." ¹¹Then 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." ¹²And Jehoshaphat agreed, "Indeed, God's word comes to him." So the king of Israel, the king of Edom and Jehoshaphat went down to Elisha. ^{1K 22:7}

¹³Elisha said to the king of Israel, "What ^{1K 18:19}

miracles, but he is not considered greater than any others because of that. He lives among 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).

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 Elisha ¹⁶and he said, “This is the word of Yahweh: Dig trenches and more trenches in this valley, ¹⁷for 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. ¹⁸This is an easy thing for Yahweh, for he shall give Moab into your hands. ¹⁹You 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. ²²When they woke up in the morning, they saw the sun shining upon the water, and this appeared to them as if it were blood. ²³So 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!” ²⁴But when they came to the camp the Israelites confronted, defeated and routed them. The Israelites pursued and entered Moab. ²⁵They 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.

²⁶When 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. ²⁷So he took his firstborn 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 • ¹The 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.” ²Elisha said, “What can I do for you? Tell me what you have in your house?” She answered, “I have but a little oil for cleaning.” ³Elisha said to her, “Go and ask your neighbors for empty jars. ⁴Get 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.”

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

⁷As 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 Shunamite's son

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

⁹The woman said to her husband, “See, this man who constantly passes by our house is a holy man of God. ¹⁰If 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.”

¹¹One day when Elisha came, he

Ex
21:2
Ne
5:1
Mt
18:25

• **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-

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

¹³Elisha said to her, "You have taken all this trouble for us. 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." ¹⁴So 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 maidservant."

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." ²⁰The 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." ²³He 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." ²⁵So 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." ²⁷She 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

Gen
18:10

Gen
21:1
Ps
113:9

1K
17:17-
24

Ex
4:17
Lk
10:4

gushed 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 con-

crete 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."

boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

^{1K 17:23 Lk 8:55} ³⁶Elisha then called Gehazi and said, “Call the woman.” And when she came, Elisha told her, “Take your son.” ³⁷She 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 some broth for the fellow prophets.” ³⁹One 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. ⁴⁰Then 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. ⁴¹Then 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

^{Lev 23:17} • ⁴²A man came from Baal-shalishad 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.”

^{Mt 14:16} ⁴³His 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.” ⁴⁴So 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 • ¹Naaman 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.

²One 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.”

⁴Naaman went to tell the king what the young Israelite maidservant had said. ⁵The 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 gold bars, six thousand pieces of silver and ten festal garments. ⁶On 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}

⁷When the king had 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:

• 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. 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

“Why have you torn your clothes? Let the man come to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel.”

^{Jn 9:7} ⁹So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and stopped before the house of Elisha. 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.”

^{Lk 4:27} 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.

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.

Naaman was already at a certain distance, ²⁰when Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, thought: “Imagine that my lord

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 messenger. 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. 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 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? 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. 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.

refused to take the gifts that Aramean brought! As Yahweh lives, I will run after him and get some of them!”

²¹ Gehazi went after Naaman and Naaman saw Gehazi running after him, so he jumped out of his chariot to greet him. ²² Gehazi 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. ²⁴ When 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.

²⁵ When he appeared before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” He answered, “Your servant has not been any place.” ²⁶ Elisha replied, “Did not my spirit run after you when a man jumped out of his chariot to meet you? Well, you have received silver and can now buy olive groves, vineyards, sheep, oxen and servants. ²⁷ But you and all your descendants shall be infected with the leprosy of Naaman forever.” And Gehazi left his presence with leprosy, as white as snow.

6 ¹ Now the fellow prophets said to Elisha, “See, the place where we

are gathered has become too small for us. ² Let us go to the Jordan, and let each of us get a log to build a shed where we can gather.” Elisha answered, “Go.” ³ Then one of them said to him, “Why do you not come along with us?” ⁴ So Elisha went with them. And when they arrived at the Jordan, they began to cut down the trees. ⁵ But as one of them was cutting a tree, his axehead fell into the river, and he exclaimed, “O my master, the iron piece that you have lent me!” 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. ⁷ Elisha said, “Get it.” The man reached out his hand and took it.

Elisha captures an armed band of Arameans

• ⁸ At that time when the king of Aram was raiding Israel, he consulted with his officials, and told them, “Let us attack that people.” ⁹ But the man of God sent a message to the king of Israel, “Guard this place for the Arameans shall go there.” ¹⁰ So the king of Israel sent men to the place indicated by the man of God, and they kept watch there. And this happened several times. ¹¹ The 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.” ¹² One 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.”

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

Num
12:10

• **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

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.

Gen 19:1
Wis 19:17
Acts 13:11 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 chickpeas 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 that he was wearing sackcloth under his tunic. ³¹The king swore: "May the Lord 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

fears, instead of taking risks and proceed, in the trust that God cannot fail!

May the Lord 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?

Lev 26:29

from Yahweh, why should I still trust him?”

7¹ But 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 piece of silver, and two measures of barley for a piece of silver, too.”² The 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.”

³ Four 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? ⁴ If 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!”

⁵ They 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. ⁶ The Lord 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.”

⁷ So 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. ⁸ When 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.

⁹ Then 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.”

¹⁰ Returning 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.” ¹¹ The guards cried out the news and it was told within the king’s household.

¹² The 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.” ¹³ One 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.” ¹⁴ So they took two chariots and their horses, and the king sent the horsemen after the Arameans. ¹⁵ They 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. ¹⁶ Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. A measure of flour was sold for a piece of silver and a double measure of barley was also sold for a piece, as Elisha had said. ¹⁷ The 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, ¹⁸ just 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,” ¹⁹ the 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.” ²⁰ So it happened. The

people ran over him and crushed him at the city gates, and there he died.

4:18 **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.

5:27 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.

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

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.

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

²⁵Ahaziah, son of Joram, king of Judah, began to reign in the twelfth year of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel. 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.

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 Ra-

1K
16:302S
7:11-
16
1K
11:36
Ps
132:
109:14
1K
22:3-
4

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

^{1K}
^{19:16}

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.

^{1K}
^{21:21-24}

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}
^{14:10-11}

^{1S}
¹⁰⁻¹¹
^{Hos}
^{9:7}

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.”

^{Mt}
^{21:7}

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!”

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

^{2S}
^{18:27}

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,

• **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.

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

Jehu murders Joram

²² When 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?” ²³ So Joram turned his chariot around and fled, saying to Ahaziah, “Treachery, Ahaziah!”

²⁴ Jehu 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.

²⁵ Jehu 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.”

1K
21:19

²⁷ As 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. ²⁸ His servants carried his body in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him with his fathers in the city of David. ²⁹ Ahaziah had begun his reign in Judah in the eleventh year of Joram, son of Ahab.

Jezebel is killed

• ³⁰ Jehu entered the city of Jezreel. When Jezebel learned this, she painted her eyes, adorned her neck, and looked out of the window. ³¹ As Jehu entered the gates, she said to him, “Do you bring peace? Will you not have Zimri’s fate after murdering your master?”

1K
16:9

³² Jehu looked up to the window and cried out, “Who is on my side?” Two or

three eunuchs looked down at him. ³³ He 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.

³⁴ Jehu 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.” ³⁵ They went to bury her, but they found no more than her hands and feet with the skull. ³⁶ When 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. ³⁷ Her body shall be as dung on the land, so that no one can say: This was Jezebel.”

1K
21:23

Ahab’s family is wiped out

10 ¹ The 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, ³ select 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.”

Jdg
9:5

⁴ They 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?” ⁵ The 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.”

⁶ Then 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.”

1K
15:29
Hos
1:4

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

⁷ As soon as this letter reached them, they

• 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 Bible as an example of a godless woman and a murderess of the servants of Yahweh (see Rev 2:20).

seized the sons of the king, beheaded 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-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 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 Nesbat, 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

• **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 king-

dom by killing all her grandchildren. This would mean the end of David's descendants, or the failure of Yahweh's promises. Joash escapes

1K
12:29

Am
1:3

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.

^{2S}
^{8:18} ⁴In the seventh year, Jehoiada the 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

^{1S}
^{21:10}
^{2S}
^{8:7}

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,

^{2S}
^{2:4}
^{1K}
^{1:39}

Dt
^{4:20}
Jer
^{34:8}

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.

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 Jehu, and he reigned for forty-two years in Jerusalem. His 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.

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

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 it 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 Jehozabad, 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.

10:32
1K
15:18

Jehoahaz, king of Israel

13 ¹In the twenty-third year 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 Benhadad, 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

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.

• **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 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.

oppressed them. ⁵ And 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.) ⁷ No 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.

14:4
1K
22:44

⁸ The rest about Jehoahaz, all that he did and his bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ⁹ When Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, they buried him in Samaria and his son Joash reigned in his place.

Joash, king of Israel

¹⁰ In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Joash, son of Jehoahaz, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, its capital; he reigned for sixteen years. ¹¹ He 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. ¹² The 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. ¹³ When 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

¹⁴ When 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!" ¹⁵ Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and arrows." So he took a bow and arrows. ¹⁶ Elisha then said to the king, "Draw the bow," and the king drew the bow. Then Elisha put his hand on the king's hand ¹⁷ and 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!" ¹⁸ And 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. ¹⁹ So 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."

Jos
8:18

²⁰ Elisha 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. ²¹ It 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.

²² Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed the Israelites throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. ²³ But 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. ²⁴ Hazael, the king of Aram, died; and his son Ben-hadad reigned in his place. ²⁵ Then 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 ¹ Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, began to reign in the second year of Joash, king of Israel. ² He 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. ³ He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, yet not like his father David; rather he acted like his father Joash. ⁴ The Sanctuaries on the Hillside still stood; there the people continued to offer sacrifices and to burn incense.

⁵ When the kingdom was firmly in his hands, Amaziah killed the officers who had murdered the king, his father, ⁶ but 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."

⁷ Amaziah 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.

⁸ Then 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." ⁹ Joash, king of Israel, sent as an answer to Amaziah, king of Judah: "A thornbush 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. ¹⁰ You now feel very proud since you conquered the Edomites. Be content with your fame and be quiet in your own house lest disgrace befall you and the people of Judah."

¹¹ But Amaziah did not listen; so Joash, king of Israel, came and confronted him in Beth-shemesh of Judah. ¹² Judah was defeated by Israel, and everyone of them fled to

Dt
24:16
Ezk
18

his home. ¹³ Joash, king of Israel, took Amaziah, son of Ahaziah, as prisoner in Bethshemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem.

He made an opening two hundred meters wide in the wall of Jerusalem, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. ¹⁴ He 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.

¹⁵ Now 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. ¹⁶ When Joash rested with his fathers, they buried him in Samaria with his ancestors, and his son Jeroboam reigned in his place.

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

Jeroboam II, king of Israel

• ²³ Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, began to reign in Samaria in the fifteenth year of the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah. He reigned for forty-one years, ²⁴ and 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. ²⁵ He 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. ²⁶ Yahweh had seen the extreme bitter misery of Israel; there was no one left, neither slave nor freeman, who would help Israel. ²⁷ But Yahweh did not decide to wipe out the name of Israel from under the heavens, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam, son of Joash.

Dt
7:24

• **14.23** The Bible dedicates only this paragraph to Jeroboam II, King of Israel (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

²⁸ Now 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. ²⁹ When Jeroboam died, he was buried with the kings of Israel, and his son Zechariah reigned in his place.

Azariah, king of Judah

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

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

⁵ Yahweh 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.

⁶ Now the rest about Azariah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ⁷ When Azariah died, they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Jotham succeeded him.

Lev
13:48

The last kings of Israel

⁸ Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, began to reign over Israel in Samaria, its capital, in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, king of Judah. For the six months that he stayed in power, ⁹ he 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.

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

¹¹ Now the rest regarding Zechariah is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ¹² In 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.

¹³ Shallum, son of Jabesh, began to reign in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah, king of Judah, and he reigned for a month in Sa-

1K
12:28

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.

maria. 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 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 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 general, Pekah, son of Remaliah, rebelled against him. He led some fifty men from the province of Gilead, and they came to kill him in Samaria in the tower of the 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 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, began to reign in the second year 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.

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

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.

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 from the Edomites, expelling the Jews from there. The Edomites then entered Elath and lived there until now.

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.

Jer
20:2

Dt
12:32
Jer
7:31

1K
14:23
Jer
2:20

Is
7:1

1K
15:18

¹⁰ So 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 measurement of that altar together with the design which he copied exactly in all its details.

¹¹ The 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. ¹² When the king returned from Damascus, he saw the altar, ¹³ approached it and went up to it. ¹³ He burned on that altar his holocausts and sacrifices. There he made his libation and shed the blood of his peace offerings. ¹⁴ He 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. As for the bronze altar, I will deal with it." ¹⁶ The priest Uriah did as the king had commanded him.

¹⁷ The 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, ¹⁸ he removed them from the House of Yahweh because of the king of Asshur.

¹⁹ The rest regarding Ahaz and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁰ When 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 ¹ Hoshea, son of Elah, began to reign in Israel in the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah. He reigned for

nine years in the city of Samaria, ² and he acted badly towards Yahweh though not as bad as the previous kings of Israel.

³ Shalmaneser, king of Asshur, came with his army to attack Hoshea, who surrendered to him and began paying taxes to him. ⁴ But 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, and then put him in prison.

⁵ The army of the king of Asshur subjected the whole of Israel, and they came to Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year 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

⁷ This 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. ⁸ They followed the customs of the nations which Yahweh had driven out before them.

⁹ The children of Israel introduced many innovations that offended Yahweh, their God. They built sanctuaries in all the cities, from the watchtowers to the fortified cities. ¹⁰ They placed images and sacred pillars on all the hills

• **17.1** Here we have the description of the fall of the northern kingdom. Samaria is captured in 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 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

^{1K}
^{12:33}
^{13:1}

^{DI}
^{28:36}
^{Hos}
^{9:3}
^{Am}
^{5:27}

^{Ex}
^{32:4}
^{Jdg}
^{2:1}
^{Jer}
^{2:6}
^{Mic}
^{6:4}
^{Ps}
⁸¹

^{Ezk}
^{46:2}

^{1K}
^{14:23}

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 pillars and knelt before all the stars of heaven, and worshiped Baal.

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

too small and isolated to resist its powerful neighbor. The Bible, however, makes us discover the deeper cause of this disaster: *they had betrayed Yahweh their God.*

They served their filthy idols. 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 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 16:13). See also Jdg 3:7 and Rom 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?

Jer
18:11
25:5
Ezk
33:11

Jer
7:26

Jer
2:5

16:3

Ezk
5:17

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."

²⁷ So 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." ²⁸ So, one of the priests who had been banished from Samaria came back, and staying in Bethel, taught these people how they should honor Yahweh.

²⁹ Yet 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: ³⁰ the Babylonians set up the idol Succoth, the inhabitants of Cuth made Negal, the inhabitants of Hamath made Ashima, ³¹ those of Avva made Nibjaz and Tartak. Those of Sepharvaim burned their children in the fire in honor of Adrammelech and Anammelech, their gods.

³² They worshiped Yahweh, but they appointed for themselves priests from among their people, who served Yahweh in the Houses on the hills. ³³ They honored Yahweh but at the same time, served their own gods, according to the customs of the nations where they had been banished.

³⁴ Until 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. ³⁵ Yahweh 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. ³⁶ You 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. ³⁷ Keep the precepts, the ordinances, the Law and the commandments he wrote for you. Fulfill them all your days and do not adore strange gods. ³⁸ Do not forsake the covenant he made with you and do not adore strange gods, ³⁹ but adore only Yahweh, your God, and he shall

free you from the hand of all your enemies." ⁴⁰ But they did not pay attention; instead they followed their ancient customs.

⁴¹ So 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.

Ezra
4:2

Hezekiah, king of Judah

18 ¹ Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, began to reign in Judah in the third year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel.

² He was twenty-five years old then, and his reign in Jerusalem lasted for twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, daughter of Zechariah. ³ He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh, like David, his ancestor.

14:3
15:3

⁴ He did away with the sanctuaries on the hills, demolished the standing stones and cut down the sacred pillars.

Num
21:4-9
Jn
3:14

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.

⁵ He trusted in Yahweh more than any of the kings of Judah who preceded or succeeded him and he never departed from Yahweh. ⁶ He kept the commandments Yahweh had given through Moses. ⁷ For 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. ⁸ He imposed his authority on the Philistines as far as Gaza, and seized their land from the watch-towers to the fortified cities.

23:25

Dt
5:29

⁹ In the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of

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.

• **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. This is the time when the prophet Isaiah is present at the side of King Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.).

He did away with the sanctuaries on the hills. 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

Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came against Samaria and besieged it. ¹⁰At the end of three years, he conquered it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year 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 Shebna the secretary and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

¹⁹The field commander said to them, "Give Hezekiah this message from the great king of Assyria: How can you be so confident? ²⁰You 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? ²¹You 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. ²²Yes, 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?"

²³Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king. I will give you two

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 Bible and also for Josiah's reform a century later (2 K 22).

The reforms of Hezekiah are told more in detail in 2 Chr 29-31.

• 13. In 701 B.C. Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem and Hezekiah had to pay a high price to keep him away.

Beginning with 18:7 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 701 the 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 18:17-19, and it concludes in 19:36-37.

In 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." The famous pagan historian, Herodotus, relates the sudden destruction of this army by an epidemic. A most

Is
36-
37

Is
7:3

Is
30:1-
7

thousand horses if you are able to supply riders. ²⁴How could you ever repulse one of the least of my master's generals? And you rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen! ²⁵Do 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!" ²⁶Then Eliakim and 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."

²⁷But 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?"

²⁸Then the field commander stood and cried out with a loud voice in Hebrew, "Hear the words of the great king of Assyria: ²⁹Do not let Hezekiah deceive you! No, he will not be able to help you! ³⁰Do 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 ³¹to 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

1K
5:5
Hos
2:14
Mic
4:4

your cistern until I come again. ³²Then 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.

Dt
7:13

Hezekiah is misleading you when he says that Yahweh will save you. ³³Have the gods of the nations rescued their land from the hands of the king of Assyria? ³⁴Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sapharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? And have the gods delivered Samaria from my hand? ³⁵Who 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?"

³⁶The people were like deaf and remained silent, since the king had commanded them not to answer him.

³⁷Then Eliakim with Shebna and Joah came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him what the field commander had said.

19 ¹When King Hezekiah heard this he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and went to the house of Yahweh. ²He 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.

Gen
37:34
2S
3:31
Es
4:1

³And they said to Isaiah, "This is

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.

^{Hos 13:13} 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. ⁴Would 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 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 ^{Is 37:8} 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, Rezeph 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 hosts and 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.

²⁹This will be a sign for you, O Hezekiah: This year you will eat the after-growth grain,

Dt
4:28
Jer
10:1

1K
8:60
18:24

Is
37:21

Is
1:8
Lm
2:15

Ps
20:8

Is
10:7

and next year what grows from that, but in the third year, sow and reap, plant vines and eat the fruit.

³⁰ A remnant of the house of Judah shall take root below and produce fruit above.

^{Is 1:9} ^{4:2} ³¹ For a remnant will come from Jerusalem and survivors from Mount Zion. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this. ³² That 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.

³³ He shall leave by the way he came and he shall not enter the city, word of Yahweh. ³⁴ I will protect this city and so save it for my own sake and for the sake of David, my servant.

³⁵ It 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.

³⁶ So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, returned home and lived in Nineveh.

³⁷ While 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

^{Is 38} **20** ¹ In 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."

² Hezekiah 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.

⁴ Isaiah 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. ⁶ See! 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."

⁸ Hezekiah 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?" ⁹ Isaiah 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?" ¹⁰ Hezekiah said, "It is easy for the shadow to lengthen ten steps, but it shall be wonderful if the shadow goes back ten steps." ¹¹ The 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.

⁷ Isaiah then said, "Bring a fig cake to rub on the ulcer and let Hezekiah be cured!"

¹² At 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. ¹³ Hezekiah 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.

¹⁴ Then 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." ¹⁵ Isaiah 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 treasures that I did not show them."

¹⁶ So Isaiah said to the king, "Listen to this word of Yahweh: ¹⁷ The 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. ¹⁸ Some 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." ¹⁹ Hezekiah 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?"

²⁰ Now 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 of the Kings of Judah. ²¹ When Hezekiah slept with his fathers, his son Manasseh reigned in his place.

Manasseh, king of Judah

21 ¹ 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.

² He treated Yahweh very badly, imitating the wretched practices of the people Yahweh had driven out from the land in order to give

• **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 ex-

plains partly why Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, begins refraining, and then persecuting Yahweh's party which was the living spirit of Judah's nationalism.

Is
22:11
2Chr
32:30

18:4

17:16

it to the Israelites. ³ He 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. ⁴ He built altars in the courtyard of the House of Yahweh, about which Yahweh had said, “Jerusalem shall be the dwelling place of my Name.”

⁵ He built altars for all the stars of heaven in the two courtyards of the House of Yahweh. ⁶ He 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. ⁷ He 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. ⁸ I 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.”

⁹ But they did not listen, and Manasseh led them into doing things worse than those nations had done whom Yahweh had expelled before the Israelites. ¹⁰ So 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.

¹² Therefore, I shall bring upon Jerusalem and upon Judah an evil so great that the ears of those who hear of it shall buzz. ¹³ Jerusalem 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. ¹⁴ I 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. ¹⁵ For they did what displeased me and made me angry from the day when their ancestors came out of Egypt to this day.”

¹⁶ Manasseh 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. ¹⁷ The 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.

¹⁸ When Manasseh died, they buried him in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza, and his son Amon reigned in his place.

¹⁹ Amon 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. ²⁰ He treated Yahweh badly, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ He completely followed in the footsteps of his father – he served the idols his father had served and bowed down before them. ²² He abandoned Yahweh, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in the way of Yahweh.

²³ The officials of Amon conspired against him, and murdered him in his house. ²⁴ But the citizens killed all who had plotted against the king, and they proclaimed his son Josiah king in his place.

²⁵ The rest regarding Amon and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁶ They 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

22 ¹ Josiah 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. ² He 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.

³ In 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 Hilkiyah and give him the amount of money which the people offer for the House of Yah-

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.

• **22.1** *Josiah followed in the footsteps of David, his father.* 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 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. During the previous king-

11:20
14:20
23:30

12:3
18:3
Dt
2:27

12:10

15
3:11

weh, 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 not ask from them any account of the money, for they are honorable men.”

^{Dt 28:61}
^{Jos 1:8} 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.”

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.”

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.

^{Ex 15:20}
^{Jdg 4:4}
^{Ne 6:4}
^{Lk 2:36}

doms, 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.

¹⁵She answered them, ¹⁶“You will say to the one who sent you to me: This is what 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

23 ¹The king summoned to his side all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. 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.

^{Ex 24:7}

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.

^{Dt 4:29}

⁴Then the king commanded the high priest Hilkiah as well as the priests of

^{21:3}

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.

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 host. 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.

¹⁰The king had the place for burning human sacrifices in the valley of Benhinnom destroyed, so that no one could sac-

rifice his sons or daughters in the fire according to the ritual of Molech. ¹¹The horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun 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 were burned. ¹²There were altars which the kings of Judah had built on the roof of the palace of Ahaza. 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.

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.

• 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.

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

• **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 sanctu-

aries, 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,

Jer
19:13

18:4

Lev
21:1
Num
9:6

1K
12:
33-
13:32

Dt
18:6

people, "Celebrate the Passover in honor of Yahweh, our God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant."

²² A 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. ²³ This Passover was celebrated in Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of King Josiah.

²⁴ Josiah obeyed all the words of the Law written in the book which the priest Hilkiah 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.

²⁵ There 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.

²⁶ In 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.

²⁷ So 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."

• ²⁸ The rest regarding Josiah and all that he did is written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. ²⁹ In those days, the Pharaoh Neco crossed the river Euphrates and went to join the king 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 Jehoiakim 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 Jehoiakim collected from all the people the gold and silver demanded by the Pharaoh.

³⁶ Jehoiakim 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

24 ¹ In those days, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became subject to him for three years, after which he rebelled.

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

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 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 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 Bible, the name Megiddo becomes the symbol of a curse (Rev 16:16).

Jer
22:13

Is
5:26
Jer
1:14

21:16

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 the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. ¹³ Nebuchadnezzar 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.

¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar 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. ¹⁵ Nebuchadnezzar also carried away Jehoiachin, with his mother, his wives, the ministers of the pal-

ace, and the prominent men of the land.

¹⁶ So 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.

¹⁷ He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king of Jerusalem, in place of Jehoiachin. And he changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old, and he reigned in Jerusalem for eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah. ¹⁹ He did what displeased Yahweh, as Jehoiakim had done; ²⁰ so the punishment of Yahweh fell on Jerusalem and Judah, until he cast them far away from his presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Jer
52:1

The Chaldeans conquer and destroy Jerusalem

25 ¹ In 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. ² The city was under siege up to the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

Jer
39:1-10

³ On 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.

• 24.8 The destruction of the kingdom of Judah takes place in two stages:

– 598 B.C. Jehoiakim has just died. His son, Jehoiachin surrenders in the city under siege. First exile of the elite to Babylon. The Chaldeans (people of Babylon) force Zedekiah to be king.

– 587 B.C. Zedekiah rebels against the Chaldeans who come to destroy Jerusalem and its temple. Second exile to Babylon.

The Bible 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.

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 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 double bronze chain and took him to Babylon.

⁸On the seventh day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard and servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem and ⁹set fire to the House of Yahweh and the royal palace as well as to all the houses in Jerusalem. ¹⁰The Chaldean army under the commander of the bodyguard completely demolished all the walls around Jerusalem.

¹¹Nebuzaradan, 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. ¹²But he left those among the very poor who were capable of working in vineyards and cultivating the soil.

¹³The Chaldeans broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the stands and the bronze Sea in the House of

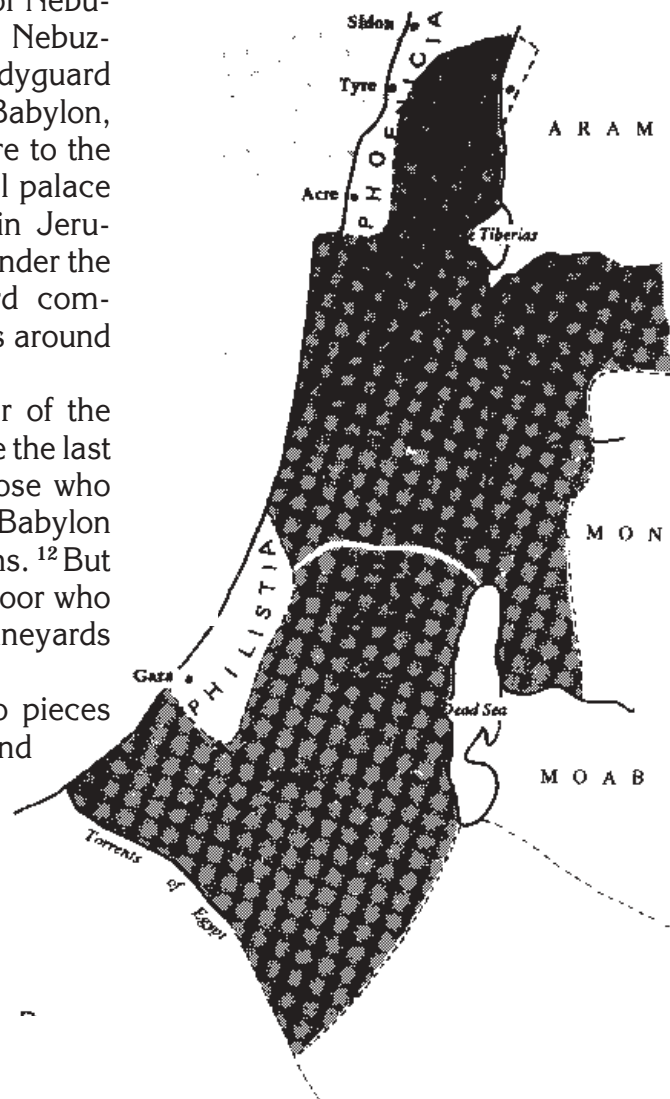
Yahweh and carried off all this bronze to Babylon.

¹⁴They also took the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, the spoons and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁵The commander of the bodyguard took the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots, lampstands, ladles and bowls – all that was made of gold or silver.

¹⁶The two pillars, the Sea, the movable stands which King Solomon had made for the House of Yahweh – all this bronze was of immeasurable weight. ¹⁷The pillars were each eighteen cubits high. Each had a thickness of four fingers and was hollow. On top of each pillar was a bronze capital five cubits high, and above and around the capital there was filigree work with pomegranates made of bronze.

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



KINGDOM OF DAVID
AND SOLOMON

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.

^{Jer 26:24} 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.

^{Jer 40:7} 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 Maccaathite, 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 Jehoiakin king of Judah, Evil-merodah, king of Babylon, in the year he came to the throne pardoned Jehoiakin 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. ²⁹Jehoiakin 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
41-
42

1K
2:7