



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

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

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

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

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

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

The Book of Kings

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

It is a religious history. And the events which other historians would consider important are deliberately omitted. For instance, it hardly discusses the important reigns of Omri and of Jeroboam II in Samaria. Its judgment on the Kings of Israel (Kingdom of Samaria) is always negative, blaming them for the division of the ancient Kingdom of David. Only a few kings of Judah are praised for their loyalty to Yahweh.

We can easily note three parts:

- the grandeur of Solomon's reign and of the Temple;
- the history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah after their division;
- after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel, the history of Judah until Jerusalem's destruction in 587.

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

David's last years

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

Song
7:1

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

2S
3:4

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

2S
11:3
12:241K
15:29

¹¹ Then Nathan spoke to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, "Have you heard that Adonijah, son of Haggith, acts as a king, unknown to David our lord? ¹² Let me then give you advice that could save both your life and Solomon your son. ¹³ Go, see King David immediately and tell him this, 'Did you not, my lord king, swear to your handmaid that Solomon, my son, would reign after you and sit on your throne? Why then does Adonijah act as king?' ¹⁴ Then,

while you are still speaking with the king, I will come in and confirm what you say."

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

2K
10:1
11:1

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

David makes Solomon king

²⁸ King David then answered, "Call Bathsheba to me." So she came to the king. As she stood before him, ²⁹ the king swore an oath and said, "As Yahweh lives, he who has delivered me from all adversity, ³⁰ so will I fulfill today the oath I swore to you by Yahweh, the God of Israel, when I said: "Solomon, your son, shall reign after me; he shall sit on my throne in my place." ³¹ Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king as she said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

³² King David then said, “Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.” So they came to the king ³³ who said to them, ^{Es 6:7, 9} “Take with you the servants of your lord and make my son Solomon ride on my own mule. Then bring him down to Gihon ³⁴ and let Zadok the priest and ^{15 9:26} Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king of Israel. Once this is done, sound the horn and proclaim, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ ³⁵ Then he shall sit on my throne in your presence. From now on he will be king in my place for I have made him ruler of Israel and Judah.”

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

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

⁴¹ Adonijah and all his guests heard this as they finished feasting. On hearing the sound of the horn, Joab asked, “What is all this commotion in the city?” ⁴² While he was still speaking, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest, arrived and Adonijah asked, “Come in, for you are a worthy man and bring good news.” ⁴³ Jonathan answered Adonijah, “Not at all, for our lord King David has made Solomon

king. ⁴⁴ The king sent him with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and Plethites who made him ride on the king’s mule.

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

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

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

David’s testament

2 • ¹ When David was about to die, he gave his son Solomon this instruction, ² “I am about to go the way of all creatures. Be strong and show yourself a man. ³ Keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in his ways. Keep his statutes, his commands,

Jos
23:14

• **2.1** This first part of the book of Kings straight away makes known the three institutions that are to shape the young nation: kings, prophets and priests. The priests in the person of

Zadok, who is to supplant Abiathar, descendant of Heli (Is 3:32-35). The priests will be the strongest support of David’s descendants (2 K 11).

his ordinances and declarations written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in whatever you do and wherever you go. ⁴If you do so, Yahweh will fulfill the promise he made to me: 'If your sons take care to walk before me faithfully with their whole heart and their whole soul, you shall always have one of your descendants on the throne of Israel.'

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

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

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

Solomon affirms his power

¹³Then Adonijah, son of Haggith, came to Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, who asked

him, "Do you come in peace?" He answered, "In peace," ¹⁴and added, "I have something to tell you." She said, "Speak" ¹⁵and Adonijah said, "You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Israel fully expected me to reign. But the kingdom has slipped from my hands and become my brother's for it was given him by Yahweh. ¹⁶Now I have one thing to ask of you and I beg you not to refuse me." She said, "Speak," ¹⁷and he continued, "Please ask King Solomon to give me Abishag the Shunammite for my wife. I know that he cannot refuse you." ¹⁸Bathsheba answered, "Very well, I shall speak to the king on your behalf."

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

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

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

²⁶Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, "Go to your estate at Anathoth. You deserve

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

At the end of his life, David, who had already lost two sons in the pursuit of power (see 2 Sam 3:2), chooses the wife whose son would be heir to the throne. Bathsheba is therefore designated (1 K 1:17) as queen-mother and her son Solomon is to reign in place of his father David. From this day onward, aware of the importance of the Davidic dynasty in the history of salvation, the books of Kings mention for each reign the wife who will be appointed queen-mother and whose son will be enthroned in Jerusalem (this was not done for the king of Israel in the dissident kingdom). When Jesus, the true descendant of David comes, the Gospel reveals the woman chosen among all, the mother whom God, in his

sovereign authority, has destined to give birth to the Son and Heir (Lk 1:31; 1:42; Heb 1:2).

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

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

2S
7:12

2S
16:5
19:17

1S
22:20
2S
15:24

death but I will not put you to death, because you carried the ark of God before my father David and shared in all his trials.”²⁷ So Solomon removed Abiathar as priest of Yahweh, and fulfilled the word spoken by Yahweh in Shiloh concerning the descendants of Eli.

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

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

So Benaiah went back to the king with this report, “This is what Joab answered.”³¹ The king then replied. “Do as he has said. Strike him down and have him buried. With this, the guilt for the blood which Joab shed will be lifted from me and from my father’s family.

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

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

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

³⁶Then the king sent for Shimei and told him, “Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and stay there, and do not leave the place to go anywhere. ³⁷On the day you leave and cross the brook Kidron, you shall surely die and you shall be responsible for your own death.” ³⁸Shimei answered the king, “What

you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has commanded.” So Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for many days.

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

In this manner, Solomon firmly established his reign.

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

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

Solomon’s dream

⁴The king used to sacrifice at Gibeon, the great high place; on the altar there he had offered a thousand burnt offerings. ⁵It was in Gibeon, dur-

• **3.1** The book shows Solomon in three activities which made a king famous:

- his wisdom, chaps. 3–5;
- his constructions, chaps. 6–8;
- his enterprises, chaps. 9–10.

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

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

It was said that he went to worship in the sanctuaries called High Places. This was to be pro-

hibited later when the Temple of Jerusalem would be the only one acceptable to Yahweh. For the moment, there is no such rule, and Solomon goes to Gibeon where there is a very ancient sanctuary. He himself sacrifices the victims – an act which, before long, will be the privilege only of the priests of Levi’s tribe.

• 4. Solomon’s “dream” is very famous. Perhaps this dream is only a parable by which the author of the book describes Solomon’s disposition when he began his reign.

Ask what you want. This is God’s offer to the young Solomon, his beloved one. It is God’s offer to any young person who is faced with

2S
3:29
Ezk
18
Mt
27:24

2S
5:7

2K
18:4

ing the night, that Yahweh appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, “Ask what you want me to give you.”

⁶Solomon answered, “You have shown your servant David my father a great and steadfast love because he served you faithfully and was righteous and sincere towards you. You have given him proof of your steadfast love in making a son of his sit on his throne this day. ⁷And now, O Yahweh my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a young boy who does not know how to undertake anything. ⁸Meantime, your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen – a people so great that they can neither be numbered nor counted.

Dt
7:7

Pro
2:6
Wis
8:10

⁹Give me, therefore, an understanding mind in governing your people that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to govern this multitude of people of yours?”

¹⁰Yahweh was pleased that Solomon had made this request. ¹¹And he told him, “Because you have requested this rather than long life or wealth or even vengeance on your enemies; indeed, because you have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right,

responsibilities for the first time. Life will not be a destiny imposed upon him or her; rather, one way or another, God will give people what they desire. What do you seek? (see Jn 1:38).

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

Give me an understanding mind in governing your people. Solomon is concerned about carrying out his responsibilities and does not want the people to be robbed of their expectations.

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

- to prepare for himself a long and quiet life, not to have problems or troubles, and to be spared the sacrifices required by a noble life;
- wealth, enjoyment of life, “to be comfortable”;

¹²I shall grant you your request. I now give you a wise and discerning mind such as no one has had before you nor anyone after you shall ever have.

2K
18:5
23:25
Ecl
1:16
Sir
7:14

¹³“I will also give you what you have not asked for, both wealth and fame; and no king shall be your equal during your lifetime. ¹⁴Moreover, if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and commands, as your father David did, I shall give you long life.”

Dt
5:33

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

The judgment of Solomon

• ¹⁶Then two harlots came to the king and stood before him. ¹⁷One of the two women said, “Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house, and I gave birth to a child while she was there with me. ¹⁸Three days after my child was born, this woman also gave birth. We were alone, and there was no one in the house but the two of us. ¹⁹Then this woman’s son died during the night because she lay on him. ²⁰So during the night, she got up, took my son from my side while I slept, laid it

– the death of his enemies, i.e., strength that leads to victory, satisfaction of one’s personal pride.

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

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

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

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

beside her and her dead son beside me. ²¹When I got up in the morning to nurse my child, I saw it was dead. But when I looked at it closely in the morning, I saw that it was not my child.”

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

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

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

Solomon’s grandeur

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

⁷Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel who provided food for the king and his household; each one of them making provisions for one month during the year. ⁸These were their names: Benhur, in the hill country of Ephraim; ⁹Bendeker, in Makaz; Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elonbeth-hanan; ¹⁰Ben-

hesed, in Arubboth (to him belonged Socoh and all the land of Hopher); ¹¹Ben-abinadab, in all of Naphath-dor (he had Taphath, daughter of Solomon, for his wife); ¹²Baana, son of Ahilud, in Taanach; Megiddo and all of Beth-shean beside Zarethan below Jezreel, and from Beth-shean to Abelmeholah, as far as Jokmeam and beyond; ¹³Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (he had the villages of Jair, son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead, as also the region of Argob in Bashan, sixty big towns, walled and barred with brazen bars); ¹⁴Ahinadab, son of Iddo, in Mahanaim; ¹⁵Ahimaaz, in Naphtali (he had taken Basemath, daughter of Solomon, for his wife); ¹⁶Baana, son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; ¹⁷Jehoshaphat, son of Paruah, in Issachar; ¹⁸Shimei, son of Ela, in Benjamin; ¹⁹Geber, son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan. And there was also an attendant in the land of Judah.

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

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

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

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

²⁹God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sand on the shore, ³⁰so that his wisdom surpassed that of all the people of the east and of the Egyptians. ³¹He was wiser than any man; wiser than Ethan, the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol and Darda, sons of Mahol; and his fame spread among all the surrounding nations. ³²He composed three thousand proverbs and knew a thousand and five songs. ³³He took his examples from all the trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hys-

Gen
22:17

Ecl
1:16

sop that grows out of the wall; he spoke also of the beasts and birds, and reptiles and fish.

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

^{2S}
^{5:11}

5 • ¹ Now, Hiram King of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon when he heard that he had been anointed king in place of his father. For David had always been Hiram's friend. ² Solomon then sent this message to Hiram, ³ "You know that David my father could not build a temple for Yahweh his God because his enemies were at war with him until the time when Yahweh gave him victory over them. ⁴ But now Yahweh my God has given me peace on all sides and there is no enemy or calamity that afflicts us. ⁵ And so I intend to build a temple for Yahweh my God as Yahweh told David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set upon your throne, shall build the House for my Name.' ⁶ Now, therefore, give orders to have cedars of Lebanon cut for me. My servants will join yours and I will pay your servants the wages you set, for you know that none of us can cut timber like the Sidonians."

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

cors of pure oil. ¹² Yahweh gave wisdom to Solomon as he had promised him, and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon who bound themselves by a treaty.

¹³ King Solomon conscripted thirty thousand men from all Israel for forced labor. ¹⁴ He sent them to Lebanon in relays of ten thousand a month, so that they would be in Lebanon for a month and at home for two months. Adoniram was in charge of the draft of laborers. ¹⁵ Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stone cutters in the hill country, ¹⁶ in addition to three thousand three hundred overseers in charge of the people engaged in the work. ¹⁷ By order of the king, they quarried large and expensive stones to give the temple a foundation of hewn stones. ¹⁸ Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders, along with the Gebalites did the hewing and prepared both timber and stone to build the temple.

^{1S}
^{8:11}

Solomon builds the temple

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

⁵ Solomon had a structure built adjoining the walls all around the House and enclosing both Sanctuary and Inner Sanctuary. He also made lateral rooms all around. ⁶ The lowest

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

Solomon brings writers together in his court to gather and write down the traditions of Israel, which until this time were scattered or transmitted merely by word of mouth. This was the time when the most ancient books of the Bible were written. (See Introduction to Genesis.)

From Solomon, or from his writers comes the nucleus of the Book of Proverbs. Later, whoever would write a book on Wisdom would attribute the work to Solomon: hence, in the Bible, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs and Wisdom are attributed to Solomon though they were in fact written later.

• **6.1** Solomon's first construction is the House of Yahweh, that is, the Temple of Jerusalem, which will be counted among the wonders of ancient times.

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

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

– There is the sincere desire to honor Yahweh

story was five cubits wide; the middle, six cubits wide; and the third, seven cubits wide. Around the exterior of the temple, he made offsets on the wall so that the supporting beams need not be inserted into walls of the temple.

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

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

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

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

Ex
37:1

¹⁶Solomon covered twenty cubits of the rear of the House with cedar boards from floor to rafter to serve as an inner sanctuary – the Most Holy Place. ¹⁷The front of the house, that is the Sanctuary, was forty cubits long. ¹⁸In all the interior of the House, the cedar was carved in the form of gourds and open flowers; all was of cedar and no stone was to be seen.

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

²³In the inner sanctuary, Solomon made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. ²⁴The length of the wings of each cherub was five cubits each, hence, ten cu-

by giving him the most beautiful house of all. Hence, the Temple is always called in the Bible, the House of Yahweh.

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

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

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

Like Solomon, the Christian kings and authorities of past centuries wanted to adorn their churches with gold and silver. They believed that the House of God ought to be much more beautiful than their own. Let us respect their piety; but today we understand that the city of God is governed by criteria different from those

of most people. The splendor of temples does not always help us to discover God’s greatness.

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

This arrangement of several rooms leading into the most sacred place is a common thing in many ancient religions. It teaches that we cannot approach God without the required preparation. Even though Yahweh remains in the midst of his people, his mystery continues to be inaccessible.

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

bits from tip to tip. ²⁵Both cherubim had the same measurement and the same form, ²⁶both being ten cubits high. ²⁷When the cherubim were put in the innermost part of the House their wings were so spread out that a wing of one touched one wall, while a wing of the other touched the other wall. Their other wings touched each other at the center of the House. ²⁸The cherubim were also overlaid with gold.

²⁹Solomon had all the surrounding walls of the House carved with figures of cherubim, palm trees and open flowers both in the interior and exterior rooms. ³⁰He also had the floor of the House, in both the interior and exterior rooms, overlaid with gold.

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

³³He did the same for the olive wood doorposts at the entrance to the sanctuary, which formed the fourth part of the door.

³⁴Both the right and left side of the door had two folding panels of cypress wood. ³⁵He had cherubim, palm trees and open flowers carved on them and overlaid the carvings with gold evenly applied.

Gen
3:24
Ezk
10

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

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

The palace and the temple

7 ¹Solomon took thirteen years to build his own palace. ²He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon which measured one hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high. It was built on three rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars.

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

³It had a cedar ceiling above the beams that were on the forty-five pillars, fifteen in each row. ⁴There were three window frames at either end, each window corresponding to another opposite it. ⁵All the doorways and windows had square frames and each window corresponded to the one opposite it.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵He cast two brazen pillars, both of which measured eighteen cubits high and had a circumference of twelve cubits. Both were hollow and measured four fingers in thickness. ¹⁶He also made two capitals of molten bronze to set on the tops of the pillars, both measuring five cubits high. ¹⁷He also made two pieces of network with a chainlike mesh for each of the capitals on top of the pillars. ¹⁸Likewise, he made pomegranates ar-

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

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

ranged in two rows encircling each piece of network to cover each capital on top of the pillars. ¹⁹The capitals on top of the pillars in the vestibule had a lotus design measuring four cubits. ²⁰They were on the two pillars above the nodes and beside the network, encircled by two hundred pomegranates arranged in two rows.

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

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

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

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

³⁵On top of the stand was a round band half a cubit high, with supports and panels which were of one piece with the stand. This was topped by a crown one cubit high within which was a rounded opening, the way a pedestal is made, a cubit and a half deep. Its opening had carvings and its panels were

square and not round. ³⁶On the surface of its supports, as also on its panels, and wherever there was space, were carvings of cherubim, lions and palm trees, with wreaths all around. ³⁷This was how the ten stands were made – all of them with the same cast, same measurement, and same form.

³⁸Hiram also made ten brazen basins, each holding forty baths and measuring four cubits. There was a basin for each of the ten stands. ³⁹He placed five of the stands on the south side of the House, and five on the north side. The Sea he placed at the southeast corner of the temple.

⁴⁰Hiram also made the bowls, shovels and basins, and thereby finished all the work that he had undertaken for King Solomon on Yahweh’s House. ⁴¹Hence, two pillars, two bowls on the capitals at the top of the pillars, ⁴²four hundred pomegranates for two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network to cover the two bowls of the capitals at the top of the pillars, ⁴³ten stands, ten basins on the stands, ⁴⁴the Sea, and twelve oxen underneath the Sea.

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

⁴⁸So Solomon made all the vessels that were in Yahweh’s House: the golden altar, the golden table for the bread of Presence, ⁴⁹the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left in front of the inner sanctuary; the flowers, lamps and tongs of gold; ⁵⁰the cups, snuffers, basins, dishes for incense, and firepans of pure gold; and the golden hinges for both the doors of the innermost part of the House, the Most Holy Place, and the doors of the Sanctuary of the House.

⁵¹When all the work that King Solomon did on Yahweh’s House was completed, he brought in the things which David his father had dedicated – the silver, the gold, and the vessels – and stored them in the treasures of Yahweh’s House.

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

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

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

Ex
30:17

Ex
27:3

Ex
25:23

2S
8:11

The ark assembled near King Solomon

•²All the Israelites assembled near King Solomon in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month.³When all the elders of Israel arrived, the priests carried the ark of Yahweh⁴ and brought it up together with the Tent of Meeting and all the holy vessels that were in the tent. After the priests and Levites had brought them up,⁵ King Solomon with the entire congregation of Israel that had assembled before him and were with him before the Ark, sacrificed so many sheep and oxen that they could neither be counted nor numbered.⁶Then the priests laid the ark of the covenant of Yahweh in its place in the inner sanctuary of the House – the Most Holy Place – underneath the wings of the cherubim.⁷The cherubim had their wings spread out over the place of the ark, providing a covering above the ark and its poles.

⁸The poles were so long that their ends were seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary but not from the outside; and they remain there to this day.⁹There was nothing in the ark except the two tables of stone which Moses placed there at Horeb, where Yahweh made a covenant with the Israelites when they came out of the land of Egypt.¹⁰And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, such a cloud filled Yahweh's House¹¹ that the priests could not continue to minister. Indeed, the glory of Yahweh filled his House.

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

In the course of time, many indecent things occurred in the courtyards of the Temple; they even built up altars to idols and practiced sacred prostitution according to pagan customs. (See 2 K 23:4-7.) Yet it is not said that Yahweh abandoned his Sanctuary where he remained out of fidelity to his Covenant.

It was only in the last years of the Kingdom that the prophet Ezekiel had a vision where the cloud left the Temple: this meant that Yahweh would

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

¹⁴The king turned and blessed the entire assembly of Israel, as they stood,¹⁵ saying, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has fulfilled by his hand what he promised personally to David my father when he said,¹⁶'Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city in all the tribes of Israel in which to build a resting place for my Name, but now I have chosen Jerusalem for my Name to be there, as I chose David to be the king of my people Israel.'¹⁷Now David my father wanted to build a House for the Name of Yahweh, the God of Israel;¹⁸but Yahweh told David my father, 'You meant well to build a House for my Name.¹⁹Nevertheless, not you but your son who shall be born to you shall build this House for my Name'."

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

Solomon's prayer

•²²Then Solomon stood before the altar of Yahweh in the presence of all the assembly of Israel. He raised his hands towards heaven²³ and said, "O Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no God like you either in heaven or on earth! You keep your covenant and show loving-kindness to your servants who walk before you wholeheartedly.²⁴You have foretold this day to your servant David, my father, and this day you have fulfilled your promise.²⁵Now, O Yahweh, God of Israel, keep this other

now live among his faithful ones exiled in Babylon (Ezk 9:3).

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

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

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

It is worth noting how God, being the invisible God and Creator of the Universe, wills to be, in some way, at a definite place, Jerusalem, and

Ps
18:12
1Tim
6:16
2S
7:13
Ps
132:
14

Ex
25:13

Ex
25:16
Dt
10:1
Heb
9:4

Ex
40:34

Ezk
43:4
Rev
15:8

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

^{Is} ^{66:1} ^{Acts} ^{17:24} ^{Dt} ^{12:5,} ¹¹ ²⁷But will God really live among people on earth? If neither heavens nor the highest heavens can contain you, how much less can this House which I have built! ²⁸Yet, listen to the prayer and supplication of your servant, O Yahweh my God; hearken to the cries and pleas which your servant directs to you this day. ²⁹Watch over this House of which you have said, 'My name shall rest there.' Hear the prayer of your servant in this place.

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

³¹When people charged with a crime against their neighbor come and take their oath before your altar in this temple, ³²then hear from heaven and do

justice. Condemn the guilty and let his evildoing fall upon him, but vindicate the righteous and reward him according to his righteousness.

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

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

among a definite people, David's descendants. This visible center of divine presence is now the Church. The Kingdom of God is universal, yet the Church relates with Christ through a well-defined series of people: the bishops and the pope.

This prayer of Solomon, composed probably by a prophet at the time of the kings, emphasizes both the importance and the relativity of the Temple. It is there that the "Name" of God resides, there God will hear the prayers of his people (8:30-53). And yet this Temple built by human hands "could not contain God in his Glory." The invisible heavens "cannot contain him," how much less this earthly dwelling.

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

Gradually, because of this, all theology of Israel will be centered on the Temple. The earth and the heavens belong to God, but on this earth one country belongs to him in a very special way – it is the Land of a Promise. In this Promised Land all the towns are his; but one among them is especially dear. And in this city, in the heart of this city is the holy mountain on which Yahweh's dwelling place has been built.

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

If the universe had by degrees been centered

around the Temple, with the New Testament, on the contrary, it is the Christ – the New Temple – who becomes the point of departure for the expansion of salvation: "You will be my witnesses, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

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

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

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

So that they may fear you (v. 40). In the Bible, *to fear God* means oftentimes: to take him seriously and to respect him. But it is also true that at times we need to fear God and his punishments because his love is not yet strong enough in us to protect us against our weakness.

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

Lev
26:14,
17

Dt
11:17

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

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

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

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

– your heritage which you brought out of Egypt from the heart of the iron furnace).

⁵²Open your eyes to the pleadings of your servant and to those of your people Israel, and listen to them whenever they call on you.

⁵³For you took them from among all the peoples of the earth to be your heritage, as you declared through Moses your servant when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Yahweh God."

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

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

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

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

Solomon's activities

9 ¹After Solomon had finished building Yahweh's House, the royal palace, and everything he wanted to build, ²Yahweh appeared to him a second time, as he had

Dt
28:21,
28

Dt
4:20

Dt
7:6

Dt
12:10

Is
45:6

Num
7:1
Ezra
6:17

appeared to him at Gibeon. ³Yahweh said to him, “I have heard the prayer and supplication you made before me. I have consecrated this House you have built, that my Name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there forever. ⁴As for you, if you will live in my presence, the way your father David did, with sincerity and uprightness, doing all that I have commanded you and keeping my decrees and laws, ⁵I will affirm your kingship in Israel forever, as I promised your father David when I said, ‘You shall always have someone from your family on the throne of Israel.’

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

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

¹⁵This is the account of the forced labor imposed by King Solomon for the building of Yahweh’s House and his own palace, the Millo as well as the wall of Jerusalem; the cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. ¹⁶(Pharaoh king of Egypt had captured and burned Gezer, putting to death the Canaanites who dwelt there. Then he had given the city as dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife.) ¹⁷So

Solomon rebuilt Gezer, Lower Beth-horon, ¹⁸Baalath and Tamar in the desert, in the land of Judah, ¹⁹all the store-cities that Solomon had, the cities for his chariots and those for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon wanted to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion.

²⁰On all the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel – ²¹their descendants who were left in the land and whom the Israelites were unable to completely destroy – on all of these Solomon imposed forced labor and it remains so to this day. ²²Of the people of Israel, however, Solomon made no slaves. They were the soldiers, his officials, his commanders, his captains, his chariot commanders and horsemen.

²³The overseers of Solomon’s work, in charge of those who were working, were five hundred and fifty. ²⁴When Pharaoh’s daughter went up from the city of David to her own house that Solomon had built for her, he began building the Millo.

²⁵After Solomon had finished the House, he came three times a year to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built to Yahweh, burning incense before Yahweh. ²⁶King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. ²⁷Hiram sent his servants, seamen who were familiar with the sea, to serve in the fleet together with the servants of Solomon. ²⁸They sailed for Ophir and brought back to King Solomon gold amounting to four hundred and twenty talents.

The queen of Sheba visits Solomon

10 ¹The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon’s fame, and came to test him with difficult questions. ²She arrived in Jerusalem with a vast retinue and with camels loaded with spices, an abundance of gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she told him all that she had on her mind ³and Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing that the king could not explain to her.

Mt
12:42

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

In reality, Israel was a very small people between the two big empires of Egypt and Baby-

lon. It happened that during the period of David and Solomon, these empires were peaceful and were practically dormant. This was enough to allow the Israelites to think of themselves as the first country in the world, and they saw in Solomon the most magnificent king of all times.

The queen of Sheba came to test him with difficult questions. The Bible does not give much importance to the commercial aspect of

⁴And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the palace he had built, ⁵the food on his table, the residence of his officials, the attendance of his servants and their clothing, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings which he offered at Yahweh's House, it left her breathless.

⁶Then she said to the king, "All that I heard in my own land concerning you and your wisdom was true. ⁷But I did not believe the reports until I came and saw with my own eyes. And what did I see! I was told only half the story; for your wisdom and wealth surpass the report I heard.

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

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

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

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

¹⁴Now the weight of gold that Solomon received in one year was six hundred and sixty-six gold talents, ¹⁵not counting that brought by traders, merchants, the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land. ¹⁶King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold, six hundred shekels of gold going into each shield. ¹⁷And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold with three minas of gold in each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. ¹⁸The king also made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold. ¹⁹The throne had six steps, a rounded back, and on each side of the seat were arm rests with two lions standing beside the arm rests. ²⁰The six steps had twelve lions, one on each end of a step. Nothing like this was ever made in any kingdom. ²¹All of King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold and none of silver, for silver was not considered of much value in the days of Solomon.

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

^{22:49}
^{Ezk}
^{27:12}

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

²⁶Solomon gathered together chariots and horses – fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses which he stationed in the chariot cities

^{Dt}
^{17:16}

this visit which will only appear toward the end in the barter mentioned in verses 10 and 13.

Solomon's meeting with the Queen of Sheba becomes an historical scene:

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

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

• 23. For a while, the Israelites marveled at Solomon's wealth and the numerous chariots and horses that made up his army. Some centuries later, they saw how little this power had

and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁷The king made silver as common as stone in Jerusalem, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore in the lowland. ²⁸Solomon imported his horses from Musri and Kue and the king's traders got them from Kue for a fixed price. ²⁹A chariot could be imported from Musri for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They were exported in the same way to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

Solomon's wives

Dt
17:17
Sir
47:19

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

Jdg
2:13

⁴In Solomon's old age, his wives led him astray to serve other gods and, unlike his father David, his heart was no longer wholly given to Yahweh his God. ⁵For he served Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the idol of the Ammonites. ⁶He did what

displeased Yahweh and, unlike his father David, was unfaithful to him. ⁷Solomon even built a high place for Chemosh, the idol of Moab, on the mountain east of Jerusalem and also for Molech, the idol of the Ammonites. ⁸He did the same for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

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

3:5
9:2

Solomon's enemies

¹⁴And Yahweh raised up an adversary against Solomon. This was Hadad, the Edomite of the royal house in Edom. ¹⁵Indeed, when David had defeated Edom, and

2S
8:13

benefited them and how much it had cost the country: the politics of fame and of grandiose works demanded the imposition of forced labor on the people. This was one of the reasons why the kingdom split at the death of Solomon. This is why, afterwards, they ceased to recall with pride the splendor of his kingdom and showed greater appreciation for justice.

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

• **11.1** The Bible is not scandalized at Solomon's having several wives. At that time, to have many wives was an indication of a man's wealth. The Bible rebukes him for taking pagan wives. In this way, Solomon entered into an

alliance with these people who did not know God, imitating them in their materialism.

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

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

You have kept neither my Covenant nor the statutes (v. 11). Solomon's real sin consists in directing his life and his nation without seeking

Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, he slew every male in Edom. ¹⁶Joab and the Israelites remained in the place for six months until he had destroyed every male in Edom. ¹⁷However Hadad, then still only a boy, fled to Egypt together with some Edomites, his father's servants. ¹⁸They left Midian for Paran and, taking along with them some of the men from Paran, they went on to Egypt to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house, promised him food and gave him land. ¹⁹Hadad pleased Pharaoh, who gave him as wife the sister of Queen Tahpenes, his own wife. ²⁰The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son, Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house, and who lived there together with Pharaoh's sons.

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

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

Ahijah foretells the division of the kingdom

• ²⁶Jeroboam also rebelled against the king. He was the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah; his mother, Zeruah, had been left a widow. He was one of Solomon's officials. ²⁷This was the reason for his rebellion. Solomon was building the Millo and was closing

up the breach of the City of David his father; ²⁸when he noticed that Jeroboam was a man of great personal worth and an able worker, he put him in charge of all the forced labor of the tribes of Joseph.

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

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

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

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

God's will. He lives like any other king and works out his own ambitions, thinking it is enough to ask Yahweh's blessings.

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

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

I am... to give you ten tribes. Israel counts

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

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

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

Ezk
37:22

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

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

The political schism

12 ¹Rehoboam went to Shechem because all Israel had gathered there to make him king. ²When Jeroboam, son of Nebat, heard of this in Egypt where he had fled from King Solomon and where he still remained, he returned from Egypt. ³They called for him, and he came with all the assembly of Israel.

The people of Israel went to Rehoboam with this demand, ⁴“Your father made our yoke heavy. So now lighten

1S
8:17

the heavy yoke and the hard labor your father imposed on us and we will serve you.” ⁵Rehoboam answered them, “Leave now but come back on the third day.” And so the people went their way.

⁶King Rehoboam sought advice from the elderly counselors who served his father Solomon while he was still alive, and he asked them, “How would you advise me to answer this people?”

⁷To this they replied, “If you attend to this people today making yourself their servant and speak to them with good words, they will serve you forever.”

⁸But Rehoboam disregarded the advice of the old counselors and asked the opinion of the greenhorns who had grown up with him and were in his service. ⁹He asked them, “What do you say we should answer this people who tell me: ‘Lighten the yoke which your father imposed on us?’” ¹⁰The greenhorns who had grown up with him answered, “Since these people said to you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you should now lighten it for us,’ tell them this: ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. ¹¹My father laid a heavy yoke on you, but I will make it

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

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

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

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

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

heavier yet. My father chastised you with whips, but I will fix iron points to the lashes.”

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

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

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

²⁰ As Jeroboam had returned and was with them at the assembly, having been called by

them, they made him king of Israel. And so, with the exception of the tribe of Judah, no one followed the house of David.

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

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

The religious division

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

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

³¹ Jeroboam also built temples on high places, appointing priests who were not from the Levites. ³² Jeroboam also appointed a feast on the fifteenth

11:29-39

14:30

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

In narrating the deeds of the kings of Israel in the north, the Bible constantly repeats: “They followed and committed the sin of Jeroboam.”

Thus Scriptures emphasized the need to remain united to the center which God established in Jerusalem. It is not enough to think: “We serve the same God,” “We serve in our own way.”

Jeroboam is the model of other rulers who, much later, tried to establish national churches: in England, at the time of the Reformation; in France, after the Revolution; in China and socialist countries, after a communist revolution. Many Catholics were persecuted and died for remaining faithful to the only church which ought to be *catholic*, or universal.

day of the eighth month in imitation of the feast in Judah, and he himself offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel and sacrificed to the calves that he had made; there he placed priests for the high places he had made. ³³On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the month which he had arbitrarily chosen, he ordained a feast for the Israelites and went up to the altar to burn incense.

The story of Judah's man of God

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

^{2K}
^{23:15}

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

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

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

^{1S}
^{7:5}
^{Jer}
^{37:3}

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

¹¹Now there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came to tell him what the man of God had done on that day in Bethel, and everything he had said to the king. ¹²Their father then asked them, "Which way did he go?" and they told him which way the man of God from Judah had taken. ¹³He then said to his sons, "Saddle the ass for me", and they did so. ¹⁴He mounted the ass and went after the man of God whom he found sitting under the Oak.

He asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" ¹⁵Come home with me and eat bread." ¹⁶The prophet from Judah answered, "I may neither return nor go in with you; nor will I eat or drink with you, ¹⁷for this was the command of Yahweh: You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor shall you return by the way you came." ¹⁸But the old prophet from Bethel said to him: "I am also a prophet as you are; and an angel told me on behalf of Yahweh: Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water." ¹⁹The old prophet in fact, was lying. And so the man of God went back with him and ate and drank in his house.

²⁰As they sat at table, the word of Yahweh came to the prophet who had brought him back. ²¹And he said in a

^{Gal}
^{1:8}

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

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

loud voice to the man of God who came from Judah, "Thus says Yahweh: You have disobeyed me and have not observed the command I gave you. ²² Instead, you have come back and eaten and drunk although I told you not to eat bread or drink water. Because of this, your body shall not be laid in the tomb of your ancestors."

²³ After he had eaten and drunk, the old prophet who had brought him back saddled the ass for him and the prophet from Judah went away. ²⁴ But a lion met ^{20:36} him on the road and killed him. His body was thrown on the road with the lion beside it. ²⁵ People who passed by saw the body thrown on the road with the lion standing by; and they reported this in the city where the old prophet lived.

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

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

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

Ahijah's prophecy against Jeroboam

14 ^{11:29-39} ^{1S 28:8} ^{1S 9:7} ¹ At that time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, fell ill. ² So the king told his wife. "Go, disguise yourself so that no one may recognize you as Jeroboam's wife. Go to Shiloh where you will find Ahijah the prophet who foretold that I would be king over this people. ³ Take with you ten loaves, a few cakes, and a jar of honey. Enter his house and he will tell you what shall happen to the child."

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

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

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

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

with your strange gods and the images you have made; and you have forsaken me.

^{21:21} ¹⁰ Now, I shall bring disaster on the family of Jeroboam. I will cut off every male in Jeroboam's line, whether slave or freeman in Israel, and I will wipe out the descendants of Jeroboam just as they wipe out the dung till all is gone.

^{16:4} ¹¹ He who dies in the city will be devoured by dogs; he who dies in the field, by the birds of the sky. So Yahweh has spoken! ¹² Leave now, and go back home! As soon as you enter the city, the child will die. ¹³ All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He alone of Jeroboam's line will be buried, for in him alone has Yahweh, the God of Israel, found something good. ¹⁴ Yahweh himself will raise up for himself a king of Israel; it is he who will destroy Jeroboam's family.

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

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

Rehoboam, king of Judah

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

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

²² The people of Judah did what displeased Yahweh and, by their sins, angered

him even more than their ancestors had done. ²³ They also built for themselves high places, pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree. ²⁴ They even had male cult prostitutes in their land. Judah followed all the abominable practices of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out before the Israelites.

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

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

Abijam, king of Judah

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

Asa, king of Judah

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

Jer
2:20

10:16

2K
8:19Dt
23:18

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

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

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

Nadab and Baasha, kings of Israel

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

²⁷Baasha, son of Ahijah of the family of Issachar, plotted against him and struck him down at Gibbethon of the Philistines when Nadab and the Israelites were laying siege to this city. ²⁸Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa king of Judah and reigned in his place. ²⁹As soon as he was king, he killed off the entire family of Jeroboam, leaving him no one alive but wiping them out according to the word which Yahweh had spoken through his servant Ahijah, the Shilonite. ³⁰This hap-

pened because of Jeroboam who aroused the anger of Yahweh, the God of Israel, by sinning and dragging Israel into sin.

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

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

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

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

Elah, king of Israel

⁸In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah, son of Baasha, began to reign over Israel in Tirzah and was king for two years. ⁹But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, plotted against him. While Elah was getting himself drunk in the house of Arza, governor of Tirzah, ¹⁰Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him. This happened in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah. Then Zimri reigned in his place.

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

^{2K}
^{23:4}

^{14:9}

^{14:10}

Omri, king of Israel

¹⁵It happened in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, that Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. ¹⁶For the army was besieging Gibbethon of the Philistines when Zimri plotted against Elah, and, on hearing that he had killed the king, they proclaimed Omri, commander of the army, king of Israel. ¹⁷Omri went up with the Israelites from Gibbethon and attacked Tirzah. ¹⁸When Zimri saw that the city was to be captured, he went into the citadel of the royal palace; he set the royal palace on fire, and he died. ¹⁹He died thus because of the sins he had committed, doing what displeased Yahweh and going the way of Jeroboam by dragging Israel into sin. ²⁰The rest of the acts of Zimri and his plot are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

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

²⁵Omri did what displeased Yahweh, even more than all those who preceded him. ²⁶He went the way of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and dragged Israel into sin, thereby provoking the anger of Yahweh, the God of Israel, by their idols. ²⁷The rest of the acts of Omri and his

bravery are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. ²⁸Then Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria while Ahab, his son, reigned in his place.

Ahab, king of Israel

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

³⁴During his reign, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. On laying its foundation he sacrificed Abirma, his firstborn. And when he set up the gates of the city, he sacrificed his youngest son, Segub, in accordance with the word of Yahweh spoken through Joshua, son of Nun.

Jos
6:26

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

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

By his victories, David had integrated numerous Canaanite groups into his kingdom. They held onto their pagan practices which contaminated Israel's faith. Fervor visibly diminished. When the culture of the Tyrians, who were of the same religion as the Canaanites, strongly entered, it suddenly became clear that this religion

had supplanted the people's faith in Yahweh: the Israelites allowed themselves to be dragged to the table of Baal and Asheroth.

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

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

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

The prophet Elijah

Jas
5:17
Rev
11:6

17 • ¹Now Elijah, the prophet from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As Yahweh, the God of Israel whom I serve lives, neither dew shall drop nor rain fall except at my command.”

²Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah, ³“Leave this place and go eastward. Hide yourself by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook and, for your food, I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” ⁵So Elijah obeyed the word of Yahweh and went to live by the brook Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁶There the ravens brought him bread in the morning and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

Ex
16:8,
12

The widow of Zarephath

• ⁷After a while, the brook dried up because no rain had fallen in the land. ⁸Then Yahweh spoke to Elijah, ⁹“Go to Zarephath of the Sidonites and stay there. I have given word to a widow there to give you food.” ¹⁰So Elijah went to Zarephath. On reaching the gate of the town, he saw a widow gathering sticks. He called to her and said,

2K
4:1
Lk
4:25

“Bring me a little water in a vessel that I may drink.”

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

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

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

The widow’s son raised to life

• ¹⁷After this, the son of this house-

2K
4:32

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

Elijah’s name is symbolic, meaning: Yahweh is my God. He is from Tishbe, a town beyond the Jordan. This poor and remote region, protected from new influences, had remained faithful to its faith.

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

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

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

The people consider the Baals as gods of rain and nature. The drought that comes will show

them that Yahweh, God of hosts, is also God of creation.

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

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

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

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

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

• **17.** This is the first resurrection we encounter in the Bible.

Lk
8:55 wife became ill. And such was his illness that he stopped breathing. ¹⁸She then said to Elijah, "What did you do, O man of God? Have you come to uncover past sins and cause my son's death?" ¹⁹He answered, "Give me your son."

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

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

17:1 **18** ¹After several days (in the third year) Yahweh spoke to Elijah and said, "Go, show yourself to Ahab that I may let it rain on the earth." ²So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab.

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

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

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

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

The sacrifice at Carmel

• ¹⁷On seeing Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, the plague of Israel?" ¹⁸Elijah replied, "Who is troubling Israel? Isn't it you and your family who have disobeyed the commands of Yahweh and followed instead the Baals? ¹⁹Now, therefore, give an order for the Israelites to gather before me at Mount

God usually directs the world and his church through the natural process of things, by the effect of the laws of nature which he himself established. He also reserves to himself the right to make exceptions to these laws sometimes: the water changes into wine, the bread is multiplied.

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

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

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

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

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

Baal or Yahweh. The people do not see clearly the difference between the two. They consider them as two powers or persons en-

Carmel, together with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal who are sustained by Jezebel.”

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

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

²⁵ Then Elijah told the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many. Then call on the name of your god lest you are left without fire!” ²⁶ So they took the bull and prepared it, and they called on the name of Baal, “Baal, answer us!”

But there was no voice and no one answered them while they went on dancing on one foot around the altar they had built.

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

³⁰ Then Elijah said to the people, “Draw closer to me,” and the people drew closer to him. He then repaired the altar of Yahweh which had been thrown down. ³¹ He took twelve stones corresponding to the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob whom Yahweh had addressed saying, “Israel shall be your name.” ³² With these stones, he built an altar to the Name of Yahweh and dug a trench around it that would contain about thirty liters. ³³ He then arranged the firewood, cut the bull in pieces and laid them on the wood. Then, he said, “Fill four jars with water and pour it on

2K
3:20
Dn
9:21

Gen
32:39
Ex
24:4
Jos
4:3

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

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

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

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

They called on the name of Baal... and no one answered them. We who read about

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

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

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

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

the burnt offering and on the firewood.”
³⁴ He said, “Do it again”; and they did it again; “one more time,” and they did it a third time. ³⁵ The water ran around the altar and filled the trench.

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

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

³⁹ All the people witnessed this. Then they fell on their faces and said, “Yahweh is God! Yahweh is God!” ⁴⁰ Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal and let none of them escape.” And so they seized them. Then Elijah brought them down to the brook Kidron and had them slaughtered there.

⁴¹ Elijah then said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for the sound of rain is rushing in.” ⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and drink. Elijah, in the meantime, went to the top of Carmel, bowed to the ground and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ Then he said to his servant, “Go up and look in the direction of the sea.” The man went up, looked, and

said, “There is nothing.” Then Elijah said, “Go again” and seven times he went. ⁴⁴ At the seventh time, he perceived a little cloud, the size of a man’s hand, rising out of the sea. Elijah told him, “Go, tell Ahab: Prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.” ⁴⁵ A little later the sky grew dark with clouds and wind and a strong rain fell. Ahab was riding on his way to Jezreel; ⁴⁶ as for Elijah, the hand of Yahweh was on him, and tucking his cloak in his belt, he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah flees to Horeb

19 • ¹ Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. ² Jezebel then sent word to Elijah, “May I be cursed if by this time tomorrow I have not dealt with you as you dealt with them.”

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

⁵ He lay down and went to sleep under the broom tree. Then an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” ⁶ Elijah looked and saw, at his head, a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and went back to sleep. ⁷ The angel of Yahweh came a second time to him, saying,

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

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

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

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

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

2K
 3:15

18:40

“Get up and eat, for the journey is too long for you.” ⁸He got up, ate and drank, and on the strength of that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Ex
24:18
Num
14:3

The encounter with God

⁹On reaching the place, he came to the cave and stayed in it. Then the word of Yahweh came to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰He answered, “I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of Hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself and they are still trying to kill me as well.” ¹¹Then Yahweh said, “Go up and stand on the mount, waiting for Yahweh.” And Yahweh passed by.

Ex
33:
18–
34:9

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

Gen
3:8

Ex
33:20
Is
6:2

Then he heard a voice addressing him again, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁴He answered, “I am burning with jealous love for Yahweh, the God of hosts, because the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword. No one is left but myself, yet they still seek my life to take it away.”

Rom
11:3

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

2K
8:7

2K
9

¹⁹So Elijah left. He found Elisha, son of Shaphat, who was plowing a field of twelve acres and was at the end of the twelfth acre. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak over him. ²⁰Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah and said, “Let me say goodbye to my father and mother; then I will follow you.” Elijah said to him, “Return if you

2K
2:13
Lk
9:61

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

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

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

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

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

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

– Elisha will transmit the menacing words of Yahweh.

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

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

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

– called for inner conversion, that of the heart;

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

• 19. *Elijah passed by Elisha and cast his cloak over him.* He calls him in the same way as Jesus will call his apostles: “Follow me.” Perhaps Elijah interprets the answer, “Let me embrace

want, don't worry about what I did." ²¹However, Elisha turned back, took the yoke of oxen and slew them. He roasted their meat on the pieces of the yoke and gave it to his people who ate of it. After this, he followed Elijah and began ministering to him.

The siege of Samaria

20 ¹Ben-hadad, king of Aram, gathered together his entire army. With him were thirty-two kings. With horses and chariots, he went to Samaria and besieged it. ²He then sent messengers into the city to Ahab, king of Israel, and said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad: ³Your silver and gold are mine and so are your fairest wives and children." ⁴The king of Israel answered, "As you say, my master, O king, I am yours with all that I possess." ⁵Again Ben-hadad sent messengers to say, "I sent this message to you: 'Hand over to me your silver and gold, along with your wives and children,' ⁶but now I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time. They shall search your house and those of your officials and take with them whatever they want to take."

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

¹³Then a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, "Have you seen this immense crowd? This is the word of Yahweh: I will deliver it into your hands today and you shall know that I am Yahweh." ¹⁴Ahab asked, "Who is to win over him?" The prophet replied, "The guards of the governors of the

districts, for this is Yahweh's order." Again the king asked, "Who shall begin the battle?" He replied, "You!"

¹⁵And so the king of Israel mustered the guards of the governors of the districts, numbering two hundred and thirty-two. After that, he mustered all the Israelites, numbering seven thousand.

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

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

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

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

Victory over the Arameans

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

my parents," as a hesitation on Elisha's part to leave everything and, for this reason, he answers him: "Go back if you want, it was nothing of importance." But Elisha merely wanted to say

goodbye to his relatives in a decent manner (see Lk 9:61). From now on, Elisha will be Elijah's disciple and his successor in Israel.

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

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

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

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

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

⁴¹At once the man removed the bandage from his eyes and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. ⁴²Then the

prophet told him, "Because you have released the man whom I have decreed to die, your life shall be in exchange for his and your people for his people." ⁴³And the king of Israel went back home to Samaria, resentful and sad.

Naboth's vineyard

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

³But Naboth said to Ahab, "Yahweh forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." Num 36:7

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

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

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

⁸So Jezebel wrote letters using Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and important persons living near Naboth. ⁹This is what she wrote in the letters, "Declare a fast and put Naboth on trial. ¹⁰Get two worthless fellows to

Pro 1:11

Dt 17:6

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

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

this punishment of God." The guilty one will have to be Naboth and, in this way, Jezebel will have him killed legally.

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

accuse him in this way: ‘You have cursed God and the king.’ Then take him out and stone him to death.”

¹¹The people, the elders and the important persons who lived in his city did as Jezebel had instructed them in the letters she sent to them. ¹²They declared a fast and put Naboth on trial. ¹³The two worthless fellows came in and sat facing him, accusing Naboth before the people, “Naboth cursed God and the king!” So the people took him outside the city and stoned him to death. ¹⁴They then sent word to Jezebel that Naboth had been stoned and was dead.

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

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

²⁰Ahab then said to Elijah, “Who, better than my enemy, could find me here and now!” Elijah answered, “I have come to you because you have done what Yahweh abhors. ²¹This is Yahweh’s word: I will bring disgrace on you.

I will sweep you away and cut off every male of your family, from the lowliest to the greatest. ²²Your family will disappear like the families of Jeroboam and Baasa, because you have offended me and have dragged Israel into sin. ²³There is another word of Yahweh to Jezebel: ‘The dogs shall devour Jezebel within the territory of Jezreel.’ ²⁴If anyone of Ahab’s line dies in the city, he shall be devoured by dogs; if in the green country, the birds of the air shall feed on him.”

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

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

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

Micaiah and the false prophets

• ⁵Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, said to the king of Israel, “Let us consult Yahweh before setting out for war.” ⁶So the king of Israel gathered all the

^{2K}
^{9:26}

^{Mic}
^{2:1}

^{2K}
^{10:1}

^{15:29}

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

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

• 5. This Micaiah is not to be confused with the other prophet Micah of Moresheth (see Mic 1:1). The kings were seated by the entrance

gate. In those days, the entrance to the city was very often the gate of the wall surrounding the town. It was the place where people gathered, as they do today in the plaza. There, the tribunal executed judgment and cases were heard; there, the elders spent hours conversing in their seats.

The present text aims to teach two things:
– God’s word condemning Ahab’s family is realized infallibly: the lies of the prophets, the strategy of the king and unforeseen events come together to accomplish what had been an-

^{2K}
^{9:36}

^{2S}
^{12:13}

^{2K}
^{3:11}

prophets, numbering about four hundred men, and asked them, "Shall I go to conquer Ramoth-gilead, or shall I hold back?" They replied, "Go, for Yahweh will deliver the city into your hands."

⁷ Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no other prophet of Yahweh around here whom we might ask?" ⁸ The king of Israel answered, "There is still one through whom we may ask for Yahweh's counsel; but I hate him, for he never prophesies good about me but only evil. It is Micaiah, son of Imlah." Then Jehoshaphat said, "Don't speak in this manner." ⁹ So the king of Israel called an official and told him, "Bring quickly Micaiah, son of Imlah."

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

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

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

¹⁵ When he had come, the king

asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to conquer Ramoth-gilead or shall we hold back?" Then Micaiah answered, "Go and triumph! Yahweh will give the city into the hands of the king!" ¹⁶ But the king said to him, "How many times shall I ask you to speak seriously to me and tell me the truth in the name of Yahweh?" ¹⁷ Then Micaiah said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. Then Yahweh said: These have no master; so let each return to his home in peace."

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

¹⁹ Micaiah replied, "Listen again to this word of Yahweh. I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne with the entire host of heaven standing beside him on his right and on his left. ²⁰ Then Yahweh asked: 'Who will deceive the king of Israel that he may go and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' One said one thing and another, another thing. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh, saying: 'I will deceive him.' ²² Yahweh then asked him, 'What will you do?' To this he replied: 'I will go and make myself a lying spirit on the lips of all his prophets.' Then Yahweh said, 'You shall succeed. Go and do just that.'

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

²⁴ Then Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, approached Micaiah, struck him, and said, "Has the Spirit of Yahweh left me to speak to you?" ²⁵ Micaiah replied,

nounced: the king will die and the dogs will lick up his blood;

– the contradiction between true and false prophets.

False prophets are fellows who live at the king's expense and claim to be inspired. Actually they only think of pleasing the king in order to retain their livelihood and their privileges. The true prophets instead are servants of the Word of God whatever the trials they have to endure.

This is why Micah will say: *I will speak what Yahweh tells me to.*

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

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

Ezk
34:5
Mt
9:36

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

Ezk
14:19

Is
30:10

Num
22:18

“You shall discover for yourself on the day you flee from house to house to hide.”

^{Jer 20:1} ²⁶Then the king of Israel ordered, “Seize Micaiah and take him back to Amon, governor of the city, and to Joash, the king’s son. ²⁷Give them this order: ‘Throw this man in prison and feed him with scant fare of bread and water until I come in peace.’”

^{Jer 28:9} ²⁸Then Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, then Yahweh has not spoken through me.”

Death of the king of Israel

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

³¹Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, “Attack no one, big or small, but only the king of Israel.” ³²When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, “That surely is the king of Israel.” So they turned to attack him. But when Jehoshaphat shouted his cry of war, ³³the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel and they no longer pursued him.

³⁴In the meantime one of the Arameans drew his bow, without knowing at whom he aimed, and hit the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. The king then ordered the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and carry me out of the battle for I am wounded.” ³⁵The battle raged fiercely on that day. Meanwhile, the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Arameans, until the evening when he died. The blood from his wound flowed down into the bottom of the chariot.

³⁶At about sunset, a cry went through the camp, “Everyone to his city, and everyone to his country! ³⁷The king has died!”

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

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

⁴¹Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. ⁴²He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. ⁴³He conducted himself like his father Asa, and did what pleased Yahweh without hesitation. ⁴⁴Yet, he did not remove the high places where the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense. ⁴⁵Jehoshaphat had peace with the king of Israel. 2K 3:7

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

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

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

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

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