



### ***When Everything Is Falling Apart***

“A third of the people will die by plague and famine; another third by the sword, and I will scatter the rest everywhere; these I will also pursue and pour out my anger on them.” These are God’s words which prompted Ezekiel to announce the destruction of a holy people. Do these also apply to the present crisis in the Church?

In many countries in a short time the Church has lost its imposing facade of well-attended temples and rituals, a practicing majority, a faithful clergy who were present everywhere, the security of unquestioned faith and the universal obedience to the center: Rome. All is collapsing. Many people hoped that the renewal begun at the Council would produce quick results. Yet, every day what seemed to promise a secure future is disappearing.

Other words from Ezekiel come to mind: “I will not allow you to be a people like the rest, rather I will rule over you by force. I will gather you from among the nations and I will confront you. You will be under my authority.” Could God be calling on destructive forces? Could God be the one breaking down the human structures we believed to be the Church? Of course, something will remain, *a remnant* as Ezekiel puts it. That is to say, those whose faith will have been purified through trial and in whom the Holy Spirit will act with more freedom.

What was just said is enough to help us understand the value of the Book of Ezekiel for today. He was God’s witness in the final years of the kingdom of Judah, though living among those exiled in Babylon.

We will surely be surprised at the language he attributes to God. He shows God as venting his resentment and jealousy by continually threatening his people and taking delight in their predicament and agony. Would it be possible, however, to speak about love without mentioning *jealousy* and *violence*?

We also find jealousy and violence when God comes to conquer a sinful people. The husband goes looking for his unfaithful wife among her lovers and brings her back by force. Ezekiel’s excessive words must not make us forget other pages of the Bible where God expresses himself tenderly, but we cannot ignore them either, under the pretext that God is a good daddy. We may have experienced in our own flesh the misery of the sinner challenging God. Ezekiel’s role was to express the bitterness of sin and the anger of God.

### ***The Book of Ezekiel***

Ezekiel may have been a young priest taken to Chaldea with the ten thousand exiles after the first siege of Jerusalem in 598 (see 2 K 24:14). There he was called by God as he tells us (chapters 1 and 2). The first part of his book (chapters 1–24) contains his discourses predicting the total destruction of his country.

3:14 **1** • <sup>1</sup>On the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year when I was with the exiles by the river Kebar, the heavens opened and I had visions from Yahweh.

<sup>2</sup>On the fifth of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiakin) <sup>3</sup>the word of Yahweh came to Ezekiel, son of Buzi, the priest, in the land of the Chaldeans by the banks of the Kebar.

There the hand of Yahweh was upon me.

### Ezekiel sees the Glory of Yahweh

8:3  
11:24  
40:2  
Is  
6:1 • <sup>4</sup>I looked: a windstorm came from the north bringing a great cloud. A fiery light inside it lit up all around it, while at the center there was something like a glowing metal.

<sup>5</sup>In the center were what appeared to be four creatures with the same form; <sup>6</sup>but each had four faces and four wings. <sup>7</sup>Their legs were straight and their feet were like those of a calf, shining like polished bronze. <sup>8</sup>Under their wings (on their four sides) they had human hands. The wings of one <sup>9</sup>touched those of the other. Their faces did not turn as they advanced, because they were able to go forward in any of the four directions of their faces.

<sup>10</sup>I saw they had human faces; but each one also had the face of a lion on the right, and on the left the face of an ox, and all four had the face of an eagle.

<sup>11</sup>Their wings were spread upwards. Each had two wings meeting those of its neighbor and two covering its body; having four faces they could advance in any of the four directions. <sup>12</sup>Wherever the spirit would go, they went without turning as they advanced.

<sup>13</sup>Between these creatures could be seen glowing coals like torches moving

between them. The fire blazed and flashed from thunderbolts. <sup>14</sup>The creatures ran to and fro like thunderbolts.

<sup>15</sup>While I looked at the creatures, I saw a wheel on the ground beside each of them, <sup>16</sup>glittering as if made of chrysolite. The four wheels had the same shape: indeed each was double – two wheels placed crosswise, <sup>17</sup>so they could follow any of the four directions without turning as they went. <sup>18</sup>Their rims were lofty and looked terrifying, and the four of them were covered with eyes all the way round.

<sup>19</sup>When the creatures moved forward the wheels moved along beside them and when the creatures rose from the ground the wheels rose, too.

<sup>20</sup>Wherever the spirit was to go, there the creatures went and the wheels went with them for the spirit of the creatures was also in the wheels. <sup>21</sup>When the creatures moved forward they did, too, stopping when they stopped, rising above the ground when they did, for the spirit of the creatures was in the wheels.

<sup>22</sup>Over the heads of the creatures was a kind of platform; it looked like crystal.

<sup>23</sup>Under the platform their wings were straight, one parallel to the other. (Each creature had two that covered its body). <sup>24</sup>I heard the noise of their wings when they moved, similar to the roar of many waters, similar to the voice of the Most High, the noise of a multitude or of a camp. When they were not moving they lowered their wings.

Zec  
4:10

Ex  
24:10  
Rev  
4:6

After the prophecies against the foreign nations, we have the third part of the book, which contains the promises to the exiles: God does not want his people to die.

We know of races that have disappeared and of immigrants who forget their land because they found work in another country. In the same way the Jewish people might well have disappeared after the crisis in which Jerusalem was devastated. While they were in Babylon, exiled in a much more prosperous country, the older people yearned for their homeland, while the young thought only of taking advantage of their new situation. Ezekiel, with his challenging teaching, kept forming the consciences of those who, one day, would return to Judea to build the new kingdom of God (chapters 33–39).

<sup>25</sup>I heard a noise above the platform over their heads. <sup>26</sup>Above it was a throne resembling a sapphire and high on this throne was a figure similar to that of a man. Then I saw a light as of glowing bronze as if fire enveloped him <sup>27</sup>from his waist upwards. And from his waist downwards it was as if fire gave radiance around him.

<sup>28</sup>The surrounding light was like a rainbow in the clouds after a day of rain. This vision was the likeness of Yahweh's Glory. On seeing it I fell on my face and then I heard a voice speaking.

#### Ezekiel receives his mission

**2** <sup>1</sup>He said to me, "Son of man, stand up for I am about to speak to you." <sup>2</sup>A spirit came upon me as he spoke and kept me standing and then I heard him speak,

<sup>3</sup>"Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a people who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have sinned against me to this day. <sup>4</sup>Now I am sending you to these defiant and stubborn people to tell them 'this is the Lord Yahweh's word.'

<sup>5</sup>So, whether they listen or not this set of rebels will know there is a prophet among them. <sup>6</sup>But you, son of man, do not fear them or what they say, for they will be as thorns for you and you will be sitting on a nest of scorpions. Don't be afraid of their words when you are facing this set of rebels. <sup>7</sup>Tell them what I say whether they choose to listen or not, for they are rebels. <sup>8</sup>Listen then, son of man, to what I say and don't be a rebel among rebels. Open your mouth and take in what I'm about to say."

<sup>9</sup>I looked and saw a hand stretched out in front of me holding a scroll. <sup>10</sup>He unrolled it before me; on both sides were written lamentations, groanings and woes.

**3** <sup>1</sup>He said to me, "Son of man, eat what is given to you. Eat this scroll and then go; speak to the people of Israel." <sup>2</sup>I opened my mouth and he made me eat the scroll and then <sup>3</sup>he said to me, "Eat and fill yourself with this scroll that I'm giving you." I ate it and it tasted as sweet as honey.

<sup>4</sup>He said, "Son of man, go to the Israelites; speak to them with my words. <sup>5</sup>Indeed it is not a people with a difficult foreign language to whom you

- **1.1** The book begins with two different introductions. Nobody knows the meaning of the year thirty in the first verse. It may be a copyist's mistake. The fifth year of Jehoiakin brings us to 594 before Christ.

*There the hand of Yahweh was upon me (v. 3).* This means that Ezekiel was drawn into ecstasy: as if having left his body, he mysteriously encountered God. He learned something of God's mystery, received his mission and was transformed into another man.

- **4.** A windstorm came from the north. Ezekiel was overwhelmed by the vivid images accompanying God's words. We will find the vision of the Chariot of Yahweh again in chapter 10 where Yahweh is shown leaving his Temple in Jerusalem to live in Babylon among the exiles.

People of those days thought that their gods were confined to specific sanctuaries and places. Thus, the Jews exiled in Babylon, far from their homeland and their Temple where they could worship God, succumbed to despair. They felt that God had abandoned them and that only the people who stayed behind in their country enjoyed God's care.

Precisely for that reason, Yahweh teaches Ezekiel that though he dwells in the temple of Jerusalem he is not less present in distant Babylon. Yahweh follows his people and dwells among them.

In a vision Ezekiel sees four creatures with four

faces and four wings. This suggests – in images of those times – the greatness of God. In Chaldean palaces there were magnificent statues of fantastic beings called "Cherubs" combining features of the strongest of beings: humans, the eagle, the lion and the bull. Here, they become impetuous living creatures surrounding and protecting the mystery of God. The intersecting wheels moving in every direction show God's action throughout the universe. They have eyes which see everything and are in constant movement. In Revelation 4, the apostle John will use images from this vision.

Above the creatures, *was a kind of platform; it looked like crystal (v. 22).* The rainbow and the transparent vault supporting the throne also suggest the mystery of Yahweh. The same is true of the fire where Yahweh alone can live and where everything which is not God is destroyed.

*A figure similar to that of a man (v. 26).* Having reached the most intimate part of God, the last image will be a figure of a human because God's power comes from his mysterious and personal being in whose likeness the human being was created.

- **3.1** *Eat this scroll.* The vision of the scroll symbolically describes the call from Yahweh, giving Ezekiel his mission.

*I am sending you to the Israelites, to a people who have rebelled against me (2:3).* This is similar to what has been expressed by

2K  
5:8Jer  
1:17  
15:10Rev  
5:1Rev  
10:8-  
11Is  
28:11

are sent; it is to the people of Israel. <sup>6</sup>It's not to the many nations with difficult and obscure languages which you cannot understand. If I sent you to them they would listen to you.

<sup>7</sup>But the Israelites will not listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me; all of them are defiant and stubborn of heart. <sup>8</sup>See I am making your face as unyielding as theirs and your forehead as hard as theirs. <sup>9</sup>I am making your forehead as hard as a diamond, harder than flint; so you shall not fear or tremble because of this set of rebels.”

<sup>10</sup>He said to me, “Son of man, listen and take to heart all I say to you, <sup>11</sup>and then go to the exiles, your fellow countrymen, speak to them and tell them: ‘This is what Yahweh says,’ whether they listen or not.”

<sup>12</sup>Then the spirit lifted me up; behind me I heard a great acclamation, “Blessed be the Glory of Yahweh in his dwelling place” <sup>13</sup>and I heard the noise of the animals’ wings brushing against each other, and the noise of the wheels; it was a great uproar.

<sup>14</sup>The spirit had lifted me up, and carried me off but I went in a bitter and

feverish spirit because the hand of Yahweh was heavy upon me. <sup>15</sup>I came to Tel Abib to the exiles living by the river Chebar and I stayed there seven days with them, overwhelmed.

### “I have made you a watchman”

• <sup>16</sup>After seven days the word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>17</sup>“Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the House of Israel. With the word you hear from my mouth you will warn them in my name. <sup>18</sup>When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ if you do not speak to warn the wicked man to give up his evil ways and so live, he shall die for his sin, and I will hold you responsible for his death. <sup>19</sup>But if you have warned the wicked man and he has not given up his wickedness and evil ways, he shall die for his sin but you will save yourself. <sup>20</sup>When the righteous man turns from what is good to do evil I shall put an obstacle in his path: he shall die. Since you did not warn him, he will die for his sin. His good deeds will not be remembered and I shall hold you responsible for his death. <sup>21</sup>But when you have warned the righteous man to keep him from sinning and he has not sinned, he

earlier prophets. When the Lord sent Isaiah, he told him only about the counter-productive effect of his mission: the people will become hardened. In Ezekiel's case, there is more optimism: sent to rebels, he must be firmer and more persistent than they are to break through the shell of their hardened hearts. In fact, Ezekiel will be constantly arguing and fighting. Paul will say later that those who evangelize must teach whether the time is right or not (2 Tim 4:2) without ever losing heart.

*Fill yourself with this scroll that I'm giving you (v. 3).* The prophet is not a parrot that repeats words dropped from heaven: he has been given a global view of events, an understanding of the meaning of history. He is possessed with fury, which is the fury of God against sin. All this is signified by the scroll (such were the ancient books) which he had to eat.

For several years Ezekiel gives only predictions of death. This explains why the book centers on woes and lamentations.

*It tasted as sweet as honey (v. 3).* Ezekiel eats these predictions of misfortune which seem sweet to him: the prophet has taken Yahweh's side and he totally accepts his plans however

terrible they may seem to the people. In sharing Yahweh's anger, Jeremiah kept his human heart and he suffered because of the suffering of his people. Ezekiel, on the contrary, does not feel torn.

Thus, with the examples of several prophets, the Bible shows us how God's Word separates believers from their own people (Mt 10:34). All who are called to speak to others or lead them, begin to experience this conflict. They do not say what people want to hear, nor are they disturbed by the complaints of cowards and of the comfortable who ask to be left alone to live the way they want. It will always be hard to lose the security we have from agreeing with everyone else. True believers willingly take God's side, which means, at times, going against the stream.

• 16. The story of Ezekiel's vocation which we read in 3:1-15 will follow in 3:22-27. Here, it is interrupted by a paragraph (3:16-21) expressing one of the great themes of Ezekiel's preaching: God does not wish the sinner to die, but to be converted and live (see chap. 18).

It is true that the catastrophe resulting from their mistakes is coming upon all Ezekiel's hear-

Is  
50:7  
Jer  
1:18

Jer  
6:17

Gen  
4:9

18:24  
2P  
2:21

will live for sure for he was warned and you will save your life.”

### Ezekiel becomes mute

3:15 •<sup>22</sup> The hand of Yahweh was upon me and he said to me, “Get up! Go to the valley and there I shall speak to you.”

24:27 33:22 <sup>23</sup> I got up and went towards the valley and there was the Glory of Yahweh that I had seen by the Chebar river. I fell on my face. <sup>24</sup> Then the spirit came to me and kept me standing; He spoke to me and said; “Go! Shut yourself in your house. <sup>25</sup> You, son of man, will be bound with cords and prevented from going among the people. <sup>26</sup> Your tongue shall stick to your palate and you will remain dumb and not be able to rebuke them for they are a rebellious people. <sup>27</sup> But when I speak to you I shall open your lips and you shall say to them: This is the word of Yahweh! He who listens, let him listen and he who refuses to listen, let him refuse for they are a rebellious people.

### Ezekiel plays war

**4** <sup>1</sup> Son of man, take a clay tablet; place it in front of you and draw on it the city of Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Then act as if you were laying siege to it; dig a trench round it and build a ramp; set up tents and a battering ram against it. <sup>3</sup> Take an iron pan; place it as a wall

of iron between you and the city and look towards the city: it is under siege and you are besieging it. All this will be a sign for the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Lie on your left side, taking upon yourself the sin of Israel, for you will bear their sin as long as you are lying on it. <sup>5</sup> I have assigned to you a number of days equal to the duration of their sins – for a hundred and ninety days you will bear the sin of Israel.

<sup>6</sup> When you have completed this you shall lie down again on your right side and bear the sin of Judah for forty days – one day corresponding to a year. <sup>7</sup> Then you shall turn your face and your bared arm towards the siege of Jerusalem and prophesy against it. <sup>8</sup> I shall bind you with cords to prevent you from turning from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your confinement. <sup>9</sup> Take some wheat and barley, some beans, lentils, millet and spelt; put it all in one vessel and make some bread; this is what you will eat all the time you are lying on your side – one hundred and ninety days.

<sup>10</sup> The food you eat will be a daily ration of eight ounces a day; <sup>11</sup> you will drink two thirds of a quart of water each day. <sup>12</sup> Eat the food as you would a barley cake. You will cook it publicly on human dung, <sup>13</sup> for that is the way – says Yahweh – the people of Israel will eat unclean bread among the nations where I shall drive them.”

<sup>14</sup> I said, “Ah, Lord Yahweh! I have not been defiled: from childhood until now I have never eaten any animal found dead or torn; unclean meat has never entered my mouth.”

<sup>15</sup> He then said, “Very well! I allow you cow dung in place of human dung for baking your bread.” <sup>16</sup> He continued, “Son of man, I shall cut off the food in Jerusalem. They will eat strictly-rationed bread with anxiety and de-

Num  
14:34

Hos  
9:3

Lev  
17:15  
Acts  
10:14

ers. Yet this is no cause for despair; if even only one person becomes aware of his wickedness, it would not be in vain, for it will give life, to at least this one person.

*I have made you a watchman* (v. 17). The prophet has been given an insight into the sin of individuals and of society which the rest do not have. He alone can see the dangers which are approaching, as God, who judges sin, has planned. The prophet struggles, not only against those who do not believe, but also against God the Judge, calling upon his mercy (Ex 32:11; Jer 14:11) as Moses and Jeremiah had done.

*He will die, and I shall hold you responsible for his death* (v. 18). The responsibility of one who has received insight from God: he receives it to save others and must not keep quiet.

*When the righteous man turns from what is good*. Everybody suffered equally in the crisis which ruined Judah. Ezekiel states that these common sufferings will bring life or death to everyone as they deserve. This is because to be alive or to be dead does not have the same

meaning for God as it does for us (Rev 3:1).

The same parable of the sentinel will be used again and developed in 33:1. Let us remember the comparison of Ezekiel which characterizes the prophets (and the believer):

– be vigilant, keep in mind what God says in order to understand what he thinks of our way of acting;

– to be attuned, to feel responsible concerning the problems of our milieu instead of ignoring them in order not to be disturbed.

• 22. Following, are Ezekiel’s prophecies in Chaldea during the six years prior to the siege and fall of Jerusalem.

For a while Ezekiel is dumb, then paralyzed. This strange illness serves as a lesson. By every possible means, Ezekiel insists that Yahweh has decided on the ruin of Jerusalem because the Israelites have not repented nor become more faithful.

Ezekiel is in Chaldea but is concerned about Jerusalem. In these chapters his teaching is close

spair as they drink water sparingly, <sup>17</sup>for food and water will be in short supply and they will all waste away because of their sin.

#### Slaughter and death in Jerusalem

**5** <sup>1</sup>Son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor on your head and beard. Then take scales and divide the hair you have cut off. <sup>2</sup>Burn a third of it in the middle of the city at the end of the siege, then take a third that you will strike with the sword all around the city; finally scatter a third in the wind and unsheathe a sword and pursue them. <sup>3</sup>Take a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of your clothes; <sup>4</sup>then throw some of them to burn in the fire. Then speak against all Israel:

<sup>5</sup>This is what Yahweh said: That is Jerusalem! I placed her in the midst of the nations surrounded by other countries; <sup>6</sup>she rebelled against my laws and my precepts more than neighboring nations. In fact she rejected my laws and did not keep my decrees.

<sup>7</sup>That is why Yahweh speaks thus: Your rebellion is greater than that of the nations around you – you have not kept my laws, respected my decrees or observed my ordinances but instead have conformed to the laws of neighboring nations – <sup>8</sup>because of that Yahweh speaks thus: I too have set myself against you. I will pass judgment on you in the sight of the nations. <sup>9</sup>And because of your abominations I will punish you in a way I have never before done and never will do in the future. <sup>10</sup>That is why parents among you will eat their children and children their parents. I will pass judgment on you and scatter your remnant to every wind.

<sup>11</sup>Therefore as surely as I live, declares Yahweh, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your horrors and abominations, I will strike you without pity! I too will show no mercy!

<sup>12</sup>A third of your people will die of the plague or starve within your walls, a third will fall by the sword outside the city, a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with sword unsheathed. <sup>13</sup>My anger will spend itself, my fury against them be satisfied. I will have my revenge and they will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken in my jealousy when I have exhausted my fury against them. <sup>14</sup>I will

17:24  
21:4

make you a heap of ruins, a reproach among the neighboring nations in the eyes of all who pass by. <sup>15</sup>You will be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, a warning and an object of horror for the nations near you when, with anger, wrath and stinging reproach, I punish you. I, Yahweh, have spoken.

Jer  
18:16

<sup>16</sup>When I send against you the deadly arrows of starvation to do away with you and blot you out, I will make you lack all food. <sup>17</sup>Hunger and wild beasts will destroy your children, while sword and plague will visit you. It is I, Yahweh, who have spoken."

**6** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me as follows, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, look towards the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them. Say to them:

<sup>3</sup>Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of Yahweh! To the mountains and hills, to the rivers and valleys Yahweh has spoken: I am going to bring the sword against you and destroy your high places. <sup>4</sup>Your altars will become desolate, your incense burners smashed; <sup>5</sup>I will lay your corpses in front of your idols and scatter your bones around your altars.

<sup>6</sup>Wherever you live, the towns will be in ruins and the high places desolate, your altars demolished and defiled, your filthy idols smashed and ruined, <sup>7</sup>your incense burners knocked all around you and you will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>8</sup>But I shall spare some of you. They will escape the sword and be scattered among the nations.

<sup>9</sup>Your survivors then will remember me among the people where they are exiled, for I shall break the adulterous hearts of those whose eyes lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they committed, for all their abominations. <sup>10</sup>And they will know that I, Yahweh, have not spoken in vain in saying I would inflict this disaster on them."

Lev  
26:41

<sup>11</sup>This is what Yahweh said, "Clap your hands, stamp your feet and say: Well done! when the people of Israel are falling by the sword, famine and plague because of their abominations. <sup>12</sup>He who is far away will die of the plague, he who is near will fall by the sword, whoever survives and is spared will die of starvation. Against them I will exhaust my fury. <sup>13</sup>And you will know that I am

to Jeremiah's during the same time. The form, however, is very different. Jeremiah spoke first, and later his statements were written down; whereas Ezekiel writes in a more formal and ordered way. Unfortunately, his style is sometimes very elaborate and complicated, but we must reflect on these long parables full of marvelous images.

In 3:25, Ezekiel seems to be affected by a

strange paralysis whose duration will be symbolic: 190 days plus 40 days. We do not know the meaning of these figures.

In 6:8-10, as many other prophets did, he announces that Yahweh will save a remnant. "They will loathe themselves for the evil they committed." This statement is typical of Ezekiel and it shows that the wicked will arrive at a sincere conversion; to be disgusted with oneself because of one's sins is what brings God's grace.

Yahweh when their people lie slain in the midst of their idols, around their altars, on every high hill, on the mountain tops, under every green tree and spreading oak and wherever they offered fragrant incense to all their idols. <sup>14</sup>I will stretch out my hand against them, I will make their country a desolate wasteland from the desert to Riblah, wherever they live; and they will know that I am Yahweh.”

**7** <sup>1</sup>This word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>2</sup>“And you, son of man, listen to what the Lord says to Israel:

<sup>3</sup>Finished! The end is coming for the four corners of the land. It is all over for you. I am unleashing my anger against you. I will judge you according to your ways and repay you for all your filthy practices. <sup>4</sup>I will not look on you with pity; I will be merciless. I will bring against you what is fitting for your conduct and your detestable practices and you will know it is Yahweh striking you.

<sup>5</sup>Thus says Yahweh: Disaster! Disaster is coming! <sup>6</sup>The end is near! It is your turn, you who live in the country. <sup>7</sup>The time has come, the day is near! No joy, only panic on the mountains! <sup>8</sup>Now I am unleashing my fury against you; my anger will exhaust itself on you. I will judge you according to your ways and your detestable practices. <sup>9</sup>I will not look on you with pity; I will be without mercy. I will judge you according to your conduct and call you to account for your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity and I will show you no mercy. I will give you what your conduct deserves. And you will know that I am Yahweh when I strike you for your abominable practices.

<sup>10</sup>This is the day, the end is coming, the die is cast. For insolence has blossomed, pride bears its fruits <sup>11</sup>and violence reigns. No one will escape.

<sup>12</sup>The time has come, the day is here! Let not the buyer rejoice or the seller regret, for the punishment will fall upon all. <sup>13</sup>The seller will not get back what he has sold, even though he survives, for the sentence regarding the multitude will not be reversed.

<sup>14</sup>They may sound the trumpet, make preparations, but no one will go to battle, for I am indignant with all. <sup>15</sup>Outside in the open is the sword; plague and starvation in the

houses. Those in the country will die by the sword, those in the city will be victims of famine and plague. <sup>16</sup>Those who escape will go to the mountains; they will be like doves, each one moaning because of his sin.

<sup>17</sup>Every hand will be limp, every knee as weak as water; <sup>18</sup>they will put on sackcloth and shudder. All will be covered with shame and every head bald.

<sup>19</sup>They will throw their silver in the streets and their gold will be dropped like filth. Silver or gold will not save them on the day of Yahweh’s anger. It will be useless to satisfy their hunger and to fill their stomachs, for it was their stumbling block, the cause of their sin.

<sup>20</sup>They became proud of their splendid jewel (the Temple), but they put into it their loathsome images and idols; that is why I will make it a horror. <sup>21</sup>I will hand it over as plunder to foreigners and as booty to the most wicked of the land, and they will defile it.

<sup>22</sup>I will take away my protection from them and people will profane my treasure. Robbers will enter and desecrate it <sup>23</sup>and within it there will be massacres, for the land is full of violence.

<sup>24</sup>I will bring the most cruel of the nations to take possession of their houses. I will break the pride of the violent and their sanctuaries will be profaned.

<sup>25</sup>Anguish is coming; they will seek peace but there will be none. <sup>26</sup>Disaster will follow disaster, rumor will follow rumor. In vain will they demand a vision from the prophet. The priest will have no answer; the elders will be unable to advise. <sup>27</sup>The king will mourn; the princes will be overcome with grief, and the hands of the citizens will tremble.

I will treat them as their conduct deserves and judge them according to their deeds, and they will know that I am Yahweh.

### The Glory of Yahweh departs from the Temple

**8** <sup>1</sup>On the fifth day of the sixth month in the sixth year, I happened to be sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting in front of me when the hand of Yahweh fell heavily on me.

<sup>2</sup>I looked and saw a being as of fire.

• **8.1** Chapters 8–11 include a long vision of the sins of Jerusalem and the punishment which will follow. Everything happens in the Temple. What appalls the priest Ezekiel most is that they have despised God and rejected him from their hearts in favor of false gods.

In 8:2, we find some flashes of the vision of the first chapter. There is always something to indicate that Yahweh is present to the prophet who

does not see him. Ezekiel is drawn into ecstasy again: his spirit will contemplate the sins of Jerusalem.

In 8:4, Ezekiel sees the Glory of Yahweh in the Temple. Since its inauguration by Solomon (see 1 K 8:10), God was present among his people even when they were building altars and statues to false gods in the very patios of the temple. Now, however, Yahweh abandons his temple

Zep  
1:18  
Is  
30:22

Is  
29:14  
Jer  
18:18  
Mic  
3:6

1:3

1:26-  
28

Downwards from what appeared to be his loins there was the appearance of fire, and from his loins upward a brightness like sparkling bronze. <sup>3</sup>As he stretched out the form of a hand and took me by my hair, the spirit lifted me between heaven and earth and brought me in a divine vision to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the inner gate facing north. There stands the idol which provokes Yahweh's jealousy.

<sup>4</sup>And the Glory of the God of Israel was there, similar to the vision I had seen in the plain. <sup>5</sup>He said to me, "Son of man, look to the north." I looked in the direction of the north and there, to the north of the altar gate, at the entrance, I saw this idol which provokes his jealousy. <sup>6</sup>He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing? Do you see the great abomination that Israel commits here to drive me from my sanctuary? You will see other abominations greater than this."

<sup>7</sup>He then led me to the door of the court. <sup>8</sup>He said, "Son of man, break through the wall."

I broke through the wall and made an opening. <sup>9</sup>He said, "Go in and see the wicked abomination they are committing here." <sup>10</sup>I went in, looked around and saw all kinds of reptiles, repulsive beasts and all the filthy idols of Israel portrayed on the wall all around.

<sup>11</sup>Before them stood seventy men, elders of Israel, and among them was Jaazaniah, son of Shaphan. Each held a censer in his hand, and perfume rose from a cloud of incense.

<sup>12</sup>He said, "Do you see, son of man, what the elders of Israel do in the dark, each one in his room of pictures? For they think: Yahweh does not see us; Yahweh has forsaken the

land." <sup>13</sup>Then he said, "You will see more of their great abominations."

<sup>14</sup>He brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of Yahweh and there women were sitting, weeping for Tammuz. <sup>15</sup>He said to me, "Did you see, son of man? You will see even greater abominations than these."

<sup>16</sup>And he led me to the inner court of the house of Yahweh and at the door to Yahweh's sanctuary, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, their backs to the temple, facing east and worshiping the sun. He said to me, <sup>17</sup>"Did you see, son of man? Is it not enough for Judah to commit the abominations that they commit here? See they are waving the branch before their nose. <sup>18</sup>I too will act against them in anger; my eye will not see with pity and I will be without mercy. Though they cry loudly in my ears, I will not hear them."

**9** <sup>1</sup>Then he shouted loudly in my ears saying, "The punishment of the city is near; see each one of these has in his hand his instrument of destruction."

<sup>2</sup>And six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each one with his instrument of destruction. With them was a man clothed in linen with writing material at his side. They came and stopped near the altar of bronze.

<sup>3</sup>Then the Glory of the God of Israel rose from the cherubim where it rested and went to the threshold of the house. Yahweh called to the man clothed in linen who had the material for writing at his side, <sup>4</sup>and he said to him, "Pass through the center of the city, through Jerusalem, and trace a cross on the forehead of the men who sigh and groan because of all the abominations committed in it."

before it is destroyed by the Chaldeans; his Glory leaves for Babylon where the exiles are. God takes three steps before leaving:

- 9:3, he leaves the sanctuary and remains on the threshold;

- 10:19, he crosses the patios and remains at the east gate, facing the mount of Olives;

- 11:22, always going to the East, to Chaldea. Yahweh crosses the Kidron valley and lingers over the mount of Olives.

While Yahweh is abandoning his Temple, the fire of his holiness becomes punishment and death for the godless people who set up their

idols and engaged in adultery according to the different meanings given to this word by the prophets (see chap. 16).

Among the collective condemnations, there are others aimed at individuals. Ezekiel cooperates with Yahweh and, with him, must pronounce the words of condemnation causing the death of the guilty ones.

9:4. A letter T which then had the shape of a cross, was to protect the "remnant."

9:8. "Ah, Yahweh! Are you going to destroy...?" A true prophet threatens the people because he wants to save them.

Dt  
32:21

1:28

Zec  
12:112K  
21:5Is  
29:15  
Ps  
10:11Ex  
12:7

<sup>5</sup>I heard him say to the others, “Now you may pass through the city after him and strike. Your eyes shall not look with pity; show no mercy! Do away with them all – <sup>6</sup>old men, young men, virgins, children and women – but do not touch anyone marked with a cross.”

And as they were told to begin with the sanctuary, they struck the elders who were in front of the Temple. <sup>7</sup>Yahweh said to them, “Let the courts be filled with the slain and the Temple be defiled with their blood; go out!”

They went and slew the people in the city. <sup>8</sup>While they were slaying the people, I fell on my face and cried out saying, “Ah, Yahweh! Are you going to destroy all that is left of Israel, and unleash your fury against Jerusalem?”

Jer  
27:18  
Am  
7:2,  
5

<sup>9</sup>He said to me, “The sin of Israel and Judah is very great; the land is filled with blood and the city full of perversion. For they say: ‘Yahweh has forsaken the land; Yahweh does not see.’ <sup>10</sup>I too will be without pity; I will show no mercy and I will bring their deeds upon their heads.”

<sup>11</sup>Then the man clothed in linen who brought the writing kit reported, “I have done what you ordered.”

<sup>1:22</sup> **10** I looked and saw that in the expanse over the heads of the cherubim there was something resembling a sapphire stone in the form of a throne. <sup>2</sup>He spoke to the man clothed in linen, “Enter by the space between the wheels under the cherubim, fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city.” And I saw him as he entered.

Rev  
8:5

<sup>1K</sup>  
<sup>8:10</sup> <sup>3</sup>The cherubim stood at the right of the Temple when the man entered and the cloud filled the inner court. <sup>4</sup>Then the Glory of Yahweh rose from above the cherubim to the threshold of the Temple and the Temple was filled with the cloud while the court was filled with the radiance of Yahweh’s Glory.

<sup>5</sup>The noise of the cherubim’s wings could be heard as far as the outer court, similar to the voice of God Almighty when he thunders. <sup>6</sup>Yet the man clothed in linen had been given the order to take the fire from between the wheels, in the space between the cherubim; so he went and stood beside the wheel. <sup>7</sup>A cherub then stretched his hand towards the fire in the space between the cherubim, took some and gave handfuls to the man clothed in linen who took them and went out. <sup>8</sup>At that moment I noticed this human hand under the wings of the cherubim. <sup>9</sup>I also saw four wheels beside the cherubim, each wheel beside a cherub. The wheels resembled sparkling chrysolite. <sup>10</sup>As for their appearance, the four had the same form; each was formed of two wheels placed crosswise, <sup>11</sup>so they could move following any of their four directions, without turning as they went. <sup>12</sup>In the direction the cherub’s head was turned, the wheels followed without turning. Their rims were full of eyes all around. <sup>13</sup>In my hearing the wheels were called “whirling.” <sup>14</sup>(Each one had four faces, the first was the face of a cherub, the second the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, the fourth the face of an eagle. <sup>15</sup>The cherubim mounted up – they were the same creatures I had seen by the river Chebar).

<sup>16</sup>When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved at their side and when the cherubim raised their wings to rise above the earth, the wheels did not depart from their side. <sup>17</sup>When they stopped, the wheels stopped; when they rose, the wheels rose with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

<sup>18</sup>The Glory of Yahweh went from above the threshold of the house and went to rest on the cherubim. <sup>19</sup>Then the cherubim left, opening their wings and rising above the earth in my sight, and the wheels went with them. They halted at the east gate of the house of Yahweh and the Glory of the God of Israel was over them.

Ps  
18:11  
80:2  
  
1S  
4:4

<sup>20</sup>These were the living creatures I had seen under the God of Israel on the banks of the river Chebar. I recognized them as cherubim. <sup>21</sup>Each had four faces, each had four wings and they had what seemed like human hands under their wings. <sup>22</sup>As for the appearance of their faces, they were the faces I had seen by the river Chebar, the same likeness. Each one went straight ahead.

#### The leaders of the people are punished

**11** <sup>1</sup>Then the spirit lifted me up and brought me to the eastern gate of

Yahweh's house, the one facing east, and there at the entrance to the gate were twenty-five men. Among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Peletiah, son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. <sup>2</sup>Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who plot wickedness and give evil counsel in the city. <sup>3</sup>They say: 'Now there is no need of more houses! The city is the pot and we are the meat!' <sup>4</sup>Because of that, prophesy against them, prophesy, son of man!"

<sup>5</sup>The spirit of Yahweh seized me and said, "Speak! This is the word of Yahweh: I know what you have said, Israel! I know what you are thinking. <sup>6</sup>You have multiplied your victims in the city; you have filled the streets with the slain. <sup>7</sup>That is why Yahweh has spoken. <sup>24:3-</sup>  
<sup>5</sup> The slain you have left in its midst; they are the meat, this city is the pot and I will bring you out of it.

<sup>8</sup>Yahweh says: Because you are afraid of the sword, I will send the sword against you. <sup>9</sup>I will make you leave and deliver you over to foreigners and I will pass sentence on you. <sup>10</sup>You will fall by the sword;

I will judge you on the borders of Israel and you will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>11</sup>The city will not be like a pot to preserve you, nor will you be meat within her. <sup>12</sup>And you will know that I am Yahweh, for until now you have not walked according to my ordinances; you have not applied my laws, but instead you have acted according to the laws of the nations around you." <sup>Dt 12:30</sup>

<sup>13</sup>It happened that while I was prophesying, Pelatiah, son of Benaiah, died. I fell on my face and cried aloud saying, "Ah, Yahweh! Are you to destroy even the remnant of Israel?"

<sup>14</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>15</sup>"Son of man, these people have said of your brothers, your relatives, and all the exiled Israelites: 'They are well far from Yahweh! He gave this land to us as our possession.' <sup>16</sup>Give them therefore this word from <sup>Is 8:14</sup> Yahweh: I myself have sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the peoples, but I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries they entered."

<sup>17</sup>For that reason Yahweh says, "I will gather you from among the peoples; I will group you together out of the countries where you were scattered and give you the land of Israel. <sup>18</sup>When you have come back and removed all the horrors and abominations, I will give you a new heart; I will put a new spirit in you. <sup>36:26-</sup>  
<sup>28</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Yes, I will remove their heart of stone

and give them a heart of flesh, <sup>20</sup>that they may walk in my statutes, observe my laws and practice them, and they shall be my people and I will be their God. <sup>21</sup>As for those whose hearts follow their horrors and abominations, I will punish them according to their deeds."

<sup>22</sup>Then the cherubim lifted up their wings and the wheels went with them. <sup>23</sup>The Glory of the God of Israel was over them.

The Glory of Yahweh rose, leaving the city to rest on the mountain that is to the east. <sup>24</sup>At that point the spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Chaldea – all this happened in vision by the power of the spirit of God – and the vision I had seen left me. <sup>25</sup>Then I told the exiles all that Yahweh had shown me.

#### The parable of the exile

**12** • <sup>1</sup>This word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, you live in the midst of a house of rebels: they have eyes for seeing but do not see; they have ears for hearing but do not hear, for they are a house of rebels. <sup>3</sup>Because of this, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage in their sight as an exile does; and go as an exile to another place in their sight. Would that they may understand, because they are a house of rebels. <sup>Is 6:9</sup>

<sup>4</sup>You will gather your things, an exile's baggage, by day to be seen by them, and you will leave in the evening as for a departure of deportees. While they look on, <sup>5</sup>dig a hole in the wall and leave from there. <sup>6</sup>As they look on, shoulder your baggage and leave in the dark. Veil your face and do not look at the land for I have made you a sign for Israel."

<sup>7</sup>I did as I was ordered, gathering my things by day, an exile's baggage, and in the evening I made a hole in the wall

• **12.1** At nightfall in Babylon, people gather at the doors of their houses. Ezekiel appears. Without saying a word he behaves as a solitary actor in a performance which captures

the people's attention. When his act is over, he leaves without giving any explanation. The next day he reveals the meaning of this parable in action.

with my hand. I left in the dark, in their presence, shouldering my baggage.

<sup>8</sup>In the morning the word of Yahweh came to me: <sup>9</sup>“Son of man, did not the Israelites, these rebels, ask you, ‘What are you doing there?’ <sup>10</sup>Answer them on behalf of Yahweh: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the Israelites remaining in the city.

<sup>11</sup>Say, ‘I am a sign for you,’ for what I have done will happen to them: They will be deported, exiled. <sup>12</sup>The prince among them shall shoulder his baggage in the dark and depart. They will dig a hole in the wall to let him leave by it. He will cover his face because he must not see the land with his eyes. <sup>13</sup>I will spread my net over him and he will be caught in its mesh. I will bring him to Babylon in the country of the Chaldeans but he will not see it and it is there that he will die.

<sup>14</sup>As for all those who form his court, his guard, his troops, I will scatter them to the winds and pursue them with the sword. <sup>15</sup>They will know I am Yahweh when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them in other countries. <sup>16</sup>I will however allow a small number of them to escape the sword, famine and pestilence so they may confess their abominations among the nations where they will go and they will know I am Yahweh.”

<sup>17</sup>This word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>18</sup>“Son of man, trembling you will eat your bread and you will drink water in fear and anxiety. <sup>19</sup>Say to the people, ‘This is what

Yahweh says regarding those who live in Jerusalem in the land of Israel: In fear they will eat their bread and in affliction they will drink their water because the land will be desolate, stripped of all it contains, due to the violence of its inhabitants. <sup>20</sup>Cities that were inhabited will become ruins, the country a wasteland and you will know that I am Yahweh.”

#### The word of God will be fulfilled

• <sup>21</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>22</sup>“Son of man, what do you mean by this proverb: The days pass and the visions do not come true? Why do you refer thus to what happens in Israel? <sup>23</sup>You shall say to them this word of Yahweh: No more of this proverb. It will not be used in Israel, for the day is at hand when every vision will be fulfilled. <sup>24</sup>No longer will there be false visions or misleading divinations in Israel. <sup>25</sup>I, Yahweh, will say what I want to say, and my words will be fulfilled. There will be no more delay, for it is in your days, rebellious people, that I will speak and it will be done – word of Yahweh.”

<sup>26</sup>The word of Yahweh was given me in these terms, <sup>27</sup>“Son of man, this is what Israel says: ‘Ezekiel’s visions refer to the distant future; he prophesies for times far off.’ <sup>28</sup>Therefore speak to them: This is what Yahweh says: There will be no further delay concerning my words: what I say will be done – word of Yahweh.”

#### The false prophets

**13** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me again, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, against those who prophesy on their own initiative. Say: Hear the word of Yahweh! <sup>3</sup>This is what Yahweh says: Woe to the senseless prophets who follow their own inspiration without having seen anything! <sup>4</sup>Your prophets, Israel, are like foxes among the ruins! <sup>5</sup>They have not gone up to the breaches nor have they built a wall around Israel so that she may hold out in battle on the day of Yahweh. <sup>6</sup>Their discourse

1K  
22:13  
Am  
7:14

By this symbolic act the prophet announces the deportation of the residents of Jerusalem and of their king.

• 21. *The days pass and the visions do not come true.* We are surprised by the lack of faith of the Jews, because looking back at Sacred History it seems to us that it is filled with miracles and the words of the prophets were fulfilled. This is not the way it appeared to the prophets’ contemporaries. In almost two centuries, there were only Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and a few minor prophets; besides, miraculous liberations like that of Jerusalem in 701 did not often occur. History was not only miracles; prophetic words

were not fulfilled immediately. Moreover, side by side with the true prophets there were false ones whose visions often failed to come true. Thus, the Jews’ unbelief is quite understandable.

There are times, in the course of history, when changes occur rapidly, and other times when God does not seem to be doing anything. In the Gospel itself we are told not to become materialistic when the Lord seems absent from the affairs of the world (Lk 21:34; 17:26; 2 P 3:3).

• 13.1 Truth and lies are spread in the world. In this, the prophets were no more privileged than we are, since all had opponents (see 1 K 22; Is 28).

is trickery and lies; they say: *word of Yahweh* when Yahweh has not sent them and yet they wait for him to fulfill their word.

<sup>7</sup>Is it not a false vision you have seen? Have you not uttered lying divinations? You say: *oracle of Yahweh* when I have not spoken. <sup>8</sup>But this is what Yahweh says: Because of your false and lying revelations I will oppose you, word of Yahweh. <sup>9</sup>My hand will strike the prophets whose revelations are delusions, whose predictions are lies. They will not be accepted among my people's assembly nor will they be inscribed in the register of the nation of Israel. They will not reenter the land of Israel – and you will know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>10</sup>These prophets have misled my people saying "Peace!" when there is no peace. The people are building a wall and these prophets daub it with whitewash; <sup>11</sup>but say to those who daub it with whitewash: The wall will fall. I will send torrential rain, huge hailstones and stormy winds, and see: <sup>12</sup>the wall will fall! Will they not say to you: Where is the whitewash with which you daubed it?"

<sup>13</sup>That is why Yahweh speaks thus: In my fury I will make a violent wind break out and in my anger I will send a torrential downpour, and my wrath will hurl destructive hailstones. <sup>14</sup>I will destroy the wall you daubed with whitewash; I will level it to the ground and its foundation will be laid bare. It will fall and beneath it you will be utterly destroyed and you will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>15</sup>I will exhaust my anger against the wall and against those who daubed it with whitewash. Then they will say to you: Where is the wall and where are those who whitewashed it, <sup>16</sup>the prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and who had visions of peace when there was no peace?"

<sup>17</sup>Yahweh then said to me, "As for you, son of man, turn towards the women of your people who prophesy on their own initiative, and prophesy against them. <sup>18</sup>You will say: Woe to those who make magic bands for all wrists and veils for every size of head – those women who ensnare souls! <sup>19</sup>For the Lord

Yahweh says: You who ensnare the lives of my people, will you preserve your own? You have dishonored me among my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread. Because of you, people die who should not die, and people live who should not live. For my people listen to you and your lies."

<sup>20</sup>That is why Yahweh speaks, "I hate the wrist bands with which you ensnare souls like birds. <sup>21</sup>I will tear your veils and free my people from your hands. No more will they fall into your hands and you will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>22</sup>You have disheartened with lies the righteous whom I would never dishearten, and you have strengthened the wicked, that he might not turn away from his evil ways and so save his life. <sup>23</sup>Because of that I will no longer let you have false visions or practice divinations. I will free my people from your clutches and you will know that I am Yahweh."

### I will not allow them to consult me

**14** • <sup>1</sup>Some of the elders of Israel came and sat in front of me. <sup>2</sup>Then the word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>3</sup>"Son of man, these men are keeping in their heart and remain attached to what makes them sin. Am I to allow them to consult me? <sup>4</sup>Speak to them on my behalf: To every Israelite who goes to a prophet while he keeps filthy idols in his heart and is attached to what makes him sin, I, Yahweh, will give the answer his many idols deserve.

<sup>5</sup>For I want to take hold of Israel's heart, the heart of all those who have strayed from me because of their filthy idols.

<sup>6</sup>So then say to the people of Israel: Thus says Yahweh: come back, turn away from your filthy idols; turn your

Here, Ezekiel tells us the difference between the false and the true prophet. The true prophet usually says something contrary to what the majority would like to hear (see also Jer 14:13); instead of keeping quiet about sin, he takes the risk of denouncing it (see Jer 23:14); he points out the causes of evil instead of proposing superficial solutions which only hide evil for a time; he is on top of the rampart, as a sentinel, seeing clearly the approaching judgment of God, namely, the inevitable consequences of sins and errors. He defends his people from the anger of Yahweh (Ezk 22:30).

Ezekiel mentions the prophetesses and their practices whose precise meaning escapes us;

they caused the people to become preoccupied with dreams, superstitions and illusory remedies, while remaining blind to crime and sin.

• **14.1** *Am I to allow them to consult me?* Here, we have a warning for those who come to consult the Lord through the prophet in order to solve their most pressing concerns: Must I marry this woman? How will I be cured of my illness? Yahweh does not want to answer those who are not willing to obey him; rather, he will punish them for their wickedness: this will be "God's answer."

*If the prophet lets himself be seduced* (v. 9). If, for gain, the prophet agrees to answer ques-

Is 56:11

8:1 20:1

face away from all your abominations. <sup>7</sup>If a man of the people of Israel or a guest staying in Israel strays away from following me and goes to a prophet to consult me while he keeps idols in his heart and remains attached to what makes him sin, I, Yahweh, will answer him myself. <sup>8</sup>I will turn my face against this man, I will make of him a proverbial example, I will strike him from the midst of my people and you will know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>1K</sup> <sup>22:23</sup> <sup>9</sup>If the prophet lets himself be seduced and gives an answer, it will be I, Yahweh, who will have let him be seduced. I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from among my people Israel.

<sup>10</sup>They will be responsible for their sin. The prophet will be as guilty as the one who consulted him, <sup>11</sup>that the people of Israel may no longer stray from me. Instead of defiling themselves with all their transgressions, they will be for me a people and I will be their God – word of Yahweh.”

<sup>12</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>13</sup>“Son of man, when a nation sins against me by being unfaithful, I will stretch out my hand against it, deprive it of bread, and famine will destroy people and animals. <sup>14</sup>But if there were found in the land these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, they would save their lives because of their righteousness – word of Yahweh.

<sup>15</sup>If I also let wild beasts roam the land to deprive it of children so that it becomes a desolation without a passerby because of the beasts, <sup>16</sup>if these three men were in the land, as I live, word of Yahweh, they would not save their sons or daughters but only they themselves would be spared while the land would be made desolate.

<sup>17</sup>The same would happen if I brought the sword against this land and ordered the sword to go through the land destroying people and animals. <sup>18</sup>If these three men were in the land, as I live, word of Yahweh, they would not save sons and daughters but they themselves would be spared. <sup>19</sup>Or if I sent pestilence to the land and poured out my fury against it in bloodshed in order to destroy people and animals, <sup>20</sup>if Noah, Daniel and Job were in the land, as I live, word of Yahweh, they would not save sons or daughters, but their own lives would be spared because of their righteousness.”

<sup>21</sup>Now this is what Yahweh says, “Although I have sent my four great punishments, sword, famine, wild beasts and plague against Jerusalem to destroy people and animals, <sup>22</sup>there are survivors, sons and daughters who will be brought out. They will come to you here, and when you see their way of life and their deeds, you will no longer be shocked at the disaster I brought on Jerusalem and at everything that happened to her. <sup>23</sup>They will set your mind at rest when you see their conduct and you will realize that not in vain was all that I did in the city – word of Yahweh.”

#### Israel: The useless vine

**15** • <sup>1</sup>This word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, in what way is the wood of the vine superior to that of any other tree in the forest? <sup>3</sup>Do they take its wood to make anything? Do they use it to make a peg for hanging a tool?

<sup>4</sup>But now they have used it as fuel and the fire has burned it at both ends leaving the middle charred. Is it then of any use? <sup>5</sup>If it was of no use when it was whole, of even less use will it be when burnt in the fire.”

<sup>6</sup>That is why Yahweh speaks thus, “I took the vine from among all the trees of the forest, and I gave it to the fire to be burned. This is how I have just dealt with those living in Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup>I will turn my face against them. Though they escaped from the fire, the fire will burn them and you will know that I am Yahweh when I turn against them. <sup>8</sup>I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful – word of Yahweh.”

tions which have nothing to do with his religious mission, Yahweh will punish the one consulting as well as the prophet.

This implies the responsibility of people who let themselves be deceived by false prophets. People prefer to go to false prophets, because they know that they will not force them to see clearly the faults in their lives. In the end, they will all be lost.

- **15.1** In chapters 15–23 the sins of Judah

throughout history are denounced four times, in different ways: chapters 16, 20, 22, 23.

In this chapter, the image of the vine is used to depict the necessary conclusion of Judah’s history: the nation is to be destroyed and its capital burned. Like the wood of the vine when Yahweh chose it, Israel did not stand out from other people, neither in number, nor in quality. Since they did not fulfill their mission, they can neither continue as God’s people, nor again become a people like the rest.

Is  
5:1-7  
Ps  
80

Jn  
15:6

### The unfaithful bride

**16** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem its sins. <sup>3</sup>You say on my behalf: Your beginning was in Canaan; there you were born. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. <sup>4</sup>On the day you were born your cord was not cut, you were not bathed in water to make you clean, you were not rubbed with salt nor were you wrapped in cloth. <sup>5</sup>There was no one to look with pity on you or compassionate enough to give you any of these attentions. You were left exposed in the open fields because you were looked upon with disgust on the day you were born.

<sup>6</sup>But I passed by and saw you immersed in your blood. I said to you in the midst of your blood, “Live!” <sup>7</sup>I made you grow like a plant of the field. <sup>8</sup>You grew up and became tall and were becoming of marriageable age. Your breasts were formed and your hair had grown but you were naked and exposed. I passed by later and saw you were at the age of love and spread part of my garment over you to cover your nudity. I made a covenant with you with an oath – word of Yahweh – and you were mine. <sup>9</sup>Then I bathed you in water, I cleansed you of your blood and anointed you with oil. <sup>10</sup>I clothed you with embroidered cloth and put soft leather sandals on your feet. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. <sup>11</sup>I adorned you with jewelry, putting bracelets on your arms, a necklace around your neck <sup>12</sup>and a ring in your nose. <sup>13</sup>I gave you earrings and a magnificent crown for your head. You were adorned with gold and silver; your clothing was fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You were fed on finest flour, honey and oil; you became very beautiful and rose to be queen. <sup>14</sup>Your beauty was perfect and your renown spread through the nations, because of the splendor I had given you – word of Yahweh.

<sup>15</sup>But you relied on your beauty; you trusted in your fame and you began to give yourself to every passerby like a prostitute. <sup>16</sup>With some of your garments you made your high places where you played the harlot

(the like has never been and never will be). <sup>17</sup>With my silver and my gold and with the ornaments that were your splendor and which I had given you, you formed male idols and gave yourself to them. <sup>18</sup>With your embroidered garments you covered them and before them you have placed my oil and my incense.

<sup>19</sup>My bread which I gave you, the fine flour, the oil and the honey with which I fed you, you offered as fragrant incense before them, word of Yahweh. <sup>20</sup>You took the sons and daughters you bore for me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was it not enough to prostitute yourself? <sup>21</sup>Did you have to slaughter my children as an offering to your idols? <sup>22</sup>You revel in your abominations and prostitution without remembering the days of your youth when you were naked and exposed, lying in your blood.

<sup>23</sup>Woe, woe to you – declares Yahweh – for all this wickedness! <sup>24</sup>You built your mounds and made your high places at every cross-road. <sup>25</sup>At the entrance to every road you built your lofty shrines; you defiled your beauty giving yourself to every passerby and always increasing your harlotry. <sup>26</sup>You gave yourself to the Egyptians, your large-limbed neighbors and provoked my anger with your increasing promiscuity. <sup>27</sup>And I stretched out my hand against you and reduced your territory and gave you over to the mercy of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines who were shocked by your filthy ways.

<sup>28</sup>You played the harlot with the Assyrians as well because you were never satisfied. Yes, you played the harlot with them but you remained insatiable. <sup>29</sup>Then you multiplied your prostitutions in a land of merchants, Chaldea, and even with that you were not satisfied. <sup>30</sup>Ah! How my anger rose against you, word of Yahweh, as you did all that, the work of an accomplished harlot, <sup>31</sup>when you built your mounds at the entrance to every road and your shrines in every square! You were not like a prostitute because you scorned payments. <sup>32</sup>Adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your husband. <sup>33</sup>All pros-

• **16.1** The story of the unfaithful wife, already told by Hosea and Jeremiah, is expanded to include all of sacred history. Here it begins with the conquest of Canaan. When David conquered Jerusalem, the common people there were *Amorites* and the upper class, *Hittites*.

We can see the stages of this history:  
 – Israel was nothing when God chose her: vv. 4-5;  
 – God enriches her: vv. 8-14;  
 – the fall: vv. 15-22;  
 – the promise: “I will remember my covenant with you.”

In speaking of prostitution, Ezekiel is dealing with three sins at the same time, just as Isaiah and

Jeremiah did:

– giving oneself to the worship of idols in spite of being “the bride of Yahweh”;  
 – organizing sacred prostitution as practiced in pagan cults;  
 – submitting to powerful nations to gain their political protection instead of remaining independent.

Ezekiel does not forget a single detail of what can humiliate his people and put them to shame. Such strong criticism of their national history has never been heard by any other nation. By hitting at the pride of his compatriots, the prophet teaches us how to bring all the stupidity and wickedness of our hearts into the open.

<sup>Hos 8:9</sup> titutes receive fees, but you gave gifts to your lovers, bribing them to come to you for your favors. <sup>34</sup>In your prostitution you have been different from other women; no one approaches you and whereas you offer payment no one gives you any. You are completely different.

<sup>35</sup>Therefore harlot, hear the word of Yahweh! <sup>36</sup>This is what Yahweh says, "For having exposed yourself and uncovered your nakedness to your lovers and your abominable idols and because you have offered them the blood of your children, because of that, <sup>37</sup>I will gather all the lovers that found pleasure in you and all those you loved, as well as those you hated; I will assemble them from all around to come against you and I will strip you before them and they will see your nakedness. <sup>38</sup>I will judge you as adulterous women are judged and as those who shed blood and I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of anger and jealousy. <sup>39</sup>I will hand you over to them; they will tear down your mounds and shrines; they shall strip you of your clothes, taking from you the ornaments that were your splendor and leaving you naked and bare. <sup>40</sup>They shall bring a troop against you to stone you and gash you with swords. <sup>41</sup>Your houses will be burned by fire. Sentence shall be passed on you in the presence of many women. I will make you cease your prostitutions and you shall no longer be hired. <sup>42</sup>But when I have exhausted my fury against you, my jealousy shall leave you. I will be calm and no longer angry.

<sup>43</sup>Because you did not remember the days of your youth and roused my anger with all these things, I in turn will make you responsible for all you did, word of Yahweh. Have you not added detestable deeds to all your other abominations?

<sup>44</sup>Every maker of proverbs will say of you: "Like mother, like daughter!" <sup>45</sup>You are the daughter of your mother who loathed her husband and her children, and you are the sister of your sisters who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite, your father an Amorite. <sup>46</sup>Your elder sister is Samaria who with her daughters lives on your left, and your younger sister at your right is Sodom with her daughters. <sup>47</sup>You have followed their ways insanely and given yourself to the same abominations. You have been more corrupt than they in every way. <sup>48</sup>As I live, word of Yahweh, Sodom your sister and her daughters have not done as you have done.

<sup>Gen 18:20</sup>  
<sup>Is 3:9</sup>  
<sup>Jer 23:14</sup>

• <sup>59</sup>. *When I take your sisters and give them to you as daughters.* After being punished and corrected, Israel will receive the mission to teach and lead other people. This can also be seen in the Church, which is holy in some sense,

<sup>49</sup>The sins of Sodom your sister were pride, over-indulgence in food, complacency and indifference to the poor and needy. <sup>50</sup>They were arrogant and did detestable things in my sight. For that reason I destroyed them as you have seen. <sup>51</sup>As for Samaria she has not committed half of your sins. Your abominations are more numerous than hers and in comparison make your sisters appear righteous. <sup>52</sup>So bear your disgrace, you who have committed such detestable sins that have provided excuses to your sisters! They appear to be more righteous than you are. Be ashamed and bear your disgrace since your sisters seem holy compared to you.

<sup>53</sup>When I restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, I will restore your own fortunes in their midst, <sup>54</sup>that you may bear your shame and confusion because they now feel they are better than you. <sup>55</sup>When your sister Sodom and her daughters and Samaria with hers will return to what they were before, you and your daughters will also return to what you were before. <sup>56</sup>Had not Sodom your sister become a byword for you in the time when you felt proud, <sup>57</sup>before your wickedness had become known? But now you have become the taunt of the daughters of Edom and all her neighbors, of the daughters of the Philistines who all around show their disgust for you. <sup>58</sup>You shall bear the consequences of your foul behavior and your abominations, word of Yahweh.

#### **That you may be put to shame**

• <sup>59</sup>For thus says Yahweh: "I will treat you as you deserve, you who despised the oath and broke the covenant. <sup>60</sup>But I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth and make in your favor an eternal covenant. <sup>61</sup>You will be mindful of your ways and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both the elder and the younger, and give them to you as daughters, without prejudice to my covenant with you. <sup>62</sup>For I will uphold my covenant with you and you will know that I am Yahweh, <sup>63</sup>so that you may remember, be ashamed and never open your mouth again because of your humiliation, when I have pardoned you for all you have done," word of Yahweh.

<sup>Jer 31:31-</sup>  
<sup>34</sup>  
<sup>Hos 2:16-</sup>  
<sup>25</sup>

#### **The kings – David's sons**

**17** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, set a riddle and relate a parable to the people of Israel. Yahweh says this:

but experiences human weakness also. The people who have sinned and experienced forgiveness often show more compassion and more eagerness to save sinners.

•<sup>3</sup>The great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and fine plumage of various colors came to Lebanon and removed the top of a cedar. <sup>4</sup>He broke off the topmost of the twigs and carried it off to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants. <sup>5</sup>He then took a seed of the land and planted it like a willow in fertile soil near abundant water. <sup>6</sup>It grew and became a splendid vine with spreading branches turned towards the eagle, and roots growing deep. It became a vine growing branches and producing foliage.

<sup>7</sup>But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and abundant plumage and the vine twisted its roots and <sup>8</sup>its branches towards him to be better watered than in the soil where it was planted. That vine, however, was able to produce branches, bear fruit and develop into a magnificent vine, because it had been planted in a good field near abundant water.”

<sup>9</sup>Yahweh says, “Will the vine prosper? Will the eagle not tear out its roots and cut away its fruit so that the foliage will wither and the vine dry up? It will not take much effort or many people to pull up its roots. <sup>10</sup>It has been transplanted, but it will not prosper. When the east wind blows, the vine will completely wither away. In the soil where it grows it will wither!”

<sup>11</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>12</sup>“Say to these rebellious people: Do you not recognize what all this signifies? The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and carried the king and princes off to Babylon. <sup>13</sup>Then he took a member of the royal family and made an alliance with him, binding him by oath. He also carried off the leading citizens <sup>14</sup>to keep the kingdom humble and unable to assert itself, and to oblige the king to respect the treaty. <sup>15</sup>But the king rebelled against him and sent messengers to Egypt to ask for horses and a powerful army. Will he succeed? Will he escape after doing this? Will he escape after breaking the treaty? <sup>16</sup>As I live, word of Yahweh, he will die in the land of the king who put him on the throne, but whose oath he despised, and whose treaty he has broken. There in Babylon he will die.

• **17.3** Ezekiel himself explains this long comparison. The conclusion is that the line of kings descending from David are coming to an end. Another descendant of David will be chosen by God himself to be the Messiah. Verses 22-24 refer to Christ and to the Church.

*Whose treaty he has broken* (vv. 15-20). Zedekiah’s submission to the Chaldeans was the just price for the previous errors denounced by the prophets. God does not accept every liberation, nor the use of any means whatsoever.

• **18.1** *The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge.* The

<sup>17</sup>Pharaoh will not send a mighty army and throngs of men to help him in war when ramps are built and siege works erected to kill many people. <sup>18</sup>This king has despised the oath and broken the treaty. Because he did all these things after giving his hand, he shall not escape!

<sup>19</sup>That is why Yahweh speaks thus: “As I live, I will make him account for the oath he despised and the treaty he broke. <sup>20</sup>I will spread my net over him and he will be caught in its mesh. I will bring him to Babylon and there I will demand an account of his infidelity to me. <sup>21</sup>As for the pick of his troops they will fall by the sword; those who survive will be scattered to the winds and you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken.”

<sup>22</sup>Thus says Yahweh: “At the top of the cedar I will take one of its uppermost branches, a tender twig and plant it. <sup>23</sup>On a lofty, massive mountain, on a high mountain of Israel I will plant it. It will produce branches and bear fruit and become a magnificent cedar. Birds of all kinds will nest in it and find shelter in its branches. <sup>24</sup>And all the trees of the field shall know that I am Yahweh, I who bring down the lofty tree and make the lowly tree tall. I will make the tree that is full of sap wither and the dry tree bloom. I, Yahweh, have spoken and this will I do.”

**If a sinner turns away from sin, he will live**

**18** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Why are you applying this proverb to the land of Israel: ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge?’

<sup>3</sup>As I live, word of Yahweh, this proverb will no longer be quoted in Israel. <sup>4</sup>All life is in my hands, the life of the parent and the life of the child are mine. The lives of both are in my hands, so the one who sins will die.

primitive people of Israel had a strong sense of common responsibility within a group, family, or nation. In Joshua 7:24, we have an example of the culprit’s family being condemned to death along with him, and also the example of the entire people being punished for the fault of one of their members.

However, in the last years of the kingdom of Judah, a sense of personal responsibility became stronger:

– The prophets declared that human justice cannot punish children for the crimes of their parents (Dt 24:16). How could God act otherwise and punish innocent people?

Jer 52

Dn 4:9  
Mt 13:32

Ps 113:7-9

14:12  
33:10-22

Jer 31:39

Dt 24:16

<sup>5</sup>Imagine a man who is righteous and practices what is just and right. <sup>6</sup>He does not eat in the mountain shrines, or look towards the filthy idols of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, or have intercourse with a woman during her period; <sup>7</sup>he molests no one, pays what he owes, does not steal, gives food to the hungry and clothes to the naked, <sup>8</sup>demands no interest on a loan and doesn't lend for interest, refrains from injustice, practices true justice, man to man, <sup>9</sup>follows my decrees and obeys my laws in acting loyally. Because such a man is truly righteous, he will live, word of Yahweh.

<sup>10</sup>But perhaps this man has a son who steals and sheds blood, committing crimes which his father never did. <sup>11</sup>Perhaps the son eats at the mountain shrines, defiles the wife of his neighbor, <sup>12</sup>oppresses the poor and needy, steals, neglects to pay his debts, looks to the idols, does detestable things, <sup>13</sup>demands interest on a loan, even practices usury. Will such a man live? No, he will not! Because he has committed all these abominations he will die: his guilt will fall upon him.

<sup>14</sup>But imagine that such a man has in turn a son who does not commit the sins he has seen his father do. <sup>15</sup>He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, <sup>16</sup>or oppress anyone or ask for a pledge on a loan; does not steal; and gives food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, <sup>17</sup>turns from injustice, exacts no usury

or excessive interest, observing my decrees and practicing my laws: such a man shall not die because of his father's sins; no, he will live!

<sup>18</sup>His father instead, who practiced extortion and stole from others, will die for his sin, because he did wrong among his people.

<sup>19</sup>You may say, 'Why does the son not bear the guilt of his father?' But the son did what was just and right, observing and practicing my decrees; he will live! <sup>20</sup>The person who sins is the one who will die. The son will not be held responsible for the sin of his father and the father will not be responsible for the sin of his son. The righteous deeds of the righteous will be to his credit and the sin of the wicked will be charged against him.

<sup>21</sup>If the sinner turns from his sin, observes my decrees and practices what is right and just, he will live, he will not die. <sup>22</sup>None of the sins he committed will be charged against him; he will live as a consequence of his righteous deeds. <sup>23</sup>Do I want the death of the sinner? – word of Yahweh. Do I not rather want him to turn from his ways and live?

<sup>24</sup>But if the righteous man turns away from what is good and commits sins as the wicked do, will he live? His righteous deeds will no longer be credited to him, but he will die because of his infidelity and his sins.

<sup>25</sup>But you say: Yahweh's way is not just! Why, Israel! Is my position wrong? Is it not rather that yours is wrong? <sup>26</sup>If

– In ancient times, any error, even unintentional, was considered a "sin." Now the prophets teach that only wickedness is a sin, and misfortunes which are not a consequence of this evil are not punishment from God.

The destruction of Jerusalem seemed to punish everyone without differentiating between good and evil people. Ezekiel does not deny the fact that, on that occasion, God struck everyone; but to him this was a thing of the past, and it was fitting for a people who had completely gone astray. He looks to the future and teaches how God will act henceforth with genuine religion:

– Justice will be for the just, and disgrace for the unfaithful: everyone will receive what he or she personally deserves.

– *If the sinner turns from his sin, he will live (v. 21): everyone will have time to decide freely. If people are evil and then decide to do good, God will wait for their conversion and will take their last orientation into account.*

In later times, wise people will note that oftentimes evil people do not receive their punishment, nor good people their reward in this life (see Job 21); it will become obvious to them that God's justice will be achieved in the next life.

Job  
31:7-  
15  
Ps 15

Ex  
20:5  
Lev  
26:39

the righteous man dies after turning from his righteous deeds and sinning, he dies because of his sins.<sup>27</sup> And if the wicked man does what is good and right, after turning from the sins he committed, he will save his life.<sup>28</sup> He will live and not die, because he has opened his eyes and turned from the sins he had committed.

<sup>29</sup>But you, Israel, say: Yahweh's way is not just! Is my position not just? Is it not rather yours that is wrong?<sup>30</sup> That is why I will judge you, Israel, each one according to his ways, word of Yahweh. Come back, turn away from your offenses, that you may not deserve punishment.

<sup>31</sup>Free yourselves from all the offenses you have committed and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, Israel?<sup>32</sup> I do not want the death of anyone, word of Yahweh, but that you be converted and live!"

#### The last kings of Judah

**19** • <sup>1</sup>As for you, son of man, intone a lamentation for the princes of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Say: A lioness among lions was your mother! Crouching among the cubs she nursed her whelps.<sup>3</sup> One of these she pushed forward and he grew to be a young lion, able to tear his prey and become a man-eater.

<sup>2K</sup><sup>23</sup><sup>31-</sup><sup>34</sup> <sup>4</sup>But the nations heard about him and he was trapped in their pit; and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.<sup>5</sup> When she saw that her hope had come to nothing, she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.<sup>6</sup> He strutted among the others for he had become a strong lion, able to tear his prey and be a man-eater.

• **19.1** In this comparison, the lioness is the Jewish nation. The cubs are the kings: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

• **20.1** Another presentation of the sins of Israel throughout its history. Here Ezekiel constantly speaks of *profanation*. Being the people of a holy God, Israel cannot live in the same way as other nations that are *profane*, that is to say, that do not belong to God. The land of Israel, its laws, its feasts: everything is *holy* and cannot be used as the people please.

In 20:22 Yahweh makes sure that *his Name is not profaned*. If he were to punish Israel and allow it to be destroyed, other nations (according to the mentality of the time) would despise God for they would think he was not able to save his

<sup>7</sup>He destroyed their strongholds and ravaged their towns. The country and its inhabitants were alarmed at the sound of his roar.<sup>8</sup> But the nations came against him from the regions round about. They spread their net over him and caught him in their pit.<sup>9</sup> They put him in a cage with hooks and brought him to the king of Babylon. There he was put in custody so that his roar was no longer heard in the mountains of Israel.

<sup>10</sup>Your mother was like the vine of a vineyard planted near water. It became fruitful and leafy from being so well-watered.<sup>11</sup> It produced a vigorous branch that became a royal scepter towering above the foliage. It was outstanding for its height and its numerous branches.

<sup>12</sup>But the vine was uprooted in fury and cast down to the ground. The east wind dried it up and stripped it of its fruit. Its vigorous branch withered and was burned by fire.<sup>13</sup> It is now planted in the desert, in an arid land of drought.<sup>14</sup> Fire from its stem has destroyed its branches and fruit. No vigorous branch or royal scepter has been left.

This is a lament that people will sing.

#### A summary of the history of Israel

**20** • <sup>1</sup>It happened on the tenth day of the fifth month of the seventh year, some men from among the elders of Jerusalem came to consult Yahweh and sat in front of me.<sup>2</sup> Then the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms,<sup>3</sup> "Son of man, say to the elders of Israel: This is the word of Yahweh: Do you come to consult me? As I live, I will not answer you – word of Yahweh.

<sup>4</sup>Judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know about the detestable practices of their fathers.<sup>5</sup> Say to them:

This is what Yahweh has said: The day I chose Israel, I committed myself to the descendants of Jacob with an oath. I revealed myself to them in the land of Egypt and I swore to them, I am Yahweh, your God.<sup>6</sup> On that day I swore to them that I would take

people. Thus, his name would be "profaned." When Yahweh gathers his people (v. 41), all the nations will see his power: thus his name will be "sanctified."

*I gave them statutes that were not good* (v. 25). Ezekiel interprets past history in his own way and points out what can humiliate his people as we noted in 20:25. At times the Israelites used the Law of Leviticus (18:21) regarding the offering of the firstborn to God, to justify the sacrifice of children as practiced by the pagans. Ezekiel suggests that the law actually required such sacrifices and that Yahweh had allowed it (he says: "had given" using a common Hebrew expression) to punish his people by letting them accumulate the crimes which pleased them.

Ps  
106  
Ezk  
8:1

them out of Egypt to a country I had explored for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most splendid of lands.

<sup>7</sup>I said to them: Let each one reject the horrors that attract him! Do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh, your God.

<sup>8</sup>But they rebelled against me and would not listen; none of them rejected the horrors that attracted them, none abandoned the filthy idols of Israel. I then thought of pouring out my fury on them, exhausting my anger against them in the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>But for the sake of my Name I relented, lest it be profaned in the sight of the nations where they lived, whose inhabitants had seen how I revealed myself to the Israelites in bringing them out of Egypt.

<sup>10</sup>So I brought them out of Egypt and led them to the desert. <sup>11</sup>I gave them my decrees and made my laws known to them, laws by which man lives provided he observes them. <sup>12</sup>I also gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between us, letting them know that I am Yahweh who makes them holy.

<sup>13</sup>But Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees, they despised my laws by which man lives, provided he obeys them; they so profaned my sabbaths that in my fury I thought of destroying them in the desert.

<sup>14</sup>But again I relented for the sake of my Name, lest it be profaned in the sight of the nations who saw me bring them out. <sup>15</sup>However I swore to them in the desert that I would not bring them to the land flowing with milk and honey that I had given them – the choicest of lands – <sup>16</sup>because they had despised my laws and had not followed my decrees; they had profaned my sabbaths, and their heart went after their idols. <sup>17</sup>But I had pity on them and did not destroy them; I did not do away with them in the desert.

<sup>18</sup>I said to their children in the desert: Do not follow the example of your fathers; do not keep their practices and do not defile yourselves with their idols. <sup>19</sup>I am Yahweh, your God. Follow my decrees, observe my laws and practice them. <sup>20</sup>Keep my sabbaths holy and let them be a sign between us and you will know that I am Yahweh, your God.

<sup>21</sup>But their children too rebelled against me; they did not follow my decrees or observe my laws; they did not carry out these laws by which man lives provided he obeys them. They profaned my sabbaths and I thought of pouring out my fury on them and exhausting my anger against them in the desert.

<sup>22</sup>But once more I held back my hand lest my Name be profaned in the eyes of the nations that had seen me bring them out. <sup>23</sup>However I swore to them in the desert that

I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them in other lands since they had not obeyed my laws, <sup>24</sup>but instead had defiled my sabbaths and had looked to the idols of their fathers. <sup>25</sup>In the meantime I gave them statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by, <sup>26</sup>so that they might be defiled by their gifts. I let them offer by fire all their firstborn, in order to shame them and let them know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore, son of man, speak to Israel; say to them: This is what Yahweh says: Do you not know that your fathers offended me by their infidelity? <sup>28</sup>I led them to the land I had sworn to give them, but whenever they saw a lofty hill or leafy tree they offered sacrifices. They provoked me with the offerings they made there – appeasing aromas and drink offerings. <sup>29</sup>Then I said to them, ‘What is this place to which you go?’ That is why they called it *high place*.

<sup>30</sup>Say to Israel, thus says Yahweh: Since you follow your fathers in lusting after their abominations, <sup>31</sup>in bringing your gifts and in sacrificing your children by fire, never ceasing to defile yourselves with your idols, am I to answer when you consult, Israel? As I live, word of Yahweh, I will not answer you.

<sup>32</sup>You have in mind to be like the other nations, worshiping wood and stone, but this shall not happen. <sup>33</sup>As I live, word of Yahweh, I will rule you with an iron hand, an outstretched arm and outpourings of wrath. <sup>34</sup>Then I will bring you from the midst of the nations and from the peoples where I have scattered you with a strong hand, an outstretched arm and outpourings of wrath. <sup>35</sup>I will lead you to the wilderness of Syria and <sup>36</sup>there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. Just as I judged your fathers in the desert of Egypt, <sup>37</sup>so will I judge you, word of Yahweh. I will make you feel my rod and sort you out. <sup>38</sup>I will rid you of rebels; though they go out from the land of their exile, they shall not enter the land of Israel and you will know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>39</sup>People of Israel, this is what the Lord Yahweh says: Go, serve your idols, but in the end you will not refuse to listen to me. No longer shall you profane my holy Name with your gifts and your idols. <sup>40</sup>For it is on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel – word of Yahweh – that all Israel, all in the land, shall serve me. <sup>41</sup>There I will accept you as a pleasing fragrance when I bring you out from the nations and assemble you from the lands where you were dispersed, and through you my holiness will be shown to the nations.

<sup>42</sup>You will know that I am Yahweh when I lead you to the land of Israel, to the land that I swore to your ancestors that I would give you. <sup>43</sup>And there you will remember your ways and all your deeds by which you defiled

Is  
48:11Ex  
32:12  
Num  
14:13  
Rom  
6:221K  
3:21S  
8:7

40:2

yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves because of your evil ways. <sup>44</sup>You will know that I am Yahweh when I deal with you, Israel, for my Name's sake and not according to your wickedness and corrupt deeds, word of Yahweh.

**21** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, look towards the south; direct your words to the south and prophesy against *Forest of the south*. <sup>3</sup>Say to the forest: 'O forest, hear the word of Yahweh: I am kindling a fire that will burn every tree, both green and dry; its flame will not be quenched but from the south to the north every face will be scorched. <sup>4</sup>Everyone will see that it was I, Yahweh, who kindled it and that it will not be put out.'" <sup>5</sup>This time I said, "Lord Yahweh, they say that I am always talking in parables."

#### **My sword is unsheathed**

<sup>6</sup>But the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>7</sup>"Son of man, look towards Jerusalem; address your words to the sanctuary and prophesy against Israel. <sup>8</sup>Say to Israel: I come against you; I will unsheathe my sword and cut off from you both the good and the wicked. <sup>9</sup>Yes: against both the good and the wicked. My sword is unsheathed against all mortals from north to south. <sup>10</sup>And all will know that I, Yahweh, have unsheathed my sword, and unsheathed it will remain."

<sup>11</sup>And you, son of man, groan in the bitterness of a broken heart, groan in their presence. <sup>12</sup>When they say to you, 'Why are you groaning?' you will answer: 'Because of what will happen; when you hear of it, every heart will melt, every hand become limp, every spirit will be faint and knees shall be as weak as water.' It is to happen; it has come, word of the Lord Yahweh."

<sup>13</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>14</sup>"Son of man; prophesy and say on my behalf: The sword has been polished and sharpened. <sup>15</sup>It has been sharpened for a massacre. <sup>16</sup>Yahweh gave it to be polished and seized by the hand. He has had the sword sharpened and polished to hand to the executioner.

<sup>17</sup>Cry out and wail, son of man, for this sword is intended for my people and for the princes of Israel. They shall be given over to the sword with my people; beat your breast, word of Yahweh.

<sup>18-19</sup>And you, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands! The sword will strike and strike again for the slaughter, for the massacre. <sup>20</sup>Hearts languish and people fall for I have placed at every gate the sword for slaughter. <sup>21</sup>It has been sharpened and shines. O sword! slash to the right, slash to the left, wherever you turn. <sup>22</sup>For my part I

clap my hands and release my fury; I, Yahweh, have spoken."

<sup>23</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>24</sup>"Son of man, mark two roads for the coming of the king of Babylon's sword. The two should leave from the same point. <sup>25</sup>At the head of each road place a sign, the first directing the sword to Rammah of the Ammonites and the second to Judah and the fortified city of Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup>The king of Babylon, in fact, is now standing at the parting of the ways, at the head of both roads looking for an omen. He is shaking arrows, questioning the idols, looking at the liver of the victims.

<sup>27</sup>The lot falls upon Jerusalem. Then he raises a wacry, 'Set a battering ram at the gates, construct a ramp and erect siegeworks.' <sup>28</sup>Those who have sworn allegiance to him in Jerusalem do not dare believe it; but he remembers their guilt and they are captured. <sup>29</sup>That is why Yahweh has spoken: Your evil deeds have brought to mind your wickedness and made known your sins. And when I remembered you, sin appeared in all your deeds. Because of this you will be taken captive.

<sup>30</sup>As for you, dishonored criminal, prince of Israel, the day and moment of your punishment has come. <sup>31</sup>They will remove your turban, take away your crown. All will be changed: what is lowly will be lifted high and what is lofty will be brought low. <sup>32</sup>I will make it a ruins, a ruins such as never has been, until the one comes whose right it is to rule, the one I shall send.

<sup>33</sup>And you, son of man, prophesy and say: This is Yahweh's word concerning the Ammonites and their insults. This is what you are to say: The sword is unsheathed for the slaughter, polished and flashing for the work of destruction. <sup>34</sup>Beware of your false visions and lying omens, when your sword is laid to the necks of the wicked for their time has come and their punishment is near. <sup>35</sup>People of Ammon, put back the sword in its sheath. In your own place, in the land of your birth you will be judged. <sup>36</sup>I will pour out my wrath on you, against you I will breathe the fire of my fury and hand you over to brutal men, experts in destruction. <sup>37</sup>You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be spilled throught the land and you shall be remembered no more for I, Yahweh, have spoken."

#### **The sins of Jerusalem**

**22** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, will you judge them? Will you judge the city of blood? Charge her with all her detestable practices. <sup>3</sup>Say: This

Lk  
23:21

Jer  
12:12

Jer  
31:19

17:24  
Dn  
5:21

Gen  
49:10  
Mic  
5:1

is Yahweh's word: City of bloodshed, your hour has come. You who made your own idols to defile yourself, you are nearing your last days, the end of your years has come. <sup>4</sup>That is why I am making you an object of horror for the nations and a laughing-stock for every country. <sup>5</sup>Those both near and far will mock you, for your name is defiled and you are full of tumult. <sup>6</sup>The leaders of Israel, each according to his strength, have one intent – to shed blood. <sup>7</sup>In you, Israel, father and mother are treated with contempt, in you the alien is oppressed, the fatherless and the widow are wronged. <sup>8</sup>You have despised my holy things and profaned my sabbaths.

<sup>9</sup>In you, men slander to shed blood; in you, they go to eat on the hill sanctuaries and act shamefully. <sup>10</sup>In you are those who defile their father's bed, in you are those who violate women when they are unclean. <sup>11</sup>One man commits a detestable offense with his neighbor's wife, another shamefully dishonors his daughter-in-law, another violates his own sister, his father's daughter.

<sup>12</sup>In you, men accept bribes to shed blood. You exact interest and usury and you rob and exploit your neighbor, and you have forgotten me. It is Yahweh who speaks.

<sup>13</sup>See, I will clap my hands at your dishonest profit, and the blood you have shed. Will your courage hold out, will your hands be steady when I shall come against you? <sup>14</sup>I, Yahweh, have

spoken and I will act accordingly. <sup>15</sup>I will scatter you among the nations, I will disperse you in other countries to rid you of your uncleanness.

<sup>16</sup>Then you will be dishonored in the eyes of the nations and you will know that I am Yahweh."

<sup>17</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>18</sup>"Israel has become for me like dross; some were like silver, bronze, tin, iron and lead; but in the furnace only dross is left. <sup>19</sup>The Lord Yahweh has spoken: This is how I am gathering you together in Jerusalem.

<sup>20</sup>As they place silver, bronze, iron, lead and tin in the fires of a furnace to be smelted, so in my anger will I assemble you, put you in the furnace and smelt you. <sup>21</sup>I will gather you in Jerusalem, stir up the fire of my wrath and smelt you in it. <sup>22</sup>As silver is smelted in the furnace so will you be smelted and you will know that I, Yahweh, have poured out my fiery wrath against you."

<sup>23</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>24</sup>"Son of man, say to Jerusalem: You are a land without rain, a land without a shower on a day of wrath, <sup>25</sup>a land where the princes have been like a roaring lion tearing its prey. They devour people; they take treasures and precious objects and increase the number of widows.

<sup>26</sup>Your priests have broken my laws and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between what is holy and what is common; they have not taught what differ-

Is  
1:22Mal  
3:2-3

• **22.1** In this chapter, from his place of exile Ezekiel addresses the people of Jerusalem.

*In you... in you... in you...* All kind of crimes are committed in Jerusalem. Your princes, your priests, your leaders, the people: they all took part in evil.

*Israel has become for me like dross* (18). The trials that we endure are like a furnace used to purify gold and other metals (1 P 1:7). In the case of Jerusalem, he uses the comparison of the furnace to make a different point: the siege of the city allows the destruction of a people who did not carry out their mission. What cannot be purified is to be burned (Mt 3:10).

*The blood you have shed* (vv. 9 and 13). The

blood shed by the murderer stained the earth until the blood of the murderer was shed (Dt 19:12). The Hebrews, violent as they were, had a keen sense of justice and of the sacred character of life. Today there are ways of causing death quietly and without soiling the hands of entire nations: the day will come when blood will cry out for vengeance against affluent people who considered themselves innocent.

*I looked for a man among them to build a wall between them and me.* Note verse 30 which brings to mind 13:9. Not everyone has the same understanding of the mystery of God, nor is everyone called to the same responsibilities. There is a need for intercessors who are in

ence there is between the clean and the unclean. They have ignored my sabbath and I have been dishonored by them.

<sup>27</sup>The officials of the city are like wolves who tear their prey, shedding blood and killing people for unjust gain.

<sup>13:10</sup> <sup>28</sup>As for the prophets, they whitewash everything by means of false visions and lying predictions, saying: ‘Yahweh has spoken’ when Yahweh has not spoken. <sup>29</sup>The lords of the land have practiced extortion and robbery, oppressing the poor and needy, molesting the alien and denying him justice.

<sup>30</sup>I looked for a man among them to build a wall and stand on the breach to protect the land lest I destroy it, but I found none. <sup>31</sup>So I have poured out my wrath against them; I have destroyed them in the heat of my fury bringing down on their heads all they have done – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

#### Oholah and Oholibah

**23** <sup>1</sup>The word of the Lord Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. <sup>3</sup>They became prostitutes in Egypt, even from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and caressed. <sup>4</sup>The elder was called Oholah, her sister Oholibah. Both of them were mine and they gave me sons and daughters. *Oholah* is Samaria and *Oholibah* is Jerusalem.

• <sup>5</sup>Oholah was mine when she played the harlot; she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians, <sup>6</sup>warriors dressed in purple, governors, commanders, desirable young men, riders on horses. <sup>7</sup>She offered them her harlotry, to those who were the best of Assyria. She dishonored herself with all those for whom she lusted and with their idols. <sup>8</sup>But she did not forget her harlotry with the Egyptians who had lain with her and poured their lust on her from the time of her youth. <sup>9</sup>That is why I gave her over to her lovers, the Assyrians, the object of her lustful desires. <sup>10</sup>They uncovered her nakedness, seized her sons and daughters and slew her. And she became a byword among women because punishment had come to her.

<sup>11</sup>Her sister, Oholibah, witnessed this but she was even more corrupt in her lust and worse than her sister in her prostitution. <sup>12</sup>She lusted after the Assyrians, governors, commanders, horsemen, all desirable young men, and <sup>13</sup>I saw how she dishonored herself.

Both sisters acted in the same way but she went further than her sister. <sup>14</sup>No sooner had she seen men portrayed on walls, pictures of Chaldeans sketched in vermilion than she lusted after these men, <sup>15</sup>tightly belted, heads top-heavy with turbans, all resembling Babylonian cavalry officers. <sup>16</sup>She sent messengers to Chaldea and <sup>17</sup>they came to her in the bed of love and defiled her with their prostitution. They dishonored her so much that she turned from them in disgust.

<sup>18</sup>But because she had given herself and exposed her nakedness, I too turned from her in disgust just as I had turned away from her sister. <sup>19</sup>She multiplied her harlotry recalling her youth when she played the harlot in Egypt. <sup>20</sup>She lusted after her lovers whose bodies were like those of donkeys and whose

solidarity with others, feel compassion for them and become responsible for them before God. Thus prayer appears crucial. All prophets discover that this is to be their role.

This understanding of how God saves has led many friends of God to “withdraw” into solitude; surrendering to the love of God through prayer and suffering.

• **23.5** As he did in chapter 16, Ezekiel teaches his compatriots, who are indifferent to the love of Yahweh, by starting with what they know: jealous love and prostitution.

Ezekiel mentions three forms of idolatry: with the *Egyptians*, the *Assyrians* and the *Babylonians*:

- The idolatry of the Egyptians; confidence in a super-organized state that gives food to everyone, but deprives them of freedom.
- The idolatry of the Assyrians: worship of power and male-centeredness.
- The idolatry of the Babylonians: the longing

for money and routine work invaded all their lives. People have no time to live and do not question the meaning of their lives.

What offends God is not only that individuals forsake the God of justice – without whose knowledge nothing befalls us – to trust in stones, images and horoscopes. What offends God more is that the whole nation is sinning. God wanted to develop within it a new faith, lifestyle and culture able to save humankind. Instead of that, their pleasure is to import all that is most alienating in foreign cultures. We too continue to import all that is alienating: advertisements, erotic dances and videos.

*Oholibah* means *my tent is in her*: this refers to the southern kingdom, with Jerusalem, where Yahweh established his dwelling and to which he gave his promises.

*Oholah* means *her own tent*: this is the North which separated with Jeroboam in order to form a kingdom of its own.

organs resembled those of horses. <sup>21</sup> She returned to the shameful conduct of her youth with the Egyptians.

<sup>22</sup> That is why, Oholibah, thus says Yahweh: I am sending against you your lovers from whom you have turned away in disgust and I will bring them against you from all sides, <sup>23</sup> Babylonians and Chaldeans, men of Pekod, Shoa and Koa and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, governors, commanders, cavalry officers, titled people, all riding horses.

<sup>24</sup> They will come against you with chariots, wagons and throngs of people who will assail you from all sides with buckler, shield and helmet. <sup>25</sup> I will put your case before them and they will judge you according to their laws. I will release my jealousy against you so that they shall deal with you furiously. They will cut off your nose and your ears and what is left of you will fall by the sword. They will seize your sons and daughters and what is left of you will be consumed by the fire; <sup>26</sup> they will strip you of your clothes and ornaments.

<sup>27</sup> I will put an end to your shameful behavior and your harlotry dating from your time in Egypt; you will not look towards them again and will no longer dream of Egypt. Thus says <sup>28</sup> the Lord Yahweh: I am handing you over to those you hate, to those from whom you turned in disgust. <sup>29</sup> They will treat you with loathing and take from you everything you have worked for, leaving you naked and uncovered and the nakedness of your harlotry will be exposed. <sup>30</sup> Your shameful conduct and your promiscuity have brought this upon you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols.

<sup>31</sup> Since you have gone the way of your sister, I will place her cup in your hand.

<sup>32</sup> Thus says Yahweh: You shall drink your sister's cup which is deep and wide. You shall be the butt of derision and mockery: the cup holds so much! <sup>33</sup> You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow; it is a cup of desolation and horror, the cup of Samaria, your sister!

<sup>34</sup> You will drink and empty it to the dregs, and then tear your breasts – for I have spoken, word of the Lord Yahweh.”

<sup>35</sup> That is why the Lord Yahweh speaks thus: “Since you have forgotten me and turned your back on me, you too will pay for your immodesty and harlotry!”

<sup>36</sup> Then Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Confront them with their abominations, <sup>37</sup> for they have committed adultery and stained their hands with blood. They committed adultery with their idols and even sacrificed their children – my children – as food for them. <sup>38</sup> At that time they defiled my sanctuary and profaned my sabbaths; <sup>39</sup> the same day they

sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary to desecrate it. This is what they did in my house.

<sup>40</sup> Both of them sent messages to men who had come from afar and they came. You bathed yourself for them, painted your eyes and decked yourself with jewels. <sup>41</sup> You seated yourself on a stately couch and beside a table on which you put incense and oil that was mine.

<sup>42</sup> The sound of a carefree crowd was heard there because of their number, not to mention the people brought in from the desert. They put bracelets on the wrists of the women and splendid crowns on their heads. <sup>43</sup> Then I said about this city, worn out and defiled with her adultery: This is indeed harlotry! <sup>44</sup> Men go to her as one goes to a prostitute. So they went to Oholah and Oholibah, the dissolute women!

<sup>45</sup> But upright men will judge as adulterous those who have shed blood, for indeed they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.”

<sup>46</sup> For thus says Yahweh: “Let a great assembly be gathered against them! Let them be delivered to terror and spoil! <sup>47</sup> The assembly will stone them, have them cut in pieces by the sword, kill their sons and daughters and burn their houses.

<sup>48</sup> I will put an end to debauchery in this land; all the women will be warned and no longer will they imitate your immorality. <sup>49</sup> I will make your immorality fall on your own heads and when you receive the punishment of your idolatry, you will know that I am Yahweh.”

**24** <sup>1</sup> The word of Yahweh came to me on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year in these terms, <sup>2</sup> “Write today's date, this very day, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem today. <sup>3</sup> Teach this rebellious people by means of a parable: This is what Yahweh ordered me to do: Put the pot on the fire; place it there and pour water into it. <sup>4</sup> Put in it all the pieces of meat, the choice pieces, the leg and shoulder and fill it with the best of the bones. <sup>5</sup> Take these from the pick of the flock. Set wood underneath it in a circle to boil the pieces of meat and cook the bones in it.”

<sup>6</sup> Now this is what Yahweh says, “Woe to the city of blood, to the rusty pot with the rust encrusted on it! Let them empty it, piece by piece but without sparing anyone, <sup>7</sup> for the blood she

Lev  
20:10  
Jn  
8:5

shed is in her midst. She poured it on the rock surface, not on the ground where dust would cover it. <sup>8</sup>But I will not cover the blood that was poured on the bare rock. I shall instead kindle my fury and take revenge.

<sup>9</sup>That is why the Lord Yahweh speaks thus: Woe to the city of blood! <sup>10</sup>I will make a great heap of wood! Pile on the wood, light the fire, cook the meat well, adding the spice, and let the bones burn. <sup>11</sup>Leave the empty pot on the coals that it may heat and the bronze grow red-hot to melt the filth inside so its rust will be consumed.

<sup>12</sup>But the rust is such that not even the fire removes it. <sup>13</sup>I have tried to cleanse you of the filth of your immorality but since you would not be cleansed, you shall not be cleansed until I have satisfied my fury against you. <sup>14</sup>I, Yahweh, have spoken. This will happen; I will act and not relent; I will show no pity, no compassion. You shall be judged according to your ways and your deeds – word of Yahweh.”

#### Ezekiel's wife dies

• <sup>15</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>16</sup>“Son of man, I am about to suddenly take from you the delight of your eyes, but you are not to lament or weep or let your tears flow.

<sup>17</sup>Groan in silence and do not mourn for the dead; wear your turban, put on your sandals, do not cover your beard or eat the customary food of mourners.”

<sup>18</sup>I spoke to the people in the morning and my wife died that evening. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. <sup>19</sup>Then the people said to me: “Explain to us the meaning of your actions.” <sup>20</sup>I said to them, “The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms: <sup>21</sup>‘Say to Israel: I am about to profane my sanctuary, your pride, the delight of your eyes for which you long. The sons and daughters you left behind will also fall by the sword, <sup>22</sup>but you will do as I have done: you will not cover your beard or eat the customary food of mourners; <sup>23</sup>you will keep your turbans on your heads and sandals on your feet. You will not lament or weep. Instead, because of your sin, you will waste away and groan among yourselves. <sup>24</sup>Ezekiel will be a sign for you. Do as he did and when this happens you will know that I am Yahweh.’

<sup>25</sup>Son of man, the day I take their stronghold, the jewel which is the delight of their eyes, for which they and their children long, <sup>26</sup>on that day a fugitive will come to give you the news. <sup>27</sup>That very day you will open your mouth and be able to speak to him and you will no longer be silent. You will be a sign for them and they will know I am Yahweh.”

Jer  
16:7

33:22

3:26  
12:6

## PROPHECIES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS

### Ammon, Moab, Edom, the Philistines

**25** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Turn towards the people of the Ammonites and prophesy against them. <sup>3</sup>Say to them on my behalf: This is what Yahweh says: Because you mocked when my sanctuary was profaned, when the land of Israel was laid waste and the Judeans were exiled, <sup>4</sup>I am giving you over to the

Jer  
49:2  
Zep  
2:8

people of the East as their possession; they will pitch their camps and settle among you. They will eat your fruit and drink your milk. <sup>5</sup>I will turn Rabbah into a pasture for camels and the towns of the Ammonites into a sheepfold and you will know that I am Yahweh.”

<sup>6</sup>Thus says Yahweh: “Because you clapped your hands and stamped your feet and danced for joy with an evil heart against

• **24.15** Once again, the prophet uses his own situation to announce the fall of Jerusalem which will lose its wealth and its inhabitants.

The prophet's personal trial in his marriage can be compared to similar occurrences of other prophets. See the commentary on Jeremiah 16:1.

• **25.1** Chapters 25–32 contain the “messages against the pagan nations” similar to what is found in other prophets.

After announcing the nearly total destruction of Israel, the prophet predicts the final destruction of Israel's enemies, when the time of justice arrives. The prophet's words are inspired by an

the land of Israel, <sup>7</sup>I will stretch out my hand against you and hand you over as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the nations; no longer will you be numbered among them. I will destroy you and you will know I am Yahweh.”

<sup>15</sup> <sup>8</sup>Thus says Yahweh, “Because Moab said: ‘Judah is like all the other nations,’ <sup>9</sup>I will leave Moab unprotected and destroy the towns which are her glory: Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, Kiriathaim. <sup>10</sup>I will give Moab along with the Ammonites as a possession to the people of the East so that the Ammonites will not be remembered among the nations. <sup>11</sup>When I will punish Moab, they will know I am Yahweh.”

<sup>35:1-15</sup> <sup>12</sup>Word of Yahweh, “Because Edom took revenge on Judah and was guilty in so doing, this is what <sup>13</sup>Yahweh says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom, destroying people and animals. I will make it a ruins from Teman and let them be slain as far as Dedan. <sup>14</sup>I will put Israel in charge of my revenge against Edom. They will deal with Edom according to my wrath and my fury and Edom will experience my revenge” – word of Yahweh.

<sup>Jer 47:1</sup>  
<sup>Zep 2:4-7</sup> <sup>15</sup>Word of Yahweh, “Because the Philistines have taken revenge with an evil heart and because of their ceaseless hatred, thus says Yahweh: <sup>16</sup>I intend to stretch out my hand against the Philistines; I will cut off the Kerethites and destroy the rest of the coast. <sup>17</sup>I will take terrible revenge and punish them in my wrath – then they will know I am Yahweh.”

### Against Tyre

<sup>15</sup> <sup>26</sup> <sup>1</sup>On the first day of the month in the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, you see how Tyre has mocked Jerusalem: ‘Aha! the land through which the goods of the nations came to me is destroyed; what she received will now be mine, I shall prosper while she lies in ruins.’ <sup>3</sup>Because Tyre said that – word of Yahweh – I am against her! I will bring many people against her. They will rise

like the waves of the sea, <sup>4</sup>they will destroy the ramparts of Tyre and knock down its towers. I will sweep away the dust, making of it a bare rock. <sup>5</sup>She will be in the midst of the sea, a place to hang out nets – I, Yahweh, have spoken.

<sup>6</sup>Tyre will be plunder for the nations; her villages on dry land will be laid waste by the sword and they will know that I am Yahweh.”

<sup>7</sup>This is what Yahweh says, “From the north I will bring Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, against Tyre. He will come with horses, chariots and cavalry, a vast army and throngs of people. <sup>8</sup>He will lay waste with the sword your villages on dry land. He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound and raise a roof of shields against you. <sup>9</sup>He will set a battering ram to hammer your walls and he will demolish your towers with weapons. <sup>10</sup>His numerous horses will cover you with dust. The noise of the cavalry, the wheels of the chariots and wagons will make your walls shake when they enter your gates as one enters a town through a breach in its walls.

<sup>11</sup>Horses’ hooves will trample your streets; he will slay your people with the sword and your powerful pillars will crumble to the ground. <sup>12</sup>They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones, timber and soil they will cast into the sea.

<sup>13</sup>I will silence your songs and the sound of your lyres will be heard no more. <sup>14</sup>I will make a stark rock of you, a place to dry fishing nets, and you shall never be rebuilt! – I, Yahweh, have spoken.

<sup>15</sup>This is a word of Yahweh to Tyre: At the time of your massacre, will not the coastlands quake, when the noise of your fall and the groaning of the victims is heard? <sup>16</sup>All the princes of the sea will step down from their thrones; they will remove their robes and take off their embroidered garments. They will put on mourning clothes, sit on the ground, tremble with fear and be appalled because of

Rev  
18:9

urgent sense of justice. The Ammonite, Edomite... etc. nations have no right to survive as nations since they have no part in preparing for salvation and Yahweh used them only to purify his people. So, they must disappear in the turmoil of history.

It would be a misunderstanding of the Bible if we were led to ask God to punish people who do not believe and who even persecute the Church (see 1 Peter). Neither can we now wish for the destruction of an oppressor since the grace of Christ is at work everywhere. All we can affirm is that any institution which is closed to the Gospel message, will disappear: “Every plant which my Father has not planted, shall be uprooted” (Mt 15:13).

Ezekiel announces the destruction of Tyre through shipwreck images. Compare with the fall of Nineveh (Nh 2–3) and of Babylon (Jer 51).

In Revelation (18:9) these words would be remembered and applied to the Roman empire and to its capital, Rome, which was the center of the world at the time of the apostles. What a condemnation for our civilization which always places economic success as top priority, even if it praises cultural and spiritual values. One may well see the shipwreck of entire nations, families and individuals in a flood of unemployment, shops stocked with sophisticated articles that have become useless.

you. <sup>17</sup>They will be amazed on your account and will take up this lament:

‘How you have perished, vanished from the sea, city of renown! Formerly you and your citizens were so powerful on the sea! You imposed terror on all <sup>18</sup>but now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall. The islands of the sea are terrified at your disappearance.’

<sup>19</sup>Thus says Yahweh: When I make you into a city of ruins like uninhabited towns, when I make the ocean rise against you and the mighty waters cover you, <sup>20</sup>then I will thrust you down with those who descend to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will throw you into the netherworld, into everlasting loneliness, like those who go down to the pit, that you may not return to the land of the living. <sup>21</sup>Then you will be an object of horror, and even if sought, you will not be found – word of Yahweh.”

Rev  
18:21

#### A lament for Tyre

**27** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, intone a lament for Tyre and <sup>3</sup>say to her, who is gateway to the sea who trades with people on many coasts: This is what Yahweh says:

Tyre, you were satisfied with your perfect beauty. <sup>4</sup>Your borders were in the heart of the sea and your builders perfected your beauty; <sup>5</sup>all your planks were made of the wood of fir trees, your masts from the cedars of Lebanon and <sup>6</sup>your oars from the oak of Bashan. Your decks were of cedar from the coast of Cyprus inlaid with ivory.

<sup>7</sup>Embroidered linen from Egypt was used for your sails which served as your ensign. Your awning was made of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah. <sup>8</sup>Your oarsmen were citizens of Sidon and Arvad. The most skilled men from Zemer served you as pilots, <sup>9</sup>veteran craftsmen from Gebal were on board to seal your seams. All the ships of the seas with their crews called on you to barter for your wares.

<sup>10</sup>Persia, Lud and Put served in your army as men of war. They brought you splendor and hung their bucklers and helmets on your walls. <sup>11</sup>The men of Arvad and Helech watched all around your walls; men of Gamad guarded your towers and hung their shields on your walls completing your magnificence.

<sup>12</sup>Tarshish traded with you because of your abundant wealth, supplying your markets with silver, iron, tin and lead. <sup>13</sup>Javan, Tubal and Mishech trafficked with you, providing you with slaves and articles in bronze.

Rev  
18:13

<sup>14</sup>People of Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your wares.

<sup>15</sup>The people of Rhodes traded with you and many coastlands were your customers; in payment they gave ivory tusks and ebony wood. <sup>16</sup>Edom trafficked with you because of your many products and provided your markets with turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered cloth, fine linen, coral and rubies. <sup>17</sup>Judah and Israel sold you wheat from Minnith, millet, honey, oil and resin. <sup>18</sup>Damascus traded with you because of your abundant wares and provided you with wine from Helbon and white wool.

<sup>19</sup>Danites and Greeks from Uzal exchanged wrought iron, cassia and calamus for your merchandise. <sup>20</sup>Dedan supplied you with saddle blankets. <sup>21</sup>Arabia and all the princes of Kedar carried on a lively trade with you in lambs, rams and goats.

1K  
10:15

<sup>22</sup>Merchants from Sheba and Raamah provided your markets with all kinds of high grade spices, precious stones and gold. <sup>23</sup>Haran, Canneh, Eden, Asshur and Chilmad <sup>24</sup>traded with you in beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered cloth, colored rugs with twisted and tightly-knotted cords. <sup>25</sup>The ships of Tarshish carried your merchandise.

You lay filled and heavy  
in the midst of the ocean.

<sup>26</sup>Your mariners led you to the high sea and the east wind wrecked you in the sea.

<sup>27</sup>Your riches, wares, merchandise,  
your seamen and sailors,  
those who repaired your seams,  
and assured your trade,  
your men of war with all the passengers  
sank into the depths of the sea  
on the day of your shipwreck.

<sup>28</sup>At the cries of your seamen the coasts  
quaked <sup>29</sup>and the oarsmen came from their ships;

sailors and seamen went ashore.

<sup>30</sup>They mourn and weep bitterly for you,  
throw dust on their heads and roll in ashes.

<sup>31</sup>Because of you they shave their heads  
and wear sackcloth.

In the bitterness of their hearts they weep  
and intone a bitter lament for you.

<sup>32</sup>A funeral song is heard:

Who was like Tyre, now silent  
in the midst of the ocean?

<sup>33</sup>How many nations you provided  
with the goods unloaded from distant  
shores!

With your abundant riches and commerce  
you enriched the kings of the earth,

• **27.1** Phoenicia with its ports, Tyre and Sidon, was on the coast of Palestine. A very small country, its people were dedicated to sea trade and were in contact with all the nations on

the Mediterranean. From Phoenicia, pagan influences reached Israel, especially in the days of Ahab (1 K 16:29).

<sup>34</sup>but now you are shattered by the sea,  
engulfed in its depths.

Your wares and all your company have  
gone down!

<sup>35</sup>All who live on the coasts are appalled  
because of you,  
their kings shudder, and fall prostrate.

<sup>36</sup>The merchants of the nations hiss at  
you,  
you are an object of dread.  
You have gone forever.”

#### About the king of Tyre

**28** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in  
these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, say to the  
prince of Tyre:

You are very proud and self-satisfied:  
‘I am a god, I sit like a god in the heart of  
the sea.’

Yet you are man and not a god;  
would you hold yourself as wise as God?

<sup>3</sup>You consider yourself wiser than Daniel;  
no secret is hidden from you.

<sup>4</sup>Your wisdom and know-how have  
earned you a fortune,  
gold and silver flowed to your treasury.

<sup>5</sup>Clever in trade, you became wealthy  
and as your fortune increased,  
your heart became prouder.

<sup>6</sup>But now Yahweh has spoken to you,  
to the one who is like God:

<sup>7</sup>I am bringing foreigners against you,  
the most feared of all the nations.

Their sword will challenge your wisdom  
and debase your refined culture.

<sup>8</sup>They will bring you down to the pit  
and you will die in the depths of the sea.

<sup>9</sup>Will you be able to say ‘I am a god’  
when your murderers are killing you?

You are a man and not a god.

<sup>10</sup>You will die the death of the un-  
circumcised and perish at the hands of aliens,  
for I have spoken – word of Yahweh.”

<sup>11</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these  
terms, <sup>12</sup>“Son of man, intone a lamentation  
for the king of Tyre and say to him: This is  
what Yahweh says:

You were the model of perfection,  
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

<sup>13</sup>You lived in Eden, the garden of God,  
and every kind of precious stone adorned  
you,

ruby, topaz, emerald, chrysolite, onyx and  
jasper, sapphire, turquoise and emerald.

The trinkets on your robe were made of  
gold,

prepared for you on the day you were  
created.

<sup>14</sup>I anointed you a guardian angel  
on the holy mountain of God  
where you walked amidst the spirits of  
God.

<sup>15</sup>You were perfect in your ways

from the day you were created  
until wickedness was found in you.

<sup>16</sup>Because of your extensive trade  
you were filled with violence and sinned;  
I then deprived you of your dignity,  
driving you away from the mountain of  
God,

expelling you from among the guardian  
angels;

<sup>17</sup>your heart was proud because of your  
beauty.

As your splendor corrupted your wisdom  
I have cast you down to the ground  
and exposed you before kings,  
a spectacle in their sight.

<sup>18</sup>Your many sins and dishonest trade  
have filled and defiled your sanctuaries.  
Then I made fire break out in you  
and reduced you to ashes on the ground in  
the sight of all who looked on.

<sup>19</sup>The nations who knew you are appalled.  
You have become an object of terror; you  
have gone forever.”

<sup>20</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these  
terms, <sup>21</sup>“Look towards Sidon and prophesy  
against her. You will say:

<sup>22</sup>Thus says Yahweh: I come against you,  
Sidon, and I will be glorified in you. When I  
inflict punishment on her and make known  
my holiness, they will know I am Yahweh. <sup>23</sup>I  
will send pestilence against her and shed  
blood in her streets. The sword is directed  
against her from all sides and they will know  
I am Yahweh when the victims fall.

<sup>24</sup>No longer will there be for the people of  
Israel thorns that wound or briars that prick  
them among their neighbors. Then they will  
know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>25</sup>Thus says Yahweh: When I gather Israel  
from among the nations where she has been  
dispersed, I will use them to show the nations  
my holiness and they will live in the land I  
gave to my servant Jacob. <sup>26</sup>They will live  
safely, build houses and plant vineyards.  
They will live in safety when I punish all those  
neighbors who treated them with contempt  
and they will know that I am Yahweh, their  
God.”

#### Against Egypt

**29** <sup>1</sup>On the tenth day of the twelfth month  
of the tenth year the word of Yahweh  
came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man,  
look towards Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and  
prophesy against all Egypt. <sup>3</sup>Say: This is the  
word of Yahweh: I am against you, Pharaoh,  
king of Egypt! Huge monster wallowing in the  
midst of your streams saying: ‘The Nile and  
its canals are mine; I made them.’ <sup>4</sup>I will put  
hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your  
rivers cling to your scales. I will drag you from  
your rivers with all the fish clinging to your  
scales. <sup>5</sup>I will throw you and the fish of the

Gen  
3:24

Gen  
3:5  
Is  
14:13

Jl  
4:4

Gen  
2:11  
Ex  
28:15

30-  
32  
Is 19  
Jer  
46

rivers into the desert. You will fall on the ground with no one to lift you up or bury you. I will give you as food to the wild beasts and to the birds of the air, and <sup>6</sup>all who live in Egypt will know I am Yahweh.

You have been but a staff of reed for Israel. <sup>7</sup>When they took hold of you, you broke in their hands; you tore open all their shoulder; when they leaned on you, you wrenched their backs. <sup>8</sup>That is why thus says Yahweh: I am bringing the sword against you and I will destroy both people and animals. <sup>9</sup>Egypt will be a wasteland and a ruins, and the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh when Egypt is made a ruins and a wasteland.

You said: 'The Nile is mine, I made it.' <sup>10</sup>Because of that I am coming against you in the midst of your streams. I will reduce Egypt to a lonely ruins from Migdal to Aswan and to the border of Cush. <sup>11</sup>Neither foot of man nor hoof of animal will tread its paths. Egypt will be uninhabited for forty years; <sup>12</sup>I will make it one of the wastelands and for forty years its cities will be numbered among cities in ruins. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them in other lands.

<sup>13</sup>Thus says Yahweh: After forty years I will gather the Egyptians from among the nations where they were dispersed; <sup>14</sup>I will bring back Egyptian captives to Pathros, the land of their birth. There they will form a small kingdom, <sup>15</sup>weaker than other kingdoms, no longer strong enough to dominate other nations. <sup>16</sup>I will decrease their number, so that they may no longer conquer other lands. No longer will Israel be tempted to trust in Egypt, nor will they sin by turning to Egypt for help. Then they will know that I am Yahweh."

<sup>17</sup>It happened on the first day of the first month of the twenty-seventh year that the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms:

<sup>18</sup>"Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon has mobilized his army for an expedition against Tyre. All are worn out, bald-headed, their shoulders raw, but neither he nor his people have received any reward for this campaign against Tyre.

<sup>19</sup>That is why thus says Yahweh: I intend to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He will carry off its riches, plunder it and let his army have the loot in place of wages. <sup>20</sup>Because these people have worked for me, I will give Egypt to them as a reward – word of Yahweh.

<sup>21</sup>On that day I will lift up the nation of Israel, and as for you, I will let you speak among them again and they will know that I am Yahweh."

**30** <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>Son of man, prophesy and say: This is the word of Yahweh: Moan! Ah! <sup>3</sup>the day is near; the day of Yahweh is

coming! It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. <sup>4</sup>The sword is brought to strike Egypt and anguish will come to Cush. The slain will fall throughout Egypt; people will carry off its riches and its foundations will be torn away. <sup>5</sup>Cush, Put and Lydia, all Arabia, Libya and all the people of the covenant will fall by the sword.

<sup>6</sup>This is the word of Yahweh: "Those who support Egypt will fall; her haughty power will crumble! From Migdal to Aswan, people will be slain, word of Yahweh. <sup>7</sup>They will be numbered among desolate lands, and her cities among ruined cities. <sup>8</sup>They will know I am Yahweh when I set fire to Egypt and when all her allies are crushed.

<sup>9</sup>On that day my messengers will leave in ships to shake the people of Cush out of their complacency and they will be in anguish on the day of the fall of Egypt; for that day is coming.

<sup>10</sup>Thus says Yahweh: I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by means of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and <sup>11</sup>his people with him, the most feared among the nations. For I will lead them here to destroy the land.

They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with victims. <sup>12</sup>I will dry up Egypt's canals and hand over the country to the wicked. I will use the hand of the foreigner to make the land and all it contains a waste. I, Yahweh, have spoken.

<sup>13</sup>This is the word of Yahweh: I will destroy the idols and wipe out the false gods in Memphis. No longer will there be a prince in the land of Egypt and I will put fear in the land. <sup>14</sup>I will make a wasteland of Pathros, set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes. <sup>15</sup>I will pour out my fury on Pelusium, the fortress of Egypt, and destroy the throngs of Thebes.

<sup>16</sup>I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. They will enter Thebes through a breach and take her by storm. <sup>17</sup>The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis will fall by the sword and the women will be taken captive. <sup>18</sup>What a dark day it will be in Tahpanhes when I break the leadership of Egypt and destroy her arrogant might! As for this city a cloud will cover it and her daughters will be taken captive. <sup>19</sup>I will inflict punishment on Egypt and they will know that I am Yahweh."

<sup>20</sup>On the seventh day of the first month of the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>21</sup>"Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. No one has treated it for healing or bandaged it to enable him to hold a sword. <sup>22</sup>That is why thus says Yahweh: See, I am against Pharaoh, king of Egypt. I will break his arms, both the one that is strong and the wounded one as well. <sup>23</sup>I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them in other lands. <sup>24</sup>I will

strengthen the arm of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand; but as for Pharaoh, I will break his arms, making him moan like a mortally wounded man. <sup>25</sup>Yes, I will strengthen the arm of the king of Babylon but make Pharaoh's arm limp. They will know I am Yahweh when I place my sword in the hand of the king of Babylon. <sup>26</sup>I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them in other lands and they will know that I am Yahweh."

<sup>Dn 4</sup> **31** • <sup>1</sup>On the first of the third month of the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>2</sup>"Son of man, say to Pharaoh, king of Egypt and to his multitude: Who is comparable to you in your greatness? <sup>3</sup>You are like a very tall cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches providing forest shade, with its top among the clouds.

<sup>4</sup>It grew. The waters made it grow, and the streams ascending from the deep springs that watered all the trees of the land through the canals, flowed straight to its place. <sup>5</sup>Higher than all the other trees, its boughs increased and its branches grew larger because of the plentiful water. <sup>6</sup>The birds of the air nested in its boughs and all the animals brought forth their young under its branches. Numerous nations lived in its shade.

<sup>7</sup>It became majestic in height and in the thickness of its branches for its roots were turned towards plentiful water. <sup>8</sup>The other cedars in the garden of God could not equal it. The pine trees could not equal its boughs nor could the plane trees rival its branches. No other tree in God's garden was comparable to it in beauty. <sup>9</sup>I made it beautiful in the abundance of its branches, the envy of the trees in the garden of God in Eden.

<sup>10</sup>That is why thus says Yahweh: Because it grew tall and reached the clouds and became proud, <sup>11</sup>I will hand it over to the ruler of the nations who will treat it according to its wickedness. I have rejected it. <sup>12</sup>Foreigners, the most terrible among the nations, have felled it, cut it down on the mountains: its boughs have fallen in all the valleys, its branches lie broken in ravines. All the nations have fled from its shade and abandoned it. <sup>13</sup>The birds of the air alight on its broken boughs and the animals are found among its fallen branches. <sup>14</sup>This is to prevent well-watered trees from attaining such a height and reaching the clouds. For all are destined to die and go below among those who descend to the pit.

<sup>15</sup>Thus says Yahweh: The day the cedar descended to the netherworld I made the depths mourn for it. I restrained its rivers and

held back the abundant waters. Darkness covered Lebanon and all the trees of the field were faint. <sup>16</sup>The nations were shaken at the noise of its fall when I made it depart to the lower regions with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees from Eden, the finest trees of Lebanon, all that were well-watered were comforted in the earth below. <sup>17</sup>Those from among the nations who lived in its shade, they too went down together to those slain by the sword. <sup>18</sup>O tree, splendid and glorious, who among the trees of Eden was comparable to you? But you were made to go down to the lower regions like the other trees of Eden. You lay among the uncircumcised people, victims of the sword, you, Pharaoh and all your multitudes, word of Yahweh."

**32** <sup>1</sup>On the first of the twelfth month in the twelfth year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>"Intone a lamentation for Pharaoh, king of Egypt. You will say: Lion of the nations, you are lost! You were like a monster of the sea, thrashing the water in the rivers, stirring and muddying the water with your feet.

<sup>3</sup>This is what Yahweh says: I will spread my nets over you, and an assembly of many nations will haul you up into my net. <sup>4</sup>I will throw you on the ground, hurl you into the open field and let the birds of the air settle on you and the beasts of the earth feed on you. <sup>5</sup>I will scatter your flesh on the mountains, fill the valleys with your remains and <sup>6</sup>drench the earth with your liquids. When I blot you out, <sup>7</sup>the skies will darken and the stars become dim; I will veil the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give its light. <sup>8</sup>Because of you I will darken all the lights in the sky and cover the earth in darkness, word of Yahweh.

<sup>9</sup>Many nations will grieve when I spread the news of your fall, even people you do not know; <sup>10</sup>their kings will shudder because of you when I wave my sword before them. All of them will tremble for their life, on the day of your fall.

<sup>11</sup>For thus says Yahweh: The sword of the king of Babylon is coming against you. <sup>12</sup>The sword of the warriors, the most terrible among the nations will destroy your numerous people. They will shatter the pride of Egypt and your multitudes will be exterminated. <sup>13</sup>I will destroy all your cattle along the shores of the great river, no longer to be trod by man or beast. <sup>14</sup>And then I will calm their rivers, and their streams will flow like oil, word of Yahweh. <sup>15</sup>When I make a wasteland of Egypt and destroy its inhabitants, striking all those who live there, they will know that I am Yahweh.

• **31.1** Note the beautiful literary image of the cedar, chapter 31: it represents Egypt.

<sup>16</sup>This is the dirge which the cities of the nations will chant for Egypt and its multitudes – word of Yahweh.”

<sup>17</sup>On the fifteenth day of the month, in the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>18</sup>“Son of man, wail for the multitudes of Egypt and make them descend to the netherworld. <sup>19</sup>For I will send them to the land of shadows with those who go down to the pit. <sup>20</sup>There they will meet all the victims of the sword. Egypt has been taken; she has been dragged away with her multitudes. <sup>21</sup>The mighty heroes in the netherworld together with Pharaoh’s allies, will say to her: ‘Why should you be more favored than others? Come down and make your bed with the uncircumcised, with those fallen by the sword.’

<sup>22</sup>Assyria is there with her entire army; she is surrounded by the tombs of her victims fallen by the sword. <sup>23</sup>Their graves are at the bottom of the pit and her army lies around her tomb; all those who spread terror in the land of the living have been killed by the sword.

<sup>24</sup>Elam is there with all her multitude around her tomb, all of them slain, fallen by the sword. They are the uncircumcised, who have gone down to the lower regions, those who spread terror in the land of the living; <sup>25</sup>( ) they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.

<sup>26</sup>Meschech and Tubal are there with the tombs of their multitude around them. All these uncircumcised are there pierced by the sword, for they spread terror in the land of the living. <sup>27</sup>They are not lying with the heroes of former times who went to the grave with all their gear of war; the heroes whose terror filled the land of the living, lie with their swords placed under their heads their shields over their bones.

<sup>28</sup>You instead will be among the uncircumcised victims of the sword.

<sup>29</sup>Edom is there with her kings and princes who despite their bravery lie with those fallen by the sword. They are placed with the uncircumcised and with those who go down to the pit. <sup>30</sup>All the princes of the north are there and all the Sidonians who have gone down in disgrace with the slain, despite the terror caused by their power. They are shamed and lie with the uncircumcised, victims of the sword. They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.

<sup>31</sup>When Pharaoh and all his army see them, he will be comforted because of all his multitudes killed by the sword, word of Yahweh. <sup>32</sup>Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living, Pharaoh will be laid among the uncircumcised victims of the sword, he and his multitudes, word of Yahweh.”

## THE REESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL

### The prophet – watchman of the people

**33** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: Imagine that I bring the sword against a country, and the people of that country choose one among them to be their sentry. <sup>3</sup>When this man sees the sword approach the land, he shall sound the trumpet to warn the people; <sup>4</sup>then if anyone hears the trumpet and does not heed the warning he shall be responsible for his own death, <sup>5</sup>but the man who gave the warning will save his life. <sup>6</sup>On the other hand when the sentry sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, the people are not warned and some are killed. In that case I will hold the sentry responsible and he will answer for the victims’ death.

<sup>7</sup>For your part, son of man, I have set you

as a watchman for Israel, and when you hear my word, you must give them my warning.

<sup>8</sup>When I say to the wicked: ‘Wicked man, you shall die for sure,’ if you do not warn the wicked man to turn from his ways, he will die because of his sin, but I will also call you to account for his blood. <sup>9</sup>If you warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you yourself will be saved.

<sup>10</sup>Son of man, you know the people of Israel say: ‘We are wasting away because of our sin, and our wrongdoing is weighing us down. How can we live?’ <sup>11</sup>Say to them: As I live, word of Yahweh, I do not want the wicked to die but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! turn from your wicked ways! Why, O Israel, should you die?

<sup>12</sup>You, son of man, say to your people: The

• **33.1** Jerusalem has been captured. While all the illusions of the Jews and their false prophets are shattered, Ezekiel understands that they have come to the end of the trial. In the future, perhaps remote, there is the glimpse of a resurrection. The prophet reveals many promises of God in chapters 34-39. This chapter (33), marking the capture of Jerusalem, serves as an introduction.

In 33:1-20 we have a different version of what we commented on in 3:17 and 18:21.

33:11. In time of misfortune, the wicked lose all hope; but the prophet, who always announced misery, raises his voice to encourage conversion and to share God’s thinking: *I do not want the wicked to die ... Why, O Israel, should you die?*

18:32  
Lk  
15:7

righteous life of the upright will not save him on the day he turns to sin and the wicked man will not be bound to his wickedness on the day he turns from his evil ways; likewise for the upright: he will die. <sup>13</sup>When I have said to the righteous: ‘You will live,’ if he takes advantage of his righteousness to do evil, his former upright life will not be remembered; the evil he is doing will make him die. <sup>14</sup>And if I say to the wicked man, ‘You will certainly die,’ but he then turns from his sin and does what is just and right, <sup>15</sup>gives back what he took as a pledge on a loan, restores what he has stolen, obeys the decrees that are life-giving and avoids evil, he will live, he will not die. <sup>16</sup>His life in sin will no longer be held against him. He has done what is just and right and because of that he will live.

<sup>17</sup>Yet your people say, ‘The position of the Lord is not just.’ On the contrary it is theirs that is wrong. <sup>18</sup>The upright man who turns from what is just and right and does evil, shall die; <sup>19</sup>and the wicked man who turns from evil to do what is just and right shall live! <sup>20</sup>Though you say: ‘The Lord’s position is wrong,’ I will judge you, Israel, each one according to his ways.”

<sup>21</sup>On the fifth day of the tenth month in the eleventh year of our exile, a fugitive arrived from Jerusalem to tell me: “The city has fallen.”

<sup>24:26-27</sup> <sup>22</sup>Now the hand of Yahweh had been on me the evening before the arrival of the fugitive. When I met him in the morning, Yahweh opened my mouth. My tongue was loosened and no longer was I silent.

<sup>23</sup>The word of Yahweh then came to me in these terms, <sup>24</sup>“Son of man, those who remain among the ruins in the land of Israel reckon: ‘Abraham was alone when he received the land as a possession; we are still numerous enough and it is to us that the country has been given.’

<sup>25</sup>But you will say to them: thus says Yahweh: You eat food with blood, you look towards idols, you shed blood, and you want to possess the land! <sup>26</sup>You lean on your sword, you do what is detestable, each one dishonors his neighbor’s wife and yet you want to possess the land!

<sup>27</sup>Say to them: This is the word of Yahweh: As I live, those who settled among the ruins will fall by the sword; those in the open country I will give as food to the beasts and those in strongholds and caves shall die of the plague. <sup>28</sup>I will make the country a wasteland, a lonely place. They will no longer lean on their power and the mountains of Israel shall be deserted with no one crossing them. <sup>29</sup>Then they will know that I am Yahweh when I make their country a lonely waste because of all the detestable things they have done.

<sup>30</sup>Son of man, your people talk about you along the walls and at the doors of the houses, each one with his neighbor: ‘Come and hear the latest word of Yahweh.’

<sup>31</sup>They go to you as they go to an assembly and sit in front of you. They listen to your words but do not do what you say. Instead they continue to lie and look only for their own interest. <sup>32</sup>For them you are no more than a singer of lovesongs – a beautiful voice accompanied by beautiful music. They listen but do not practice what they hear.

<sup>33</sup>But when what is foretold comes true – and it is about to happen – they will know that there was a prophet among them.”

Jer  
42:21  
Mt  
7:26

### The shepherds of Israel

**34** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, speak on my behalf against the shepherds of Israel! Say to the shepherds on my behalf: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? <sup>3</sup>But you feed on milk and are clothed in wool, and you slaughter the fattest sheep. You have not taken care of the flock, <sup>4</sup>you have not strengthened the weak, cared for the sick or bandaged the injured. You have not gone after the sheep that strayed or searched for the one that was lost. Instead you ruled them harshly and were

Jer  
23:1  
Zec  
11:14-17

• **34.1** The Lord Yahweh gathers his scattered flock.

There are two parts to this long comparison in which Yahweh promises to become the shepherd of his flock:

- a revolution,
- a judgment.

*Speak on my behalf against the shepherds of Israel.* Here Yahweh announces a radical change in the social life of Israel: he will replace all the shepherds. The expression “shepherd” applies to all civil authorities, and thus includes the king, the magistrates and the judges. It does

not include the priests and the prophets. This is contrary to modern usage, since for us the word “pastor” (shepherd) refers only to the spiritual leaders of a community.

*Should not the shepherds feed the flock?* (v. 2) The flock does not belong to the shepherds. Yahweh condemns the leaders of his people who find it normal to enjoy power and wealth without first seeing themselves as the servants of the people. We can easily imagine the misery of the Jewish people in the days about which Ezekiel writes, immediately after the catastrophe in Jerusalem:

Num 27:17  
Mt 9:36  
their oppressors. <sup>5</sup>They have scattered for want of a shepherd and became prey of wild animals. <sup>6</sup>My sheep wander over the mountains and high hills; and when they are scattered throughout the land, no one bothers about them or looks for them.

<sup>1P</sup> 7 Hear then shepherds, what Yahweh says: <sup>8</sup>As I live – word of Yahweh, – because my sheep have been the prey of wild animals and become their food for want of shepherds, because the shepherds have not cared for my sheep, because you shepherds have not bothered about them but fed yourselves and not the flocks, because of that, <sup>9</sup>hear the word of Yahweh. <sup>10</sup>This is what Yahweh says: I will ask an account of the shepherds and reclaim my sheep from them. No longer shall they tend my flock; nor shall there be shepherds who feed themselves. I shall save the flock from their mouths and no longer shall it be food for them.

Mic 2:12  
<sup>11</sup>Indeed Yahweh says this: I myself will care for my sheep and watch over them. <sup>12</sup>As the shepherd looks after his flock when he finds them scattered, so will I watch over my sheep and gather

them from all the places where they were scattered in a time of cloud and fog. <sup>13</sup>I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from other countries. I will lead them to their own land and pasture them on the mountains of Israel in all the valleys and inhabited regions of the land. <sup>14</sup>I will take them to good pastures on the high mountains of Israel. They will rest where the grazing is good and feed in lush pastures on the heights of Israel. <sup>15</sup>I myself will tend my sheep and let them rest, word of Yahweh. <sup>16</sup>I will search for the lost and lead back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the fat and strong will be eliminated. I will shepherd my flock with justice.

<sup>17</sup>As for you, my flock – says Yahweh – I will distinguish between one sheep and another, and set apart rams and goats. <sup>18</sup>Was it not enough for you to feed on good pasture? Why did you trample under your feet the rest of the pasture? Were you not satisfied with drinking clear water? Why did you muddy the rest with your feet? <sup>19</sup>Must my sheep feed on what you have

– *weak, hungry, sick sheep*;  
– *stray sheep*: wandering without home or work, isolated, alienated by the lies of their rulers;  
– *they became the prey of all the nations*, they were taken into exile, or left their homeland looking for work.

*I myself will care for my sheep.* Now Yahweh has rejected Israel's leaders who have disappeared in the catastrophe and promises to become Israel's pastor. Yahweh will be the good shepherd and he names the responsibilities of a shepherd: to gather, protect, and feed everyone, and to hold back the very powerful.

The *time of cloud and fog* (v. 12), when God seemed distant and Israel was overwhelmed and without hope, are over. Now Yahweh will *gather his people from among the nations*. The Kingdom that God has prepared for this discouraged crowd will surpass all they could ever hope for. Not only will they enjoy material prosperity, but will also live in peace and rest with God. *I myself, will let them rest* (v. 15).

*As for you, I will distinguish between one sheep and another.* With these words the second part begins: God's judgment.

On one hand, the fat sheep: those that took advantage of the unjust social order. They were not satisfied with having a standard of living higher than the rest, but *they trampled the rest of the pasture*: they grew nothing on the best land in the country; they deposited abroad the money which would have stimulated economic development; they prevented the access of many to education and culture.

*Shoulder and horns you butt the weak sheep until you have driven them away* (v. 21). They took advantage of their power and because justice was at their disposal, they imposed "their" order by force.

*Over them I will put one shepherd, my servant David who will tend them, pasture them.* This shepherd is Christ, the new David. As we said with regard to Isaiah 11:1, the Messiah is not announced as another descendant of David, nor is he to resume the past. He will be another David and with him will begin something completely new.

We can easily see here some of the images and ideas on which Jesus reflected and which he used in his parables: the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1); the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:4) and the Final Judgment (Mt 25:31).

Lk 15:4-7  
19:10

Mt 25:32

trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

<sup>20</sup>That is why thus says the Lord Yahweh to the shepherds: Here I am. I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean. <sup>21</sup>Because with flank, shoulder and horns you butt the weak sheep until you have driven them away, <sup>22</sup>I will rescue my flock and no longer will they be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another.

<sup>23</sup>Over them I will put one shepherd, my servant David who will tend them, pasture them and be a true shepherd for them. <sup>24</sup>I, Yahweh, will be their God and my servant David a ruler among them. I, Yahweh, have this to say: <sup>25</sup>I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts, so that they may live safely in the desert and sleep in forests. <sup>26</sup>I will settle them on my holy mountain, sending them rain in season, showers of rich blessings. <sup>27</sup>The trees of the field will give their fruit and the soil its produce, while they are safe in their land, and they will know that I am Yahweh.

I will break the bars of their yoke and free them from the power of those who enslave them. <sup>28</sup>No longer will they be plundered by the nations or ravaged by wild beasts. They will live in security without anyone causing them to fear. <sup>29</sup>I will give them splendid crops; people will not die of hunger and no longer will you be scorned by other nations. <sup>30</sup>This people will know that I, Yahweh, am their God and that I am with them and that they, Israel, are my people – word of Yahweh. <sup>31</sup>You are my sheep, the flock of my pasture, and I am your God, declares Yahweh.”

#### Against Edom

<sup>25:12</sup> <sup>Jer</sup> <sup>49:7</sup> **35** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, set your face against the mountain of Seir, prophesy against it <sup>3</sup>and say: Thus says Yahweh: I come to strike

you, mountain of Seir! I have stretched out my hand against you and I will make of you a mournful solitude. <sup>4</sup>I will reduce your towns to ruins, make you a desolation and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>5</sup>I know your long-standing enmity and how you handed over the people of Israel to the sword in the day of their disaster, when their sins reached an end. <sup>6</sup>Because of that, as I live, word of Yahweh, I intend to give you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you. <sup>7</sup>I will make of the mountain of Seir a mournful solitude and destroy all who come and go there. <sup>8</sup>The mountains will be filled with the slain; the victims of the sword will fall on your hills, in your valleys and ravines. <sup>9</sup>I will reduce you to a desolate ruins forever; no longer will your towns be inhabited and then you will know that I am Yahweh.

<sup>10</sup>You said: ‘These two nations and these two countries will be mine, we shall take possession of them,’ and you disregarded Yahweh who was there. <sup>11</sup>Because of that, as I live, declares Yahweh, I will deal with you according to your hatred towards them and I will make myself known among them when I judge you. <sup>12</sup>Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have heard all the insults uttered against the mountains of Israel, such as: ‘They are devastated and have been given over to us to be devoured.’ <sup>13</sup>For I heard when you boasted against me without restraint.

<sup>14</sup>Thus says Yahweh: When all the earth rejoices, you will be desolate. <sup>15</sup>Since you rejoiced when the inheritance of Israel became a deserted ruins, that is how I will deal with you. You will become a desert, Mount Seir, and Edom likewise, and people will know that I am Yahweh.”

#### Israel shall be gathered together

**36** <sup>1</sup>“Son of man, prophesy regarding the mountains of Israel; say to them: Mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh: <sup>2</sup>Your enemies have said: ‘Aha! these eternal heights have become our possession.’ <sup>35:10</sup> <sup>3</sup>People have envied you and ravaged you on all sides; other nations have taken possession of you, so that you became the subject of talk and gossip. Because of that, <sup>4</sup>mountains of Israel, hear this word of Yahweh. Yahweh says to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys, to the deserted ruins and the empty towns which have become the plunder and target of mockery for other nations around: <sup>5</sup>Truly in the fire of my jealousy I will speak against the other nations, namely all of Edom, who with glee and malice in their hearts, have taken possession of my land and plundered its pastures.

• **35.1** The capture of Jerusalem was not the end of Jewish humiliation. After the conquerors of 587 withdrew, the small country of

Edom took advantage of the situation to invade Palestine in an attempt to take over the Jewish and Israelite territories: *the two nations*.

<sup>6</sup>Now you shall prophesy concerning Israel. You shall say to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys: This is the word of Yahweh who speaks in the fury of his jealousy! Because you have suffered the scorn of the nations, <sup>7</sup>Yahweh says: I swear with uplifted hand, the nations surrounding you will suffer scorn. <sup>8</sup>But you, mountains of Israel, you shall bring forth branches and produce fruit for my people Israel, for soon they will return.

<sup>9</sup>Indeed, I have turned in your direction and I have bent towards you; you will be cultivated and sown with seed. <sup>10</sup>I will increase your population in all Israel; the towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. <sup>11</sup>Both people and animals will increase; they will be fruitful and multiply. I will build up their numbers as in the past and they will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>12</sup>Men and women of Israel will walk on you again. They will take possession of you; you will be their heritage again, and never again will you let their children perish.”

<sup>13</sup>Yahweh speaks, “People say that you devour men and that you rob your people of children. <sup>14</sup>But never again shall you devour men or rob your people of children – word of Yahweh. <sup>15</sup>You shall no longer hear the mockery of the nations or suffer the insults of other lands – word of Yahweh.”

<sup>16</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>17</sup>“Son of man, when Israel occupied her own land she defiled it by her way of life and her actions. To me her conduct was like the uncleanness of a woman in her period.

<sup>18</sup>I poured out my fury on them because of the blood they shed in the land and because they defiled it with their filthy idols. <sup>19</sup>Then I scattered them among the nations and dispersed them in other lands. I judged them according to their conduct and their actions.

<sup>20</sup>But when they were brought to other nations, my holy Name was profaned because others said of them: ‘The people of Yahweh had to be exiled from his land!’

<sup>21</sup>Then I was concerned for my holy Name, profaned by Israel among the nations where she had been dispersed. Now you shall say to the people of Israel:

### A new heart

• <sup>22</sup>It is not for your sake that I am about to act, but because of my holy Name that you have profaned in the places where you have gone. <sup>23</sup>I will make known the holiness of my great Name, profaned among the nations because of you, and they will know that I am Yahweh when I show them my holiness among you.

<sup>24</sup>For I will gather you from all the nations and bring you back to your own land. <sup>25</sup>Then I shall pour pure water over you and you shall be made clean – cleansed from the defilement of all your idols. <sup>26</sup>I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I shall remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>I shall put my spirit within you and move you to follow my decrees and keep my laws. <sup>28</sup>You will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you shall be my people and I will be your God.

<sup>29</sup>I will free you from all your uncleanness. I shall summon the wheat and make it plentiful and so keep famine away from you. <sup>30</sup>I shall see that the fruits of the earth and the produce of the fields are plentiful and that you no longer suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Dt  
9:5-6

47:1  
Num  
19:19

11:19  
Jer  
31:31  
2Cor  
3:3  
1Thes  
4:8

Ex  
6:7  
Lev  
26:12  
Jer  
11:4

1K  
17:1  
Jer  
14  
Hos  
2:11

• **36.22** *I shall give you a new heart.* Many think it impossible to change the human heart. Because some have no hope of changing human beings, they accept people as they are, preferring to overlook mediocrity and sinfulness. Others become bitter about everything and everyone.

This new heart is precisely what God offers in this text, quite similar to Jeremiah 31:31 and Ezekiel 11:19. The experience of the Jewish people showed that human beings are weak and unable to follow the commandments. Yet if an individual knows God personally, to the point of sharing intimately in God’s life, is there no possibility of change and renewal?

This is the meaning of the word *conversion*. To be converted means to come back to God after having been away from him. First, there is

a change that takes place in the *heart*, that is to say, in the innermost part of the human being. Then, there is a change of mentality and attitude. In fact, it is God who converts people, by loving them, attracting them and giving them his Spirit, which transforms them into new beings. I will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. This will be the New Covenant.

Here may be seen the difference between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Ezekiel has been given a pastoral task from God: he had to form over long years those who were to rebuild Israel. Ezekiel is preparing the near future. *I will bring you back to your land*: how often Ezekiel will repeat this. He is in the line of Moses; after him Ezekiel is one who had to lead the people of Israel. His duties as a pastor prevented him from seeing that a *new heart* would mean a radical change in the

<sup>31</sup> Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked actions and loathe yourselves for the sins you committed and for your detestable practices. <sup>32</sup> I want you to know that it is not for your sake I am doing this, word of Yahweh. Be ashamed and humbled because of your conduct, Israel! <sup>33</sup> This is what Yahweh says: The day I cleanse you from all your sins, I shall repopulate the cities and the ruins will be rebuilt. <sup>34</sup> The devastated land will be cultivated wherever passersby saw it desolate. <sup>35</sup> Everyone will say, 'This devastated land is now a garden of Eden and its cities once in ruins and leveled to the ground have been rebuilt and populated.' <sup>36</sup> And the nations that remain around you will know that I, Yahweh, have rebuilt the ruined city and replanted what was desolate. I, Yahweh, have spoken and I will do it.

<sup>37</sup> Thus says Yahweh: Once again I shall listen to the plea of Israel and favor them. I shall make their people as numerous as sheep, <sup>38</sup> as numerous as the flock they bring to Jerusalem's Temple at the time of her holy days. In the same way the ruined cities will be filled with flocks of people and they will know that I am Yahweh."

#### "Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh"

<sup>Is 40:1</sup> **37** <sup>54:7</sup> <sup>1</sup> The hand of Yahweh was upon me. He brought me out and led me in spirit to the middle of the valley which was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He made me walk to and fro among them and I could see there was a great number of them on the ground all along the valley and that they were very dry.

<sup>3</sup> Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live again?" I said, "Lord Yahweh, only you know that."

history of Israel: even if the Jews reentered their country, the time of their kingdom had passed and their national hopes would no longer matter. Jeremiah, on the contrary, who did not bear the same responsibility, lived the tragedy to the full, and in such moments could see that the history of Israel – God's people on God's earth – was nearing its end: the Gospel had to come.

• **37.1** *Can these bones live again?* This page announces the restoration of Israel which had been dead in every sense of the word.

*Our bones are dry.* The dry and scattered bones represent the Israelites, exiled and dispersed. For many years, the people of Israel believed that God would manifest his glory in the world by granting them prosperity and by working miraculous liberations on their behalf. These were nothing but human dreams. God's plan is to teach his people through centuries of strug-

<sup>4</sup> He then said, "Speak on my behalf concerning these bones; say to them:

Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh! <sup>5</sup> Yahweh says: I am going to put spirit in you and make you live. <sup>6</sup> I shall put sinews on you and make flesh grow on you; I shall cover you with skin and give you my spirit, that you may live. And you will know that I am Yahweh."

<sup>7</sup> I prophesied as I had been commanded and then there was a noise and commotion; the bones joined together. <sup>8</sup> I looked and saw that they had sinews, that flesh was growing on them and that he was covering them with skin. But there was no spirit in them.

<sup>9</sup> So Yahweh said to me, "Speak on my behalf and call on the Spirit, son of man! Say to the Spirit: This is the word of Yahweh: Spirit, come from the four winds. Breathe into these dead bones and let them live!"

<sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he had commanded me and breath entered them; they came alive, standing on their feet – a great, immense army!

<sup>11</sup> He then said to me, "Son of man, these bones are all Israel. They keep saying: 'Our bones are dry, hope has gone, it is the end of us.' <sup>12</sup> So prophesy! Say to them: This is what Yahweh says: I am going to open your tombs, I shall bring you out of your tombs, my people, and lead you back to the land

gling, mistakes and suffering. Nations, like people, cannot reach true maturity without passing through the death of their pride and their ambitions. This is precisely when God sends the word which makes the dead rise again.

*I shall cover you with skin and give you my Spirit, that you may live* (v. 6). First, God sent his prophets. Their words were not listened to during their lifetime, but they fell to the ground as seed. After a few years, some people would emerge to restore the nation with Ezra and Nehemiah.

When we speak about the resurrection, we always think about the resurrection of people. John spoke about it in 5:25-28 showing how Christ calls dead people to rise from sin or from death. History shows that God raises his people not once, but several times, and even daily as can be seen in the present history of our Church.

Gen  
2:7  
Ps  
104:  
30  
Rom  
8:11  
Rev  
11:11

of Israel. <sup>13</sup>You will know that I am Yahweh, O my people! when I open your graves and bring you out of your graves, <sup>14</sup>when I put my spirit in you and you live. I shall settle you in your land and you will know that I, Yahweh, have done what I said I would do.”

• <sup>15</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, “Son of man, take a piece of wood and write on it: ‘Judah and the Israelites loyal to him.’ <sup>16</sup>Take another piece of wood and write: ‘Joseph, the branch of Ephraim and the Israelites loyal to him.’ <sup>17</sup>Join one to the other to make a single piece of wood in your hand. <sup>18</sup>When your people say to you, ‘Won’t you tell us what this means?’ <sup>19</sup>say to them: Yahweh says this: I am going to take the branch of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel loyal to him and put Judah’s branch with them, and they will be as one in my hand. <sup>20</sup>And you will hold in your hand in their sight the pieces of wood on which you wrote.

<sup>21</sup>You will then say to them: Thus says Yahweh: I am about to withdraw the Israelites from where they were among the nations. I shall gather them from all around and bring them back to their land. <sup>22</sup>I shall make them into one people on the mountains of Israel and one king is to be king of them all. They will no longer form two nations or be two separate kingdoms, <sup>23</sup>nor will they defile themselves again with their idols, their detestable practices and their sins. I shall free them from the guilt of their treachery; I shall cleanse them and they will be for me a people and I shall be God for them. <sup>24</sup>My servant David will reign over them, one shepherd for all. They will live according to my laws and follow and practice my decrees. <sup>25</sup>They will settle in the land I gave to my servant Jacob where their ancestors lived. There they will

live forever, their children and their children’s children. David my servant will be their prince forever.

<sup>26</sup>I shall establish a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I shall settle them and they will increase and I shall put my sanctuary in their midst forever. <sup>27</sup>I shall make my home at their side; I shall be their God and they will be my people. <sup>28</sup>Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh who makes Israel holy, having my sanctuary among them forever.”

Heb  
13:20

Rev  
21:3

### Gog and Magog

**38** • <sup>1</sup>The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, <sup>2</sup>“Son of man, turn towards Gog of the country of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal and prophesy against him. <sup>3</sup>Say to him: Hear the word of Yahweh: I come to strike you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. <sup>4</sup>I will turn you round, fix hooks in your jaws and bring you out, you and your entire army, horses and riders all perfectly equipped, a great army, all with shields and bucklers and brandishing swords. <sup>5</sup>Persia, Cush and Put are with them, all with buckler and helmet. <sup>6</sup>Gomer and all his troops, and Bethtogarmah from the far north with his battalions, a vast throng, are with you.

<sup>7</sup>Get ready, be prepared, you and all your troops massed around you, and take command of them. <sup>8</sup>After many days you will be given a mission. In the years ahead you will invade a land recovered from war where the people are gathered from among many nations on the mountains of Israel which had for long been barren. Its people were brought from among the nations and now live in safety, all of them. <sup>9</sup>Then you will go up like a storm, like a cloud covering the earth, you and all your troops and the many nations with you.

<sup>10</sup>Thus says Yahweh: On that day

• 15. The Jewish nation’s “original sin” was its division since Solomon’s death.

In the restored Israel the division would be removed and healed: there would be *one people and one shepherd* (see Jn 10:16).

Even after the exiles came back from Babylon, Israel understood that she had to gather her children who had emigrated all over the world. Jesus, likewise, intended to gather all the scattered children of God (Jn 11:52), since he did not come for the Jews alone, but for all those who do not belong to the flock also (Jn 10).

If we reflect on this extensive mission of Jesus’ disciples, it becomes evident that the word “assemble” does not mean to gather together all the nations into one, or impose on them the same institutions. For them it is a matter of forming one living body where all that is human and the uniqueness of each one may flourish. Such a

unity is a gift of God: to have reached it would mean that we have arrived at the end of history.

Meanwhile, to truly become the New People of God, the Church must be one even in its visible structure. To become divided is to revert to the sin of Jeroboam.

• **38.1** Chapters 38 and 39 predict an invasion of nations united against the kingdom of Israel, after it is restored. Those countries are to the north, near the Black Sea. A miraculous victory of Yahweh is predicted for that moment.

If we omit the end of chapter 39 (vv. 17-29), it is almost certain that these pages were not written by Ezekiel, nor do they have anything to do with his mission but were inserted here at the time of the Maccabees. As the so-called “prophecies of Daniel,” they belong to apocalyptic literature which delighted the Jews during the

thoughts will come to your mind and you will plan an evil scheme <sup>11</sup>saying: 'I will go up against unprotected towns, against peaceful people living in safety, all of them living without walls, bars or gates. <sup>12</sup>I will plunder and loot; I will attack the land that is inhabited again. I will go against this people gathered from among the nations, who live by trading and are increasing their cattle at the center of the world.'

<sup>13</sup>People of Sheba and Dedan and all the merchants of Tarshish and its villages will ask you: 'Have you come to plunder? Is it to loot that you have assembled such an army?' And they will come with silver and gold, to take away the livestock and to buy your enormous booty.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore prophesy, son of man and say to Gog on my behalf: On that day when my people Israel are living in security you will come from the far north, <sup>15</sup>you and the throngs with you, all on horses, with many troops – a vast army. <sup>16</sup>You will come against my people Israel like a cloud about to cover the earth. It will be in the far-off days that you shall come against my people, and I shall let you do so, that the nations may know me, for I shall manifest my holiness through you, O Gog!

Rev  
11:13

<sup>17</sup>Thus says Yahweh: You are the one about whom I spoke in former times through my servants, the prophets of Israel, saying that I would bring you against them in far-off days. <sup>18</sup>On that day when Gog will come to the land of Israel – word of Yahweh – my fury will be aroused. <sup>19</sup>In the jealousy and heat of my anger I declare: On that day there will be a great earthquake in Israel. <sup>20</sup>The fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the creatures that creep on the ground and every human being on the earth will tremble before me.

Mountains will fall, cliffs crumble and walls collapse. <sup>21</sup>I will summon the sword against

Gog on all my mountains – word of Yahweh. Each one's sword will turn against his brother. <sup>22</sup>I will punish Gog with plague and bloodshed. I will send torrential rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his battalions and on the many nations with him. <sup>23</sup>I will manifest myself as the Mighty and Holy One in the sight of these many people, and they will know that I am Yahweh.

**39** <sup>1</sup>Son of man, prophesy against Gog! Say to him: Thus says Yahweh: I come against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. <sup>2</sup>When I have led, directed and brought you from the far north to the mountains of Israel, <sup>3</sup>I shall break the bow in your left hand and snatch the arrows from your right hand. <sup>4</sup>You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you, your battalions and the nations with you. And I shall give you over to all the birds of prey and wild beasts <sup>5</sup>when you have fallen in the open countryside, for I have spoken, word of Yahweh. <sup>6</sup>I shall send fire to the land of Magog and to those living peacefully in the islands and they will know that I am Yahweh. <sup>7</sup>I will manifest my holy Name among my people Israel, and never again allow my holy Name to be profaned, and the nations will know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

<sup>8</sup>All this will come about and take place – word of Yahweh. This is the day I foretold. <sup>9</sup>After that citizens of the towns of Israel will make a fire, using your weapons as fuel: small and large bucklers, bows and arrows, clubs and javelins. For seven years they will be used as fuel; <sup>10</sup>there will be no need to bring wood from the country or to gather it in the forests since they will have your weapons to burn. They will plunder their plunderers and loot those who looted them – word of Yahweh.

<sup>11</sup>On that day I shall give Gog a well-known burial place in Israel, the valley of the

two centuries before Christ and for a hundred years after him (see the introduction to Daniel).

This veiled description of the Syrian invasions in the time of the Maccabees is attributed to Ezekiel, when, in fact, a contemporary of those wars is the author. He expressed his conviction that soon God would crush the Syrian persecutors.

In apocalyptic books, it was customary to use complicated images, to speak emphatically and to announce spectacular divine interventions. This complicated style is always heartening to people with little education who want to see in it some true and ancient prophecy, applicable to our time. There will always be details which, if taken literally, could apply to planes, tanks, chemical warfare.... Even with little biblical knowledge, one can easily find the confirmation of one's own dreams.

The apocalyptic pages of the Bible tell us that the history of the world will end with the clear division between those who accept God's offer and those who reject it. The kingdom of God will not be the world we are building, although we must build it to prepare for the new and definitive world which God will bring about in his own way. To wait for God to do everything however, can be illusory and deceptive. Some believers adopt a pessimistic attitude: they think that evil is stronger than good and that there is nothing to be done other than to wait for God to solve everything. Others are eager for "revelations" and predict "punishment and catastrophes." Others see themselves and their sects as the reduced group of the saved, and live withdrawn from others, that is, they turn their backs on real life.

Abarim, on the east of the sea, the valley where the traveler has to stop. There they will bury Gog and his hordes and they will call it the Valley of the Multitude of Gog. <sup>12</sup>It will take seven months to bury the dead and cleanse the country. <sup>13</sup>All the population will work at burying the dead and this will be their honor on the day I am glorified, word of Yahweh. <sup>14</sup>Men will work on a regular basis going around the country to bury those lying on the ground and so cleanse the land. For seven months they will go searching. <sup>15</sup>If, as they go through the land, they come across human remains, they will make a pile of stones beside them until the grave diggers bury them in the Valley of the Multitude of Gog <sup>16</sup>(the name of the town is Multitude). In that way the land will be cleansed.

<sup>Rev 19:17-18</sup> <sup>17</sup>Son of man, Yahweh says this: Say to every kind of bird and wild beast: Assemble and come together from all parts to the sacrifice I am preparing for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel at which you will eat flesh and drink blood, <sup>18</sup>the flesh of heroes and the blood of the world's princes. They are all rams, lambs, goats, bullocks, all fattened animals from Bashan. <sup>19</sup>You will eat all the fat you want and drink blood until you are drunk at the sacrifice I am preparing for you. <sup>20</sup>You will have your fill of horses, riders,

heroes and warriors of all kinds – word of Yahweh. <sup>21</sup>I will show my glory among all the nations and they will know my judgment and the punishment I shall inflict on them.

<sup>22</sup>Then Israel will know from that day onward that I am Yahweh, their God. <sup>23</sup>And the nations will know that Israel was exiled because they were unfaithful to me, and this was why I hid my face from them; I handed them over to their enemies and they perished by the sword. <sup>24</sup>I dealt with them as their defilement and sins deserved, and I hid my face from them.

<sup>25</sup>That is why thus says Yahweh: Now, moved by my compassion for Israel, I am going to bring back the captives of Jacob and I will give glory to my holy name. <sup>26</sup>They will forget their shame and the treachery they committed towards me, when they live safely in their own land with no one to disturb them. <sup>27</sup>When I gather them from among the nations and take them from the land of their enemies, I will show my holiness through them to many nations. <sup>28</sup>They will know that I am Yahweh their God when, after their exile among the nations, I bring them together in their own land and leave no one behind. <sup>29</sup>Never again shall I hide my face from them because I shall pour out my Spirit on Israel – word of Yahweh.”

## THE FUTURE TEMPLE

**40** • <sup>1</sup>In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, fourteen years after Jerusalem had been taken, the hand of Yahweh was upon me. <sup>2</sup>In a divine vision he took me away to the land of Israel and put me down on a very high mountain, on the south of which there seemed to be built a city. <sup>3</sup>He took me to it, and there I saw a man who seemed to be made of bronze. He had a flax cord and a measuring rod in his hand and was standing in the gateway. <sup>4</sup>The man said to me, “Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and pay attention to everything I show you, since they brought you here for me to show it to you. Tell the people of Israel everything that you see.”

<sup>1K 6:7</sup> <sup>5</sup>The House was surrounded with a wall, and the man was holding a measuring rod

that was three meters long (six great cubits). He measured the thickness of this construction – one rod; and its height – one rod. <sup>Rev 21:15</sup>

<sup>6</sup>He went to the east gate, climbed the steps and measured its threshold: one rod deep. <sup>7</sup>Each guardroom one rod by one rod; and the walls between the guardrooms five cubits thick; <sup>8</sup>and the threshold of the gate inward from the porch of the gate: one rod. <sup>9</sup>He measured the porch of the gate: eight cubits; its jambs: two cubits; the porch of the gate was at the inner end. <sup>10</sup>There were three guardrooms on each side of the east gate, all three the same size; the walls between them all the same thickness on each side. <sup>11</sup>He measured the width of the entrance: ten cubits; and the width all down the gateway: thirteen cubits. <sup>12</sup>There was a rail in front of the guardrooms; each rail on either side was

• **40.1** In the 25th year of his exile (or in 571), Ezekiel received the vision which he presents in chapters 40–48, regarding the new land in Palestine. It is an ideal vision, one could say: a utopian description of what the new Israel will be like.

In 43:4 the Glory of Yahweh returns from Babylon to Jerusalem to take over the Temple (see 1:4). A river flows under the Temple and

expands, making the land fruitful: it is a sign of all sorts of blessings emerging from the presence of Yahweh in the midst of his people. There is also a description of the division of the land among the twelve tribes, which restores the former structure of the people of Israel.

By this vision, Ezekiel assures his compatriots that there is hope for them: the people will come to life again and their mission will be essentially

one cubit. And the guardrooms on either side were six cubits square. <sup>13</sup>He measured the width of the gate from the back wall of one guardroom to the back wall of the other; it was twenty-five cubits across from window to window. <sup>14</sup>He measured the entrance: twenty cubits; after the porch of the gate came the outer court. <sup>15</sup>From the entrance end of the gate to the porch opposite: fifty cubits. <sup>16</sup>On each side of the gate there were windows with screens both in the guardrooms and in the spaces between, and there were openings all around inside the porch as well, and palm trees decorating the pillars.

<sup>17</sup>He took me through to the outer court. There were rooms and a paved terrace going all the way around; there were thirty rooms on this terrace. <sup>18</sup>This terrace, which came right up to the sides of the gates and matched their depth, is the Lower Terrace. <sup>19</sup>He measured across the outer court from the lower gate to the outside of the inner court: a hundred cubits.

<sup>20</sup>He measured the length and breadth of the north gate of the outer court. <sup>21</sup>It had three guardrooms on each side; the thickness of the walls between them, and its porch too, all measured the same as those of the first gate: fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits. <sup>22</sup>Its windows, its entrance and its palm-tree decoration all measured the same as those of the east gate. There were seven steps up to it, and its porch was at the inner end. <sup>23</sup>In the inner court there was, opposite the north gate, a gate like the one opposite the east gate. He measured the distance from one gate to the other: a hundred cubits.

<sup>24</sup>He took me to the south and there was a gate to the south gate; he measured its guardrooms, the thickness of its walls and porch; they were of the same dimensions as the others. <sup>25</sup>All around it and its entrance were windows, like the other windows; it measured fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits, <sup>26</sup>and it had seven steps up to it; its entrance was at the inner end and had palm-tree decorations on its pillars, one on each side. <sup>27</sup>The inner court had a southern gate; he measured the distance southward from one gate to the other: a hundred cubits.

<sup>28</sup>He then took me into the inner court by the south gate; he measured the south gate which was the same size as the others. <sup>29</sup>Its guardrooms, the thickness of its walls and entrance all measured the same as the others. <sup>30</sup>Its entrance had windows all around. It measured fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits.

Its entrance, measured in all, all around, was twenty-five cubits by five cubits. <sup>31</sup>The entrance gave on to the outer court. It had palm trees on its pillars, each side, and eight steps leading up to it.

<sup>32</sup>He took me to the east gate and measured it. It was the same size as the others. <sup>33</sup>Its guardrooms, the thickness of its walls, its entrance all measured the same as the others. The gate and its entrance had windows all around. Its area was fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits. <sup>34</sup>Its porch gave on to the outer court. There were palm trees on its pillars on either side, and eight steps leading up to it.

<sup>35</sup>He took me to the north gate and measured it. Its guardrooms, the thickness of its walls and its entrance all measured the same as the others. <sup>36</sup>It had windows all around. Its area was fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits. <sup>37</sup>Its entrance gave on to the outer court. There were palm trees on its pillars on either side, and eight steps leading up to it.

<sup>38</sup>There was a room entered from the entrance of the gates. It was here that they had to wash the holocaust. <sup>39</sup>And on either side of the entrance of the gate there were two tables for slaughtering the burnt offering, the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of repayment. <sup>40</sup>Going northward up to the gate, there were two tables outside and two more tables at the entrance end of the gate. <sup>41</sup>There were four tables on the inside and four tables on the outside of the entrance; in all, eight tables on which the sacrifices were offered. <sup>42</sup>There were also four tables of dressed stone for burnt offerings, a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit high, on which all the things necessary for killing the burnt offering and the sacrifices were put. <sup>43</sup>Rims, a handbreadth broad, went all around the top, and on these tables was put the flesh of the offerings.

<sup>44</sup>He took me into the inner court; there were two lodges in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate, facing south, the other at the side of the south gate, facing north. <sup>45</sup>He told me, "The lodge looking south is for the priests in charge of the Temple, <sup>46</sup>and the lodge looking north is for the priests who serve the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, the only sons of Levi who approach Yahweh to serve him."

<sup>47</sup>He measured the inner court. It was a quadrangle, a hundred cubits by a hundred cubits, with the altar in front of the House.

<sup>48</sup>He took me to the Hall of the House and measured its door pillars – five cubits each

---

a religious one, since the life of the nation will be centered around the Temple. The abundance of details about worship makes these chapters tiring. Let us not forget that a nation cannot rise without commitment to a demanding mission.

For their part, the Jews reorganized their community around the Temple and their priests, with the conviction that perfect worship and the observance of the Law would consequently bring the Kingdom of God (see Ezra and Nehemiah).

side; and the width of the entrance was fourteen cubits with a three-cubit wall each side. <sup>49</sup>The Hall was twenty cubits by twelve cubits. There were ten steps leading up to it, and there were columns by the door pillars, one on each side.

**41** <sup>1</sup>He took me into the Sanctuary and measured its door pillars: six cubits deep on the one side, six cubits deep on the other. <sup>2</sup>The width of the entrance was ten cubits. The walls on each side of the entrance were five cubits on the one side and five cubits on the other. He measured its length: forty cubits; and its width: twenty cubits.

<sup>3</sup>He went in and measured the door pillars at the entrance: two cubits; then the entrance: six cubits; and the walls on each side of the entrance: seven cubits. <sup>4</sup>He measured its length: twenty cubits; and its width measured across the end wall of the Sanctuary: twenty cubits. He then said to me, "This is the most holy place."

<sup>5</sup>He measured the wall of the House: six cubits. The width of the side cells was four cubits, all around the House. <sup>6</sup>The cells were one above the other, thirty of them in three stories. <sup>7</sup>The supports for the surrounding cells were fixed into the House wall, so that the cells were not recessed into the wall of the House. The width of the cells increased, story by story, for they surrounded the House in the stories that went right around it. <sup>8</sup>Then I saw that there was a paved terrace all around the House. The height of this, which formed the base of the side cells, was a full rod of six cubits. <sup>9</sup>The outer wall of the side cells was five cubits thick and the pavement formed a veranda outside the cells of the House. <sup>10</sup>Beyond the rooms was an area twenty cubits wide right around the House. <sup>11</sup>And for access from the side cells onto the courtyard there was one entrance on the north side and one entrance on the south side. The width of the courtyard was five cubits all around.

<sup>12</sup>The building to the west of this surrounding area was seventy cubits by ninety cubits, and the wall of the building was five cubits thick, all around. <sup>13</sup>He measured the length of the House: a hundred cubits. The length of the court plus the building and its walls: a hundred cubits. <sup>14</sup>The breadth of the facade of the House with the quadrangle: a hundred cubits. <sup>15</sup>He measured the length of the building plus the surrounding area at the back, plus the side depth of its door: a hundred cubits.

The inside of the Sanctuary and the entrance of the court, their thresholds, the window screens, the three sets of doors, one at each threshold, <sup>16</sup>were all paneled with wood, from floor to windows, and the windows were

screened with lattice-work. <sup>17</sup>From the door to the inner part of the House, and right around the whole wall of the inner room, outside and inside, <sup>18</sup>were carved cherubs and palm trees, palm trees and cherubs alternating; each cherub had two faces – <sup>19</sup>the face of a man turned toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward the palm tree on the other, all around the House. The cherubs and palm trees were carved <sup>20</sup>from the floor to above the entrance, as also on the wall of the hall. <sup>21</sup>The pillars of the House were square.

In front of the Most Holy Place, <sup>22</sup>there appeared to be a wooden altar, three cubits high and two cubits square. Its corners, base and sides were of wood. He said to me, "This is the table before Yahweh."

<sup>23</sup>There was a double door for the Temple, and a double door for the Sanctuary. <sup>24</sup>These doors had two hinged leaves, two leaves for the one door, two leaves for the other. <sup>25</sup>On them, on the doors of the Sanctuary, were carved cherubs and palm trees like those carved on the walls. A wooden screen outside went across the front of the Hall. <sup>26</sup>There were screened windows with flanking palm trees on the walls of the House, and of the cells at the side of the House.

**42** <sup>1</sup>He took me northward into the court and led me to the rooms facing the outer court, and the building to the north. <sup>2</sup>They were one hundred cubits long on the north side and fifty cubits wide. <sup>3</sup>On the sides facing the entrance of the inner court and the paving of the outer court was a gallery in front of the triple gallery, <sup>4</sup>and in front of the rooms was a walk, ten cubits broad measured inward and a hundred cubits long; their doors looked north. <sup>5</sup>The top-floor rooms were narrow because the galleries took up part of the width, being narrower than those on the ground floor or those on the middle floor of the building. <sup>6</sup>They were in three stories and had no columns such as those in the court had. Hence they were narrower than the ground-floor ones or the middle-floor ones below them. <sup>7</sup>The outer wall parallel to the rooms, facing them and giving on to the outer court, was fifty cubits long, <sup>8</sup>the length of the rooms facing the outer court being fifty cubits, while on the side facing the building it was a hundred cubits. <sup>9</sup>Beneath the rooms there was an entrance from the east, leading in from the outer court.

<sup>10</sup>In the thickness of the wall of the court, on the south side fronting the court and the building, were rooms. <sup>11</sup>A walk ran in front of them, as with the rooms built on the north side; they were of the same length and breadth, and had similar design and doors in and out. <sup>12</sup>They were like the entrances of the

southern rooms; one entrance at the end of each walk, fronting the eastern wall, being the way in. He said to me, <sup>13</sup>“The northern and southern rooms giving on to the court are holy rooms, in which the priests who approach Yahweh will eat the most holy things. In them will be placed the most holy things: the offering, the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of repayment, since this is a holy place. <sup>14</sup>Once the priests have entered they will not go out of the holy place into the outer court without leaving their liturgical vestments there, since these vestments are holy; they will put on other clothes before going near the room assigned to the people.”

<sup>15</sup>When he had finished measuring the inside of the Temple, he took me out to the east gate and measured the whole area of the court. <sup>16</sup>He measured the east side with his measuring rod: a total of five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. <sup>17</sup>He then measured the north side: five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. <sup>18</sup>He then measured the south side: five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. <sup>19</sup>On the west side he measured five hundred cubits. <sup>20</sup>So he measured the entire enclosing wall on all four sides: length five hundred, breadth five hundred. This separated the sacred from the profane.

**43** <sup>1</sup>He took me to the gate, facing east. <sup>2</sup>Then I saw the Glory of the God of Israel approaching from the east with a sound like the sound of the ocean, and the earth shone with his Glory. <sup>3</sup>This vision was like the one I had seen when he came for the destruction of the city, and like the one I had seen on the bank of the river Chebar. Then I threw myself to the ground.

<sup>4</sup>The Glory of Yahweh arrived at the Temple by the east gate. <sup>5</sup>The spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court: the Glory of Yahweh was filling the House. <sup>6</sup>And I heard someone speaking to me from the Temple while the man stood beside me. <sup>7</sup>The voice said, “Son of man, you have seen the place of my throne, where I will place the soles of my feet, and live among the Israelites forever; and the people of Israel, they and their kings, will no longer defile my holy name with their prostitutions and the kings, <sup>8</sup>setting their threshold beside my threshold and their door beside my door, with a common wall shared by them and me. They used to defile my holy name by their filthy practices, and this is why I destroyed them in my anger. <sup>9</sup>From now on if they take their prostitutions and the corpses of their kings away from my presence, I shall live among them forever.

<sup>10</sup>Son of man, describe this House to the people of Israel, to shame them out of their filthy practices. <sup>11</sup>If they are ashamed of their behavior, draw up the plan and show them

the design of the Temple, its exits and entrances, its shape, how all of it is arranged, its rules and its laws. Give them all this in writing so that they can see and take note of its design and the way it is all arranged and carry it out. <sup>12</sup>This is the law of the Temple: all the surrounding area on top of the mountain is a most holy area.

<sup>13</sup>Here are the dimensions of the altar (in big cubits, each of a cubit plus a handbreadth). The base: one cubit high and one cubit wide. The ledge all around it: one span. This is the height of the altar: <sup>14</sup>from the ground level of the base up to the lower base, two cubits high and one cubit wide; from the lesser plinth to the greater base, four cubits high and one cubit wide. <sup>15</sup>The altar hearth: four cubits high, with four horns projecting from the hearth, <sup>16</sup>the hearth being square: twelve cubits by twelve cubits; <sup>17</sup>and the square base: fourteen cubits by fourteen cubits; and the ledge all around: half a cubit; and the base: one cubit all around. The steps are on the east side.”

<sup>18</sup>He said to me, “Son of man, Yahweh says this: As regard the altar, this is how things are to be done when it has been built for the offering of the holocaust and for the pouring of blood. <sup>19</sup>To those levitical priests of the race of Zadok who approach me to serve me – it is Yahweh who speaks – you must give a young bull as sacrifice for sin. <sup>20</sup>You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns and the four corners of the base and the surrounding ledge. <sup>21</sup>In this way you will purify it and make atonement on it. Then take the bull of the sacrifice for sin and burn it in a room of the House apart from the sanctuary. <sup>22</sup>On the second day, you must offer an unblemished he-goat as sacrifice for sin, and the altar is to be purified again as with the bull. <sup>23</sup>When you have finished the purification you must offer a young bull without blemish and an unblemished ram chosen from the flock. <sup>24</sup>You are to present them before Yahweh, and the priests will sprinkle salt on them and offer them as a holocaust to Yahweh. <sup>25</sup>As a sacrifice for sin, every day for seven days you must offer a he-goat, a bull and an unblemished ram chosen from the flock, for a week. <sup>26</sup>In this way the altar will be atoned for and will be purified and inaugurated. <sup>27</sup>At the end of that time, on the eighth day and afterwards, the priest is to offer your burnt offerings and your communion offerings on the altar, and I will look kindly on you – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

#### New regulations for worship

**44** <sup>1</sup>He brought me back to the outer east gate of the sanctuary. It was shut. <sup>2</sup>Yahweh said to me, “This gate will be kept shut. No one will open it or go through it, since

Lev  
2:13  
Mk  
9:49

Yahweh the God of Israel has been through it. And so it must be kept shut. <sup>3</sup>The prince himself, however, may sit there to take his meal in the presence of Yahweh. But he is to enter through the entrance of the gate and leave through the same way.”

<sup>4</sup>He led me through the north gate to the front of the House. I looked; I saw the Glory of Yahweh filling his House, and I threw myself to the ground. <sup>5</sup>Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, pay attention, look carefully and listen closely to everything while I explain to you all the rules of the House of Yahweh and all its laws. Be careful about which men are admitted to the House and which are excluded from the sanctuary. <sup>6</sup>And say to the rebels of the people of Israel, the Lord Yahweh says this: There has been enough of all your filthy practices, House of Israel. <sup>7</sup>You let aliens enter, uncircumcised in heart and body, to frequent my sanctuary and profane my Temple when you gave me for my food the fat and the blood; and you broke my covenant with all your filthy practices <sup>8</sup>when you let them perform your duties in my sanctuary. <sup>9</sup>For, the Lord Yahweh said this: No alien, uncircumcised in heart and body, is to enter my sanctuary, none of those aliens living among the Israelites.

<sup>10</sup>The Levites who abandoned me when Israel strayed far from me, and followed their idols, must bear the weight of their own sin.

<sup>11</sup>They are to be servants in my sanctuary, responsible for guarding the gates and serving the House. They will kill the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and hold themselves at the service of the people. <sup>12</sup>But since they used to be at their service in front of their idols and made Israel sin, (and I have raised my hand against them) it is Yahweh who speaks – they must bear the weight of their sin. <sup>13</sup>They are never to approach me again to perform the priestly office in my presence, or to touch my holy things and my most holy things; they must bear the disgrace of their filthy practices. <sup>14</sup>I shall let them work in the House and serve it and do everything to be done in it.

<sup>15</sup>The levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who did their duty to me in the sanctuary when the Israelites strayed far from me, may still approach me to serve me. They may stand in my presence to offer me the fat and blood – it is Yahweh who speaks. <sup>16</sup>They may enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve me; they may perform my liturgy. <sup>17</sup>Once they enter the gates of the inner court, they are to wear linen garments; they are to wear no wool when they serve inside the gates of the inner court and in the House. <sup>18</sup>They are to wear linen caps on their heads, and linen breeches about their loins; they are not to wear belts that may make them sweat.

<sup>19</sup>When they go out to the people in the outer court, they are to remove the garments in which they have performed the liturgy and leave them in the rooms of the Holy Place, and put on other clothes, so as not to hallow the people with their vestments. <sup>20</sup>They are neither to shave their heads nor to let their hair grow long, but must cut their hair to a reasonable length. <sup>21</sup>No priest is to drink wine on the day he enters the inner court. <sup>22</sup>They are not to marry widows or divorced women, but only virgins of the race of Israel; they may, however, marry widows, if it is the widow of a priest. <sup>23</sup>They are to teach my people what is sacred and what is profane and make them know what is clean and what is unclean. <sup>24</sup>They are to be judges in disputes; they must judge in the spirit of my statutes; they must follow my laws and ordinances at all my feasts and keep my sabbaths holy. <sup>25</sup>They are not to go near a dead person, lest they become unclean, except for father, mother, daughter, son, brother or unmarried sister. <sup>26</sup>After one of them has been purified, seven days must elapse; <sup>27</sup>then on the day when he enters the sanctuary – the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he is to offer his sacrifice for sin – it is Yahweh who speaks. <sup>28</sup>They are to have no inheritance in Israel; I myself will be their inheritance. You are to give them no patrimony in Israel; I myself will be their patrimony. <sup>29</sup>Their food is to be the offering, the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of repayment. Everything in Israel consecrated by anathema shall be for them. <sup>30</sup>The best of all your first fruits of every sort and of all that you offer, is to go to the priests; and the best of your dough you are also to give to the priests, so that a blessing may rest on your houses. <sup>31</sup>Priests are not to eat the flesh of anything that has died a natural death or been savaged, neither the flesh of a bird nor of any other creature.

**45** <sup>1</sup>When you divide the country into portions by lot, you are to allocate a sacred portion of the country to Yahweh: twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty thousand wide. <sup>2</sup>The whole of this land is to be sacred, and of this square area five hundred by five hundred cubits is to be for the sanctuary, with a boundary fifty cubits wide all around. <sup>3</sup>Out of this area you are also to measure a section twenty-five thousand by ten thousand cubits, in which there shall stand the sanctuary; this is a very holy land. <sup>4</sup>This is to be the sacred portion of the country; it shall belong to the priests who officiate in the sanctuary and approach Yahweh to serve him. There they are to have their houses and also a district set apart for the sanctuary. <sup>5</sup>An area twenty-five thousand by ten thousand cubits is to be kept for the Levites serving the House to own, with towns

to live in. <sup>6</sup>You are to give the city possession of an area five thousand by twenty-five thousand cubits, near the land belonging to the sanctuary; this is to be for the whole people of Israel.

<sup>7</sup>The prince is to have a domain on either side of the very holy land and of the land belonging to the city, and adjacent to both of them, stretching westward from the west and eastward from the east, its size equal to one of the portions between the west and the east frontiers of the country. <sup>8</sup>This is to be his possession in Israel. Then my princes will no longer oppress my people; they must leave the rest of the country for the people of Israel, for its tribes.

<sup>9</sup>Yahweh says this: Let this be enough for you, princes of Israel! Give up your violence and plundering, practice justice and integrity, crush my people no more with taxation – it is Yahweh who speaks. <sup>10</sup>Have scales that are fair, a fair ephah, a fair bath. <sup>11</sup>Let the ephah and bath be equal, let the bath hold one tenth of a homer and the ephah one tenth of a homer. <sup>12</sup>Let the measures be based on the homer. The shekel is to be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels are to make one mina.

<sup>13</sup>This is the tax that you are to levy: the sixth of an ephah for every homer of wheat, and the sixth of an ephah for every homer of barley. <sup>14</sup>The dues on oil: one bath of oil out of every ten baths or out of every cor (which is equal to ten baths or one homer, since ten baths equal one homer). <sup>15</sup>You are to levy one sheep on every flock of two hundred from the patrimony of Israel for the oblation, the burnt offering and the communion sacrifice. This is for the atonement – it is Yahweh who speaks. <sup>16</sup>Let all the people of the country be bound to give this offering for the prince of Israel. <sup>17</sup>The prince is to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings for feasts, New Moons and sabbaths, for all the solemn festivals of Israel. He is to provide the sacrifice for sin, oblation, holocaust and communion sacrifices atoning for Israel.

<sup>18</sup>Yahweh says this: On the first day of the first month, you must take a young bull without blemish, to purify the sanctuary. <sup>19</sup>The priest is to take blood from the sacrifice for sin and put it on the doorposts of the House, on the four corners of the altar base and on the doorposts of the gates of the inner court. <sup>20</sup>You must do the same on the seventh of the month, on behalf of anyone who has sinned through inadvertence or ignorance. This is how you are to make atonement for the House. <sup>21</sup>On the fourteenth day of the first month, you must celebrate the feast of the Passover. For seven days everyone is to eat unleavened loaves. <sup>22</sup>On that day, the prince must offer a bull as a sacrifice for sin, for

himself and all the people in the country. <sup>23</sup>For the seven days of the feast, he must offer Yahweh a burnt offering of seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for a week, and one he-goat daily as a sacrifice for sin, <sup>24</sup>with a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, and a hin of oil for every ephah for the oblation.

<sup>25</sup>For the feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he must do the same for seven days, offering the sacrifice for sin, burnt offering, drink offering and the oil.

#### The sabbath and the new moon

**46** <sup>1</sup>Thus speak Yahweh: The east gate of the inner court must be kept shut for the six working days. On the sabbath day it is to be opened, as also on the day of the New Moon; <sup>2</sup>and the prince is to go in through the entrance of the outer gate and stand by the doorposts of the gate. The priest must then offer his holocaust and his communion sacrifice. He must prostrate himself on the threshold of the gate and go out, and the gate is not to be shut again until the evening. <sup>3</sup>The people of the country are to prostrate themselves in the presence of Yahweh at the entrance to the gate on sabbaths and days of the New Moon. <sup>4</sup>On the sabbath day the prince shall offer six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram for the burnt offering. <sup>5</sup>The grain offering is of one ephah for the ram, with such oblation as he pleases for the lambs, and a hin of oil for every ephah. <sup>6</sup>On the day of the New Moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram; <sup>7</sup>he must make a grain offering of one ephah for the bull and one ephah for the ram, and what he pleases for the lambs, and a hin of oil for every ephah.

<sup>8</sup>When the prince goes in, he is to enter by the entrance of the gate, and he must leave by the same way. <sup>9</sup>When the people of the country come into the presence of Yahweh at the solemn festivals to prostrate themselves, those who have come in by the north gate are to go out by the south gate, and those who have come in by the south gate are to go out by the north gate; no one is to turn back to leave through the gate by which he entered but is to go out on the opposite side.

<sup>10</sup>The prince is to come with them, coming in like them and going out like them. <sup>11</sup>On feast days and solemn festivals the oblation must be one ephah for every bull, one ephah for every ram, what he pleases for the lambs, and a hin of oil for every ephah. <sup>12</sup>When the prince offers Yahweh a voluntary communion sacrifice, the east gate is to be opened for him, and he is to offer his holocaust and his communion sacrifice as he does on the sabbath day; when he has gone out, the gate is to

be shut after him. <sup>13</sup>Every day he must offer an unblemished lamb one year old as a holocaust to Yahweh; he must offer this every morning. <sup>14</sup>Every morning, in addition, he is to offer an oblation of one sixth of an ephah and one third of a hin of oil, for mixing with the flour. This is an eternal law. <sup>15</sup>The lamb, the oblation and the oil are to be offered morning after morning forever.

<sup>16</sup>Yahweh says this: If the prince gives his sons part of his inheritance, the gift is to pass to the ownership of his sons, and become their heritage. <sup>17</sup>But if he gives part of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall only belong to the man until the year of liberation and is then to revert to the prince. Only his sons may retain his inheritance. <sup>18</sup>The prince may not take any part of the people's inheritance and thus rob them of their rightful possessions; he must provide the patrimony of his sons out of his own property, so that no member of my people will be robbed of his rightful possessions."

<sup>19</sup>He took me through the entrance at the side of the north gate that leads to the rooms of the Holy Place set apart for the priests. And there before us, to the west, was a space at the end. <sup>20</sup>He said to me, "This is where the priests are to boil the slaughtered animals for the sacrifice for sin and the sacrifice of reparation, and where they are to bake the oblation. They shall not carry them into the outer court lest they hallow the people." <sup>21</sup>He took me into the outer court and led me to each of its four corners; <sup>22</sup>in each corner was a compound; there were four small compounds, forty cubits by thirty, all four being the same size. <sup>23</sup>Each of the four was enclosed by a wall, with hearths all around the bottom of the wall. <sup>24</sup>He said, "These are the kitchens where the Temple servants are to boil the sacrifices offered by the people."

### The river that flows from the Temple

Gen  
2:10  
Ps  
46:5  
Jn  
4:14  
7:38  
Rev  
22:1

**47** • <sup>1</sup>The man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple and I saw water coming out from the threshold of the Temple and flowing eastwards. The Temple faced the east and the water flowed from the south side of the Temple, from the south side of the altar. <sup>2</sup>He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the

outside to the outer gate facing the east and there I saw the stream coming from the south side.

<sup>3</sup>The man had a measuring cord in his hand. As he went towards the east he measured off a thousand cubits and led me across the water which was up to my ankles. <sup>4</sup>He measured off another thousand cubits and made me cross the water which came to my knees. He measured off another thousand cubits and we crossed the water which was up to my waist. <sup>5</sup>When he had again measured a thousand cubits, I could not cross the torrent for it had swollen to a depth which was impossible to cross without swimming.

<sup>6</sup>The man then said to me, "Son of man, did you see?" He led me on further and then brought me back to the bank of the river. <sup>7</sup>There I saw a number of trees on both sides of the river. <sup>8</sup>He said to me, "This water goes to the east, down to the Arabah, and when it flows into the sea of foul-smelling water, the water will become wholesome. <sup>9</sup>Wherever the river flows, swarms of creatures will live in it; fish will be plentiful and the sea water will become fresh. Wherever it flows, life will abound. <sup>10</sup>Fishermen will stand on the banks and spread nets from En Gedi to En Eglaim. Fish of many kinds will be found there, like the fish of the open sea and very plentiful. <sup>11</sup>The swamps and the marshes will not become wholesome; they will be used as saltbeds.

Ex  
15:25  
2K  
2:21

<sup>12</sup>Near the river on both banks there will be all kinds of fruit trees with foliage that will not wither and fruit that will never fail; each month they will bear a fresh crop because the water comes from the Temple. The fruit will be good

• **47.1** Note the vision of the river which makes the land fruitful and starts from the place where God is present. The invisible God manifests himself in the life which he gives to people. The Holy Spirit, imaged in the stream of living water (see Jn 7:38), makes all the seeds of life blossom again in the world.

The stream flows to the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea. (Its waters are so salty that there are no fish. No plants can grow on the shores.) This serves as an image of the healing that God brings to a world, sterile because of its sins. *The fruit will be good to eat and the leaves will be used for healing* (12).

to eat and the leaves will be used for healing.

#### The frontiers of the land

<sup>13</sup>Yahweh says this: Here are the boundaries of the territories to be allotted between the twelve tribes of Israel, with two portions for Joseph. <sup>14</sup>You must share it out equally between you, since I swore to your ancestors that I would give them this land which now falls to you as your inheritance. <sup>15</sup>Here are the frontiers of the land. On the north, from the Great Sea by the way of Hethlon to the Pass of Hamath and on to Zedad, <sup>16</sup>Berothah, Sibramim lying between the territories of Damascus and Hamath – and to Hazerhatticon on the borders of Hauran. <sup>17</sup>The frontier will extend from the sea to Hazar-enon, marching with Damascus and Hamath on the north; this is the northern frontier. <sup>18</sup>On the east the Jordan will serve as frontier between Hauran and Damascus, between Gilead and the land of Israel, down to the Eastern Sea as far as Tamar; this is for the eastern frontier. <sup>19</sup>On the south, from Tamar southward to the waters of Meribah in Kadesh, to the torrent of Egypt and the Great Sea; this is for the southern frontier. <sup>20</sup>On the west the Great Sea will serve as frontier straight up towards Hamath; so much for the western frontier. <sup>21</sup>You are to share out this land among yourselves, between the tribes of Israel. <sup>22</sup>You are to divide it into inheritances for yourselves and the aliens settled among you who have had children among you, since you are to treat them as citizens of Israel. They are to draw lots with you for their inheritance, with the tribes of Israel. <sup>23</sup>You must give the alien his inheritance in the tribe in which he is living – it is Yahweh who speaks.

#### The distribution of the land among the twelve tribes

**48** <sup>1</sup>This is the list of the tribes. In the far north by way of Hethlon to Hamath, to Hazar-enon, with the frontier of Damascus lying to the north, bordering Hamath – each portion extends from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Dan, one portion. <sup>2</sup>Bordering Dan, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Asher. <sup>3</sup>Bordering Asher, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Naphtali. <sup>4</sup>Bordering Naphtali, from the eastern to the western frontier: Manasseh. <sup>5</sup>Bordering Manasseh, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Ephraim. <sup>6</sup>Bordering Ephraim, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Reuben. <sup>7</sup>Bordering Reuben, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Judah. <sup>8</sup>Bordering Judah, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier, is the part you are to set aside, twenty-five

thousand cubits wide, and as long as each of the other portions from the eastern frontier to the western frontier. The sanctuary will be in the center of it.

<sup>9</sup>The part you must set aside for Yahweh is to be twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide. <sup>10</sup>This consecrated portion is to belong to the priests, being on the north side, twenty-five thousand cubits; on the west side ten thousand cubits wide, on the east side ten thousand cubits wide and on the south side twenty-five thousand cubits long, and the sanctuary of Yahweh will be the center of it. <sup>11</sup>This is to belong to the consecrated priests, to those of the sons of Zadok who maintained my liturgy and did not go astray with the straying Israelites, as the Levites went astray. <sup>12</sup>And so their portion is to be taken out of the most holy portion of the land, at the side of the territory of the Levites. <sup>13</sup>The territory of the Levites, like the territory of the priests, is to be twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide – the whole length being twenty-five thousand and the width ten thousand. <sup>14</sup>They must not sell or exchange any part of it, and their part can never be alienated, since it is consecrated to Yahweh. <sup>15</sup>The remainder, an area of five thousand cubits by twenty-five thousand, is to be a non-sacred space for the city, for houses and pastures. The city is to stand in the center. <sup>16</sup>Here are its measurements: on the north side, four thousand five hundred cubits; on the south side, four thousand five hundred cubits; on the east side, four thousand five hundred cubits; on the west side, four thousand five hundred cubits. <sup>17</sup>And the city pastures are to extend two hundred and fifty cubits to the north, two hundred and fifty to the south, two hundred and fifty to the east, two hundred and fifty to the west. <sup>18</sup>What remains of the part set aside, after keeping out the consecrated portion, consists of ten thousand cubits eastward and ten thousand westward, alongside the consecrated portion; this will bring in a revenue for feeding the people working inside the city. <sup>19</sup>These people are to be drawn from all the tribes of Israel and shall till this land. <sup>20</sup>The portion is to have a total area of twenty-five thousand cubits by twenty-five thousand cubits. So the sacred portion has a square shape and is located beside the land belonging to the city. <sup>21</sup>What is left over on either side of the sacred portion and of the land belonging to the city, shall be for the prince, extending along the twenty-five thousand cubits eastward to the eastern frontier, and extending along the twenty-five thousand cubits westward to the western frontier – running parallel with the other portions. This is the portion for the prince with, the consecrated portion and the sanctuary of the Temple at the middle.

<sup>22</sup> Thus, apart from the property of the Levites and property of the city which lie inside the prince's portion, everything between the borders of Judah and the borders of Benjamin is to belong to the prince.

<sup>23</sup> Here are the rest of the tribes: from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Benjamin. <sup>24</sup> Bordering Benjamin, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Simeon. <sup>25</sup> Bordering Simeon, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Issachar. <sup>26</sup> Bordering Issachar, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Zebulun. <sup>27</sup> Bordering Zebulun, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Gad. <sup>28</sup> The southern border of Gad will be formed by the southern frontier running through Tamar to the waters of Meribah in Kadesh, to the Wadi and the great Sea. <sup>29</sup> This is the inheritance of the tribes of Israel

and this is how you will apportion it – it is Yahweh who speaks.

<sup>30</sup> Here are the ways out of the city. On the north side, being four thousand five hundred cubits long, <sup>31</sup> three gates: the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, the gate of Levi; the gates of the city are to be named after the tribes of Israel. <sup>32</sup> On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, the gate of Dan. <sup>33</sup> On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, the gate of Zebulun. <sup>34</sup> On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits long, three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, the gate of Naphtali. <sup>35</sup> The total perimeter will be eighteen thousand cubits, and the name of the city is to be: *Yahweh-is-there*.

Rev  
21:12-  
13

Is  
1:26  
Zec  
8:3