



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** • ¹On 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.

²On the fifth of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiakin) ³the 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 • ⁴I 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.

⁵In the center were what appeared to be four creatures with the same form; ⁶but each had four faces and four wings. ⁷Their legs were straight and their feet were like those of a calf, shining like polished bronze. ⁸Under their wings (on their four sides) they had human hands. The wings of one ⁹touched 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.

¹⁰I 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.

¹¹Their 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. ¹²Wherever the spirit would go, they went without turning as they advanced.

¹³Between these creatures could be seen glowing coals like torches moving

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

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

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

²⁰Wherever 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. ²¹When 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.

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

²³Under the platform their wings were straight, one parallel to the other. (Each creature had two that covered its body). ²⁴I 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).

²⁵I heard a noise above the platform over their heads. ²⁶Above 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 ²⁷from his waist upwards. And from his waist downwards it was as if fire gave radiance around him.

²⁸The 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 ¹He said to me, "Son of man, stand up for I am about to speak to you." ²A spirit came upon me as he spoke and kept me standing and then I heard him speak,

³"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. ⁴Now I am sending you to these defiant and stubborn people to tell them 'this is the Lord Yahweh's word.'

⁵So, whether they listen or not this set of rebels will know there is a prophet among them. ⁶But 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. ⁷Tell them what I say whether they choose to listen or not, for they are rebels. ⁸Listen 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."

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

3 ¹He said to me, "Son of man, eat what is given to you. Eat this scroll and then go; speak to the people of Israel." ²I opened my mouth and he made me eat the scroll and then ³he 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.

⁴He said, "Son of man, go to the Israelites; speak to them with my words. ⁵Indeed 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. ⁶It'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.

⁷But 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. ⁸See I am making your face as unyielding as theirs and your forehead as hard as theirs. ⁹I 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.”

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

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

¹⁴The 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. ¹⁵I 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”

• ¹⁶After seven days the word of Yahweh came to me, ¹⁷“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. ¹⁸When 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. ¹⁹But 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. ²⁰When 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. ²¹But when you have warned the righteous man to keep him from sinning and he has not sinned, he

Is
50:7
Jer
1:18

Jer
6:17

Gen
4:9

18:24
2P
2:21

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-

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

Ezekiel becomes mute

3:15 •²² 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 ²³ 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. ²⁴ Then the spirit came to me and kept me standing; He spoke to me and said; “Go! Shut yourself in your house. ²⁵ You, son of man, will be bound with cords and prevented from going among the people. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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 ¹ Son of man, take a clay tablet; place it in front of you and draw on it the city of Jerusalem. ² 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. ³ 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.

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

⁶ 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. ⁷ Then you shall turn your face and your bared arm towards the siege of Jerusalem and prophesy against it. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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.

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

¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ He then said, “Very well! I allow you cow dung in place of human dung for baking your bread.” ¹⁶ 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, ¹⁷for food and water will be in short supply and they will all waste away because of their sin.

Slaughter and death in Jerusalem

5 ¹Son 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. ²Burn 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. ³Take a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of your clothes; ⁴then throw some of them to burn in the fire. Then speak against all Israel:

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

⁷That 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 – ⁸because of that Yahweh speaks thus: I too have set myself against you. I will pass judgment on you in the sight of the nations. ⁹And because of your abominations I will punish you in a way I have never before done and never will do in the future. ¹⁰That 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.

¹¹Therefore 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!

¹²A 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. ¹³My 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. ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁵You 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

¹⁶When 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. ¹⁷Hunger and wild beasts will destroy your children, while sword and plague will visit you. It is I, Yahweh, who have spoken."

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

³Mountains 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. ⁴Your altars will become desolate, your incense burners smashed; ⁵I will lay your corpses in front of your idols and scatter your bones around your altars.

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

⁹Your 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. ¹⁰And they will know that I, Yahweh, have not spoken in vain in saying I would inflict this disaster on them."

Lev
26:41

¹¹This 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. ¹²He 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. ¹³And 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. ¹⁴I 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 ¹This word of Yahweh came to me, ²“And you, son of man, listen to what the Lord says to Israel:

³Finished! 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. ⁴I 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.

⁵Thus says Yahweh: Disaster! Disaster is coming! ⁶The end is near! It is your turn, you who live in the country. ⁷The time has come, the day is near! No joy, only panic on the mountains! ⁸Now 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. ⁹I 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.

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

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

¹⁴They may sound the trumpet, make preparations, but no one will go to battle, for I am indignant with all. ¹⁵Outside 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. ¹⁶Those who escape will go to the mountains; they will be like doves, each one moaning because of his sin.

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

¹⁹They 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.

²⁰They 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. ²¹I will hand it over as plunder to foreigners and as booty to the most wicked of the land, and they will defile it.

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

²⁴I 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.

²⁵Anguish is coming; they will seek peace but there will be none. ²⁶Disaster 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. ²⁷The 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 ¹On 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.

²I 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. ³As 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.

⁴And the Glory of the God of Israel was there, similar to the vision I had seen in the plain. ⁵He 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. ⁶He 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."

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

I broke through the wall and made an opening. ⁹He said, "Go in and see the wicked abomination they are committing here." ¹⁰I 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.

¹¹Before 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.

¹²He 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." ¹³Then he said, "You will see more of their great abominations."

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

¹⁶And 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, ¹⁷"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. ¹⁸I 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 ¹Then 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."

²And 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.

³Then 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, ⁴and 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

⁵I 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 – ⁶old 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. ⁷Yahweh 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. ⁸While 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

⁹He 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.’ ¹⁰I too will be without pity; I will show no mercy and I will bring their deeds upon their heads.”

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

^{1:22} **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. ²He 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

^{1K}
^{8:10} ³The cherubim stood at the right of the Temple when the man entered and the cloud filled the inner court. ⁴Then 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.

⁵The 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. ⁶Yet 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. ⁷A 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. ⁸At that moment I noticed this human hand under the wings of the cherubim. ⁹I also saw four wheels beside the cherubim, each wheel beside a cherub. The wheels resembled sparkling chrysolite. ¹⁰As for their appearance, the four had the same form; each was formed of two wheels placed crosswise, ¹¹so they could move following any of their four directions, without turning as they went. ¹²In the direction the cherub’s head was turned, the wheels followed without turning. Their rims were full of eyes all around. ¹³In my hearing the wheels were called “whirling.” ¹⁴(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. ¹⁵The cherubim mounted up – they were the same creatures I had seen by the river Chebar).

¹⁶When 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. ¹⁷When they stopped, the wheels stopped; when they rose, the wheels rose with them, for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

¹⁸The Glory of Yahweh went from above the threshold of the house and went to rest on the cherubim. ¹⁹Then 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

²⁰These were the living creatures I had seen under the God of Israel on the banks of the river Chebar. I recognized them as cherubim. ²¹Each had four faces, each had four wings and they had what seemed like human hands under their wings. ²²As 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 ¹Then 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. ²Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who plot wickedness and give evil counsel in the city. ³They say: 'Now there is no need of more houses! The city is the pot and we are the meat!' ⁴Because of that, prophesy against them, prophesy, son of man!"

⁵The 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. ⁶You have multiplied your victims in the city; you have filled the streets with the slain. ⁷That is why Yahweh has spoken. ^{24:3-}
⁵ 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.

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

I will judge you on the borders of Israel and you will know that I am Yahweh. ¹¹The city will not be like a pot to preserve you, nor will you be meat within her. ¹²And 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." ^{Dt 12:30}

¹³It 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?"

¹⁴The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹⁵"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.' ¹⁶Give them therefore this word from ^{Is 8:14} 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."

¹⁷For 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. ¹⁸When 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. ^{36:26-}
²⁸

¹⁹Yes, I will remove their heart of stone

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

²²Then the cherubim lifted up their wings and the wheels went with them. ²³The 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. ²⁴At 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. ²⁵Then I told the exiles all that Yahweh had shown me.

The parable of the exile

12 • ¹This word of Yahweh came to me, ²"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. ³Because 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. ^{Is 6:9}

⁴You 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, ⁵dig a hole in the wall and leave from there. ⁶As 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."

⁷I 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.

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

¹¹Say, ‘I am a sign for you,’ for what I have done will happen to them: They will be deported, exiled. ¹²The 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. ¹³I 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.

¹⁴As for all those who form his court, his guard, his troops, I will scatter them to the winds and pursue them with the sword. ¹⁵They will know I am Yahweh when I scatter them among the nations and disperse them in other countries. ¹⁶I 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.”

¹⁷This word of Yahweh came to me, ¹⁸“Son of man, trembling you will eat your bread and you will drink water in fear and anxiety. ¹⁹Say 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. ²⁰Cities 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

• ²¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²²“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? ²³You 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. ²⁴No longer will there be false visions or misleading divinations in Israel. ²⁵I, 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.”

²⁶The word of Yahweh was given me in these terms, ²⁷“Son of man, this is what Israel says: ‘Ezekiel’s visions refer to the distant future; he prophesies for times far off.’ ²⁸Therefore 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me again, ²“Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, against those who prophesy on their own initiative. Say: Hear the word of Yahweh! ³This is what Yahweh says: Woe to the senseless prophets who follow their own inspiration without having seen anything! ⁴Your prophets, Israel, are like foxes among the ruins! ⁵They 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. ⁶Their 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.

⁷Is it not a false vision you have seen? Have you not uttered lying divinations? You say: *oracle of Yahweh* when I have not spoken. ⁸But this is what Yahweh says: Because of your false and lying revelations I will oppose you, word of Yahweh. ⁹My 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.

¹⁰These 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; ¹¹but say to those who daub it with whitewash: The wall will fall. I will send torrential rain, huge hailstones and stormy winds, and see: ¹²the wall will fall! Will they not say to you: Where is the whitewash with which you daubed it?"

¹³That 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. ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁵I 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, ¹⁶the prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and who had visions of peace when there was no peace?"

¹⁷Yahweh 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. ¹⁸You will say: Woe to those who make magic bands for all wrists and veils for every size of head – those women who ensnare souls! ¹⁹For 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."

²⁰That is why Yahweh speaks, "I hate the wrist bands with which you ensnare souls like birds. ²¹I 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. ²²You 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. ²³Because 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 • ¹Some of the elders of Israel came and sat in front of me. ²Then the word of Yahweh came to me, ³"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? ⁴Speak 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.

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

⁶So 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. ⁷If 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. ⁸I 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.

^{1K} ^{22:23} ⁹If 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.

¹⁰They will be responsible for their sin. The prophet will be as guilty as the one who consulted him, ¹¹that 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.”

¹²The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹³“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. ¹⁴But 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.

¹⁵If 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, ¹⁶if 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.

¹⁷The same would happen if I brought the sword against this land and ordered the sword to go through the land destroying people and animals. ¹⁸If 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. ¹⁹Or if I sent pestilence to the land and poured out my fury against it in bloodshed in order to destroy people and animals, ²⁰if 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.”

²¹Now 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, ²²there 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. ²³They 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 • ¹This word of Yahweh came to me, ²“Son of man, in what way is the wood of the vine superior to that of any other tree in the forest? ³Do they take its wood to make anything? Do they use it to make a peg for hanging a tool?

⁴But 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? ⁵If it was of no use when it was whole, of even less use will it be when burnt in the fire.”

⁶That 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. ⁷I 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. ⁸I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful – word of Yahweh.”

Is
5:1-7
Ps
80

Jn
15:6

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.

The unfaithful bride

16 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“Son of man, make known to Jerusalem its sins. ³You say on my behalf: Your beginning was in Canaan; there you were born. Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴On 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. ⁵There 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.

⁶But I passed by and saw you immersed in your blood. I said to you in the midst of your blood, “Live!” ⁷I made you grow like a plant of the field. ⁸You 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. ⁹Then I bathed you in water, I cleansed you of your blood and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I clothed you with embroidered cloth and put soft leather sandals on your feet. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹I adorned you with jewelry, putting bracelets on your arms, a necklace around your neck ¹²and a ring in your nose. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴Your beauty was perfect and your renown spread through the nations, because of the splendor I had given you – word of Yahweh.

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

(the like has never been and never will be). ¹⁷With 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. ¹⁸With your embroidered garments you covered them and before them you have placed my oil and my incense.

¹⁹My 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. ²⁰You took the sons and daughters you bore for me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was it not enough to prostitute yourself? ²¹Did you have to slaughter my children as an offering to your idols? ²²You revel in your abominations and prostitution without remembering the days of your youth when you were naked and exposed, lying in your blood.

²³Woe, woe to you – declares Yahweh – for all this wickedness! ²⁴You built your mounds and made your high places at every cross-road. ²⁵At the entrance to every road you built your lofty shrines; you defiled your beauty giving yourself to every passerby and always increasing your harlotry. ²⁶You gave yourself to the Egyptians, your large-limbed neighbors and provoked my anger with your increasing promiscuity. ²⁷And 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.

²⁸You played the harlot with the Assyrians as well because you were never satisfied. Yes, you played the harlot with them but you remained insatiable. ²⁹Then you multiplied your prostitutions in a land of merchants, Chaldea, and even with that you were not satisfied. ³⁰Ah! How my anger rose against you, word of Yahweh, as you did all that, the work of an accomplished harlot, ³¹when 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. ³²Adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your husband. ³³All 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.

^{Hos 8:9} titutes receive fees, but you gave gifts to your lovers, bribing them to come to you for your favors. ³⁴In 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.

³⁵Therefore harlot, hear the word of Yahweh! ³⁶This 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, ³⁷I 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. ³⁸I 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. ³⁹I 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. ⁴⁰They shall bring a troop against you to stone you and gash you with swords. ⁴¹Your 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. ⁴²But when I have exhausted my fury against you, my jealousy shall leave you. I will be calm and no longer angry.

⁴³Because 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?

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

^{Gen 18:20}
^{Is 3:9}
^{Jer 23:14}

• ⁵⁹. *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,

⁴⁹The sins of Sodom your sister were pride, over-indulgence in food, complacency and indifference to the poor and needy. ⁵⁰They were arrogant and did detestable things in my sight. For that reason I destroyed them as you have seen. ⁵¹As 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. ⁵²So 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.

⁵³When I restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, I will restore your own fortunes in their midst, ⁵⁴that you may bear your shame and confusion because they now feel they are better than you. ⁵⁵When 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. ⁵⁶Had not Sodom your sister become a byword for you in the time when you felt proud, ⁵⁷before 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. ⁵⁸You shall bear the consequences of your foul behavior and your abominations, word of Yahweh.

That you may be put to shame

• ⁵⁹For thus says Yahweh: "I will treat you as you deserve, you who despised the oath and broke the covenant. ⁶⁰But I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth and make in your favor an eternal covenant. ⁶¹You 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. ⁶²For I will uphold my covenant with you and you will know that I am Yahweh, ⁶³so 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.

^{Jer 31:31-}
³⁴
^{Hos 2:16-}
²⁵

The kings – David's sons

17 ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²"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.

•³The great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and fine plumage of various colors came to Lebanon and removed the top of a cedar. ⁴He broke off the topmost of the twigs and carried it off to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants. ⁵He then took a seed of the land and planted it like a willow in fertile soil near abundant water. ⁶It 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.

⁷But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and abundant plumage and the vine twisted its roots and ⁸its 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.”

⁹Yahweh 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. ¹⁰It 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!”

¹¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹²“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. ¹³Then 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 ¹⁴to keep the kingdom humble and unable to assert itself, and to oblige the king to respect the treaty. ¹⁵But 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? ¹⁶As 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

¹⁷Pharaoh 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. ¹⁸This king has despised the oath and broken the treaty. Because he did all these things after giving his hand, he shall not escape!

¹⁹That is why Yahweh speaks thus: “As I live, I will make him account for the oath he despised and the treaty he broke. ²⁰I 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. ²¹As 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.”

²²Thus says Yahweh: “At the top of the cedar I will take one of its uppermost branches, a tender twig and plant it. ²³On 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. ²⁴And 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“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?’

³As I live, word of Yahweh, this proverb will no longer be quoted in Israel. ⁴All 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

⁵Imagine a man who is righteous and practices what is just and right. ⁶He 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; ⁷he molests no one, pays what he owes, does not steal, gives food to the hungry and clothes to the naked, ⁸demands no interest on a loan and doesn't lend for interest, refrains from injustice, practices true justice, man to man, ⁹follows my decrees and obeys my laws in acting loyally. Because such a man is truly righteous, he will live, word of Yahweh.

¹⁰But perhaps this man has a son who steals and sheds blood, committing crimes which his father never did. ¹¹Perhaps the son eats at the mountain shrines, defiles the wife of his neighbor, ¹²oppresses the poor and needy, steals, neglects to pay his debts, looks to the idols, does detestable things, ¹³demands 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.

¹⁴But imagine that such a man has in turn a son who does not commit the sins he has seen his father do. ¹⁵He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, ¹⁶or oppress anyone or ask for a pledge on a loan; does not steal; and gives food to the hungry and clothing to the naked, ¹⁷turns 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!

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

¹⁹You 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! ²⁰The 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.

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

²⁴But 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.

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

– 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.²⁷ And if the wicked man does what is good and right, after turning from the sins he committed, he will save his life.²⁸ He will live and not die, because he has opened his eyes and turned from the sins he had committed.

²⁹But you, Israel, say: Yahweh's way is not just! Is my position not just? Is it not rather yours that is wrong?³⁰ 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.

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

The last kings of Judah

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

^{2K}²³³¹⁻³⁴ ⁴But the nations heard about him and he was trapped in their pit; and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.⁵ When she saw that her hope had come to nothing, she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.⁶ 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

⁷He destroyed their strongholds and ravaged their towns. The country and its inhabitants were alarmed at the sound of his roar.⁸ But the nations came against him from the regions round about. They spread their net over him and caught him in their pit.⁹ 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.

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

¹²But 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.¹³ It is now planted in the desert, in an arid land of drought.¹⁴ 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 • ¹It 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.² Then the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms,³ "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.

⁴Judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know about the detestable practices of their fathers.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.

⁷I 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.

⁸But 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. ⁹But 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.

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

¹³But 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.

¹⁴But 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. ¹⁵However 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 – ¹⁶because they had despised my laws and had not followed my decrees; they had profaned my sabbaths, and their heart went after their idols. ¹⁷But I had pity on them and did not destroy them; I did not do away with them in the desert.

¹⁸I 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. ¹⁹I am Yahweh, your God. Follow my decrees, observe my laws and practice them. ²⁰Keep my sabbaths holy and let them be a sign between us and you will know that I am Yahweh, your God.

²¹But 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.

²²But 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. ²³However 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, ²⁴but instead had defiled my sabbaths and had looked to the idols of their fathers. ²⁵In the meantime I gave them statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by, ²⁶so 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.

²⁷Therefore, 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? ²⁸I 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. ²⁹Then I said to them, ‘What is this place to which you go?’ That is why they called it *high place*.

³⁰Say to Israel, thus says Yahweh: Since you follow your fathers in lusting after their abominations, ³¹in 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.

³²You have in mind to be like the other nations, worshiping wood and stone, but this shall not happen. ³³As I live, word of Yahweh, I will rule you with an iron hand, an outstretched arm and outpourings of wrath. ³⁴Then 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. ³⁵I will lead you to the wilderness of Syria and ³⁶there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. Just as I judged your fathers in the desert of Egypt, ³⁷so will I judge you, word of Yahweh. I will make you feel my rod and sort you out. ³⁸I 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.

³⁹People 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. ⁴⁰For it is on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel – word of Yahweh – that all Israel, all in the land, shall serve me. ⁴¹There 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.

⁴²You 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. ⁴³And 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. ⁴⁴You 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 ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²"Son of man, look towards the south; direct your words to the south and prophesy against *Forest of the south*. ³Say 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. ⁴Everyone will see that it was I, Yahweh, who kindled it and that it will not be put out.' ⁵This time I said, "Lord Yahweh, they say that I am always talking in parables."

My sword is unsheathed

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

¹¹And you, son of man, groan in the bitterness of a broken heart, groan in their presence. ¹²When 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."

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

¹⁷Cry 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.

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

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

²³The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²⁴"Son of man, mark two roads for the coming of the king of Babylon's sword. The two should leave from the same point. ²⁵At 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. ²⁶The 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.

²⁷The lot falls upon Jerusalem. Then he raises a wacry, 'Set a battering ram at the gates, construct a ramp and erect siegeworks.' ²⁸Those who have sworn allegiance to him in Jerusalem do not dare believe it; but he remembers their guilt and they are captured. ²⁹That 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.

³⁰As for you, dishonored criminal, prince of Israel, the day and moment of your punishment has come. ³¹They 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. ³²I 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.

³³And 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. ³⁴Beware 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. ³⁵People of Ammon, put back the sword in its sheath. In your own place, in the land of your birth you will be judged. ³⁶I 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. ³⁷You 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 ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²"Son of man, will you judge them? Will you judge the city of blood? Charge her with all her detestable practices. ³Say: 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. ⁴That is why I am making you an object of horror for the nations and a laughing-stock for every country. ⁵Those both near and far will mock you, for your name is defiled and you are full of tumult. ⁶The leaders of Israel, each according to his strength, have one intent – to shed blood. ⁷In you, Israel, father and mother are treated with contempt, in you the alien is oppressed, the fatherless and the widow are wronged. ⁸You have despised my holy things and profaned my sabbaths.

⁹In you, men slander to shed blood; in you, they go to eat on the hill sanctuaries and act shamefully. ¹⁰In you are those who defile their father's bed, in you are those who violate women when they are unclean. ¹¹One 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.

¹²In 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.

¹³See, 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? ¹⁴I, Yahweh, have

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

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

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

²⁰As 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. ²¹I will gather you in Jerusalem, stir up the fire of my wrath and smelt you in it. ²²As 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."

²³The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²⁴"Son of man, say to Jerusalem: You are a land without rain, a land without a shower on a day of wrath, ²⁵a 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.

²⁶Your 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

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

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

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

³⁰I 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. ³¹So 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 ¹The word of the Lord Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother. ³They became prostitutes in Egypt, even from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and caressed. ⁴The 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.

• ⁵Oholah was mine when she played the harlot; she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians, ⁶warriors dressed in purple, governors, commanders, desirable young men, riders on horses. ⁷She 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. ⁸But 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. ⁹That is why I gave her over to her lovers, the Assyrians, the object of her lustful desires. ¹⁰They uncovered her nakedness, seized her sons and daughters and slew her. And she became a byword among women because punishment had come to her.

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

Both sisters acted in the same way but she went further than her sister. ¹⁴No sooner had she seen men portrayed on walls, pictures of Chaldeans sketched in vermilion than she lusted after these men, ¹⁵tightly belted, heads top-heavy with turbans, all resembling Babylonian cavalry officers. ¹⁶She sent messengers to Chaldea and ¹⁷they 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.

¹⁸But 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. ¹⁹She multiplied her harlotry recalling her youth when she played the harlot in Egypt. ²⁰She 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. ²¹ She returned to the shameful conduct of her youth with the Egyptians.

²² 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, ²³ 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.

²⁴ They will come against you with chariots, wagons and throngs of people who will assail you from all sides with buckler, shield and helmet. ²⁵ 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; ²⁶ they will strip you of your clothes and ornaments.

²⁷ 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 ²⁸ the Lord Yahweh: I am handing you over to those you hate, to those from whom you turned in disgust. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ Your shameful conduct and your promiscuity have brought this upon you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols.

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

³² 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! ³³ You shall be filled with drunkenness and sorrow; it is a cup of desolation and horror, the cup of Samaria, your sister!

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

³⁵ 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!”

³⁶ Then Yahweh said to me, “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Confront them with their abominations, ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ At that time they defiled my sanctuary and profaned my sabbaths; ³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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. ⁴¹ You seated yourself on a stately couch and beside a table on which you put incense and oil that was mine.

⁴² 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. ⁴³ Then I said about this city, worn out and defiled with her adultery: This is indeed harlotry! ⁴⁴ Men go to her as one goes to a prostitute. So they went to Oholah and Oholibah, the dissolute women!

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

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

⁴⁸ I will put an end to debauchery in this land; all the women will be warned and no longer will they imitate your immorality. ⁴⁹ 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 ¹ The word of Yahweh came to me on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year in these terms,

² “Write today's date, this very day, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem today. ³ 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. ⁴ Put in it all the pieces of meat, the choice pieces, the leg and shoulder and fill it with the best of the bones. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ 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, ⁷ 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. ⁸But I will not cover the blood that was poured on the bare rock. I shall instead kindle my fury and take revenge.

⁹That is why the Lord Yahweh speaks thus: Woe to the city of blood! ¹⁰I 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. ¹¹Leave 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.

¹²But the rust is such that not even the fire removes it. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴I, 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

• ¹⁵The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹⁶“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.

¹⁷Groan 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.”

¹⁸I spoke to the people in the morning and my wife died that evening. The next morning I did as I had been commanded. ¹⁹Then the people said to me: “Explain to us the meaning of your actions.” ²⁰I said to them, “The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms: ²¹‘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, ²²but you will do as I have done: you will not cover your beard or eat the customary food of mourners; ²³you 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. ²⁴Ezekiel will be a sign for you. Do as he did and when this happens you will know that I am Yahweh.’

²⁵Son of man, the day I take their stronghold, the jewel which is the delight of their eyes, for which they and their children long, ²⁶on that day a fugitive will come to give you the news. ²⁷That 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“Turn towards the people of the Ammonites and prophesy against them. ³Say 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, ⁴I 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. ⁵I 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.”

⁶Thus 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, ⁷I 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.”

¹⁵ ⁸Thus says Yahweh, “Because Moab said: ‘Judah is like all the other nations,’ ⁹I will leave Moab unprotected and destroy the towns which are her glory: Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, Kiriathaim. ¹⁰I 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. ¹¹When I will punish Moab, they will know I am Yahweh.”

^{35:1-15} ¹²Word of Yahweh, “Because Edom took revenge on Judah and was guilty in so doing, this is what ¹³Yahweh 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. ¹⁴I 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.

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

Against Tyre

¹⁵ ²⁶ ¹On the first day of the month in the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“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.’ ³Because 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, ⁴they will destroy the ramparts of Tyre and knock down its towers. I will sweep away the dust, making of it a bare rock. ⁵She will be in the midst of the sea, a place to hang out nets – I, Yahweh, have spoken.

⁶Tyre 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.”

⁷This 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. ⁸He 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. ⁹He will set a battering ram to hammer your walls and he will demolish your towers with weapons. ¹⁰His 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.

¹¹Horses’ hooves will trample your streets; he will slay your people with the sword and your powerful pillars will crumble to the ground. ¹²They 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.

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

¹⁵This 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? ¹⁶All 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. ¹⁷They 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 ¹⁸but now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall. The islands of the sea are terrified at your disappearance.’

¹⁹Thus 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, ²⁰then 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. ²¹Then 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“Son of man, intone a lament for Tyre and ³say 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. ⁴Your borders were in the heart of the sea and your builders perfected your beauty; ⁵all your planks were made of the wood of fir trees, your masts from the cedars of Lebanon and ⁶your oars from the oak of Bashan. Your decks were of cedar from the coast of Cyprus inlaid with ivory.

⁷Embroidered 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. ⁸Your oarsmen were citizens of Sidon and Arvad. The most skilled men from Zemer served you as pilots, ⁹veteran 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.

¹⁰Persia, Lud and Put served in your army as men of war. They brought you splendor and hung their bucklers and helmets on your walls. ¹¹The 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.

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

Rev
18:13

¹⁴People of Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your wares.

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

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

1K
10:15

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

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

²⁶Your mariners led you to the high sea and the east wind wrecked you in the sea.

²⁷Your 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.

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

sailors and seamen went ashore.

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

³¹Because of you they shave their heads
and wear sackcloth.

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

³²A funeral song is heard:

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

³³How 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).

³⁴but now you are shattered by the sea,
engulfed in its depths.

Your wares and all your company have
gone down!

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

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

About the king of Tyre

28 ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in
these terms, ²“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?

³You consider yourself wiser than Daniel;
no secret is hidden from you.

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

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

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

⁷I am bringing foreigners against you,
the most feared of all the nations.

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

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

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

You are a man and not a god.

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

¹¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these
terms, ¹²“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.

¹³You 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.

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

¹⁵You were perfect in your ways

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

¹⁶Because 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;

¹⁷your 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.

¹⁸Your 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.

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

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

²²Thus 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. ²³I
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.

²⁴No 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.

²⁵Thus 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. ²⁶They 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 ¹On the tenth day of the twelfth month
of the tenth year the word of Yahweh
came to me in these terms, ²“Son of man,
look towards Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and
prophesy against all Egypt. ³Say: 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.’ ⁴I 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. ⁵I will throw you and the fish of the

Gen
3:24

Jl
4:4

36:24

30-
32
Is 19
Jer
46

Gen
3:5
Is
14:13

Gen
2:11
Ex
28:15

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 ⁶all who live in Egypt will know I am Yahweh.

You have been but a staff of reed for Israel. ⁷When 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. ⁸That is why thus says Yahweh: I am bringing the sword against you and I will destroy both people and animals. ⁹Egypt 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.' ¹⁰Because 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. ¹¹Neither foot of man nor hoof of animal will tread its paths. Egypt will be uninhabited for forty years; ¹²I 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.

¹³Thus says Yahweh: After forty years I will gather the Egyptians from among the nations where they were dispersed; ¹⁴I will bring back Egyptian captives to Pathros, the land of their birth. There they will form a small kingdom, ¹⁵weaker than other kingdoms, no longer strong enough to dominate other nations. ¹⁶I 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."

¹⁷It 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:

¹⁸"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.

¹⁹That 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. ²⁰Because these people have worked for me, I will give Egypt to them as a reward – word of Yahweh.

²¹On 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 ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²Son of man, prophesy and say: This is the word of Yahweh: Moan! Ah! ³the day is near; the day of Yahweh is

coming! It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. ⁴The 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. ⁵Cush, Put and Lydia, all Arabia, Libya and all the people of the covenant will fall by the sword.

⁶This 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. ⁷They will be numbered among desolate lands, and her cities among ruined cities. ⁸They will know I am Yahweh when I set fire to Egypt and when all her allies are crushed.

⁹On 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.

¹⁰Thus says Yahweh: I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by means of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and ¹¹his 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. ¹²I 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.

¹³This 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. ¹⁴I will make a wasteland of Pathros, set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment on Thebes. ¹⁵I will pour out my fury on Pelusium, the fortress of Egypt, and destroy the throngs of Thebes.

¹⁶I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium will writhe in agony. They will enter Thebes through a breach and take her by storm. ¹⁷The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis will fall by the sword and the women will be taken captive. ¹⁸What 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. ¹⁹I will inflict punishment on Egypt and they will know that I am Yahweh."

²⁰On the seventh day of the first month of the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me, ²¹"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. ²²That 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. ²³I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them in other lands. ²⁴I 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. ²⁵Yes, 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. ²⁶I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them in other lands and they will know that I am Yahweh."

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

⁴It 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. ⁵Higher than all the other trees, its boughs increased and its branches grew larger because of the plentiful water. ⁶The 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.

⁷It became majestic in height and in the thickness of its branches for its roots were turned towards plentiful water. ⁸The 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. ⁹I made it beautiful in the abundance of its branches, the envy of the trees in the garden of God in Eden.

¹⁰That is why thus says Yahweh: Because it grew tall and reached the clouds and became proud, ¹¹I will hand it over to the ruler of the nations who will treat it according to its wickedness. I have rejected it. ¹²Foreigners, 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. ¹³The birds of the air alight on its broken boughs and the animals are found among its fallen branches. ¹⁴This 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.

¹⁵Thus 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. ¹⁶The 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. ¹⁷Those from among the nations who lived in its shade, they too went down together to those slain by the sword. ¹⁸O 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 ¹On the first of the twelfth month in the twelfth year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²"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.

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

⁹Many nations will grieve when I spread the news of your fall, even people you do not know; ¹⁰their 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.

¹¹For thus says Yahweh: The sword of the king of Babylon is coming against you. ¹²The 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. ¹³I will destroy all your cattle along the shores of the great river, no longer to be trod by man or beast. ¹⁴And then I will calm their rivers, and their streams will flow like oil, word of Yahweh. ¹⁵When 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.

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

¹⁷On the fifteenth day of the month, in the eleventh year, the word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹⁸“Son of man, wail for the multitudes of Egypt and make them descend to the netherworld. ¹⁹For I will send them to the land of shadows with those who go down to the pit. ²⁰There they will meet all the victims of the sword. Egypt has been taken; she has been dragged away with her multitudes. ²¹The 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.’

²²Assyria is there with her entire army; she is surrounded by the tombs of her victims fallen by the sword. ²³Their 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.

²⁴Elam 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; ²⁵() they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.

²⁶Meschech 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. ²⁷They 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.

²⁸You instead will be among the uncircumcised victims of the sword.

²⁹Edom 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. ³⁰All 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.

³¹When Pharaoh and all his army see them, he will be comforted because of all his multitudes killed by the sword, word of Yahweh. ³²Although 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“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. ³When this man sees the sword approach the land, he shall sound the trumpet to warn the people; ⁴then if anyone hears the trumpet and does not heed the warning he shall be responsible for his own death, ⁵but the man who gave the warning will save his life. ⁶On 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.

⁷For 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.

⁸When 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. ⁹If 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.

¹⁰Son 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?’ ¹¹Say 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?

¹²You, son of man, say to your people: The

18:32
Lk
15:7

• **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?*

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. ¹³When 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. ¹⁴And 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, ¹⁵gives 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. ¹⁶His 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.

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

²¹On 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."

^{24:26-27} ²²Now 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.

²³The word of Yahweh then came to me in these terms, ²⁴"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.'

²⁵But 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! ²⁶You lean on your sword, you do what is detestable, each one dishonors his neighbor's wife and yet you want to possess the land!

²⁷Say 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. ²⁸I 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. ²⁹Then they will know that I am Yahweh when I make their country a lonely waste because of all the detestable things they have done.

³⁰Son 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.'

³¹They 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. ³²For 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.

³³But 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²"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? ³But you feed on milk and are clothed in wool, and you slaughter the fattest sheep. You have not taken care of the flock, ⁴you 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. ⁵They have scattered for want of a shepherd and became prey of wild animals. ⁶My 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.

^{1P} 5:2
⁷Hear then shepherds, what Yahweh says: ⁸As 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, ⁹hear the word of Yahweh. ¹⁰This 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
¹¹Indeed Yahweh says this: I myself will care for my sheep and watch over them. ¹²As 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. ¹³I 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. ¹⁴I 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. ¹⁵I myself will tend my sheep and let them rest, word of Yahweh. ¹⁶I 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.

¹⁷As for you, my flock – says Yahweh – I will distinguish between one sheep and another, and set apart rams and goats. ¹⁸Was 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? ¹⁹Must 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?

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

²³Over them I will put one shepherd, my servant David who will tend them, pasture them and be a true shepherd for them. ²⁴I, Yahweh, will be their God and my servant David a ruler among them. I, Yahweh, have this to say: ²⁵I 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. ²⁶I will settle them on my holy mountain, sending them rain in season, showers of rich blessings. ²⁷The 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. ²⁸No longer will they be plundered by the nations or ravaged by wild beasts. They will live in security without anyone causing them to fear. ²⁹I will give them splendid crops; people will not die of hunger and no longer will you be scorned by other nations. ³⁰This 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. ³¹You are my sheep, the flock of my pasture, and I am your God, declares Yahweh.”

Against Edom

^{25:12} ^{Jer} ^{49:7} **35** • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me, ²“Son of man, set your face against the mountain of Seir, prophesy against it ³and 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. ⁴I will reduce your towns to ruins, make you a desolation and you shall know that I am Yahweh.

⁵I 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. ⁶Because of that, as I live, word of Yahweh, I intend to give you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you. ⁷I will make of the mountain of Seir a mournful solitude and destroy all who come and go there. ⁸The mountains will be filled with the slain; the victims of the sword will fall on your hills, in your valleys and ravines. ⁹I will reduce you to a desolate ruins forever; no longer will your towns be inhabited and then you will know that I am Yahweh.

¹⁰You said: ‘These two nations and these two countries will be mine, we shall take possession of them,’ and you disregarded Yahweh who was there. ¹¹Because 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. ¹²Then 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.’ ¹³For I heard when you boasted against me without restraint.

¹⁴Thus says Yahweh: When all the earth rejoices, you will be desolate. ¹⁵Since 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 ¹“Son of man, prophesy regarding the mountains of Israel; say to them: Mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh: ²Your enemies have said: ‘Aha! these eternal heights have become our possession.’ ^{35:10} ³People 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, ⁴mountains 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: ⁵Truly 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*.

⁶Now 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, ⁷Yahweh says: I swear with uplifted hand, the nations surrounding you will suffer scorn. ⁸But you, mountains of Israel, you shall bring forth branches and produce fruit for my people Israel, for soon they will return.

⁹Indeed, I have turned in your direction and I have bent towards you; you will be cultivated and sown with seed. ¹⁰I will increase your population in all Israel; the towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. ¹¹Both 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. ¹²Men 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.”

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

¹⁶The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ¹⁷“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.

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

²⁰But 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!’

²¹Then 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

• ²²It 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. ²³I 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.

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

²⁹I will free you from all your uncleanness. I shall summon the wheat and make it plentiful and so keep famine away from you. ³⁰I 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.

• **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

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

Is
61:4

Rom
2:24

³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked actions and loathe yourselves for the sins you committed and for your detestable practices. ³² 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! ³³ 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. ³⁴ The devastated land will be cultivated wherever passersby saw it desolate. ³⁵ 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.' ³⁶ 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.

³⁷ 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, ³⁸ 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"

^{Is 40:1} **37** ^{54:7} ¹ 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. ² 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.

³ 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-

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

Dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh! ⁵ Yahweh says: I am going to put spirit in you and make you live. ⁶ 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."

⁷ I prophesied as I had been commanded and then there was a noise and commotion; the bones joined together. ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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!"

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

¹¹ 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.' ¹² 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. ¹³You will know that I am Yahweh, O my people! when I open your graves and bring you out of your graves, ¹⁴when 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.”

• ¹⁵The 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.’ ¹⁶Take another piece of wood and write: ‘Joseph, the branch of Ephraim and the Israelites loyal to him.’ ¹⁷Join one to the other to make a single piece of wood in your hand. ¹⁸When your people say to you, ‘Won’t you tell us what this means?’ ¹⁹say 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. ²⁰And you will hold in your hand in their sight the pieces of wood on which you wrote.

²¹You 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. ²²I 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, ²³nor 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. ²⁴My servant David will reign over them, one shepherd for all. They will live according to my laws and follow and practice my decrees. ²⁵They 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.

²⁶I 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. ²⁷I shall make my home at their side; I shall be their God and they will be my people. ²⁸Then 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 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms, ²“Son of man, turn towards Gog of the country of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal and prophesy against him. ³Say to him: Hear the word of Yahweh: I come to strike you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. ⁴I 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. ⁵Persia, Cush and Put are with them, all with buckler and helmet. ⁶Gomer and all his troops, and Bethtogarmah from the far north with his battalions, a vast throng, are with you.

⁷Get ready, be prepared, you and all your troops massed around you, and take command of them. ⁸After 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. ⁹Then you will go up like a storm, like a cloud covering the earth, you and all your troops and the many nations with you.

¹⁰Thus 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 ¹¹saying: 'I will go up against unprotected towns, against peaceful people living in safety, all of them living without walls, bars or gates. ¹²I 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.'

¹³People 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.

¹⁴Therefore 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, ¹⁵you and the throngs with you, all on horses, with many troops – a vast army. ¹⁶You 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

¹⁷Thus 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. ¹⁸On that day when Gog will come to the land of Israel – word of Yahweh – my fury will be aroused. ¹⁹In the jealousy and heat of my anger I declare: On that day there will be a great earthquake in Israel. ²⁰The 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. ²¹I will summon the sword against

Gog on all my mountains – word of Yahweh. Each one's sword will turn against his brother. ²²I 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. ²³I 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 ¹Son of man, prophesy against Gog! Say to him: Thus says Yahweh: I come against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. ²When I have led, directed and brought you from the far north to the mountains of Israel, ³I shall break the bow in your left hand and snatch the arrows from your right hand. ⁴You 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 ⁵when you have fallen in the open countryside, for I have spoken, word of Yahweh. ⁶I shall send fire to the land of Magog and to those living peacefully in the islands and they will know that I am Yahweh. ⁷I 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.

⁸All this will come about and take place – word of Yahweh. This is the day I foretold. ⁹After 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; ¹⁰there 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.

¹¹On 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. ¹²It will take seven months to bury the dead and cleanse the country. ¹³All the population will work at burying the dead and this will be their honor on the day I am glorified, word of Yahweh. ¹⁴Men 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. ¹⁵If, 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 ¹⁶(the name of the town is Multitude). In that way the land will be cleansed.

^{Rev 19:17-18} ¹⁷Son 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, ¹⁸the flesh of heroes and the blood of the world's princes. They are all rams, lambs, goats, bullocks, all fattened animals from Bashan. ¹⁹You will eat all the fat you want and drink blood until you are drunk at the sacrifice I am preparing for you. ²⁰You will have your fill of horses, riders,

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

²²Then Israel will know from that day onward that I am Yahweh, their God. ²³And 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. ²⁴I dealt with them as their defilement and sins deserved, and I hid my face from them.

²⁵That 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. ²⁶They 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. ²⁷When 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. ²⁸They 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. ²⁹Never again shall I hide my face from them because I shall pour out my Spirit on Israel – word of Yahweh.”

THE FUTURE TEMPLE

40 • ¹In 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. ²In 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. ³He 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. ⁴The 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.”

^{1K 6:7} ⁵The 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. ^{Rev 21:15}

⁶He went to the east gate, climbed the steps and measured its threshold: one rod deep. ⁷Each guardroom one rod by one rod; and the walls between the guardrooms five cubits thick; ⁸and the threshold of the gate inward from the porch of the gate: one rod. ⁹He measured the porch of the gate: eight cubits; its jambs: two cubits; the porch of the gate was at the inner end. ¹⁰There 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. ¹¹He measured the width of the entrance: ten cubits; and the width all down the gateway: thirteen cubits. ¹²There 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. ¹³He 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. ¹⁴He measured the entrance: twenty cubits; after the porch of the gate came the outer court. ¹⁵From the entrance end of the gate to the porch opposite: fifty cubits. ¹⁶On 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.

¹⁷He 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. ¹⁸This terrace, which came right up to the sides of the gates and matched their depth, is the Lower Terrace. ¹⁹He measured across the outer court from the lower gate to the outside of the inner court: a hundred cubits.

²⁰He measured the length and breadth of the north gate of the outer court. ²¹It 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. ²²Its 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. ²³In 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.

²⁴He 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. ²⁵All around it and its entrance were windows, like the other windows; it measured fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits, ²⁶and 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. ²⁷The inner court had a southern gate; he measured the distance southward from one gate to the other: a hundred cubits.

²⁸He then took me into the inner court by the south gate; he measured the south gate which was the same size as the others. ²⁹Its guardrooms, the thickness of its walls and entrance all measured the same as the others. ³⁰Its 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. ³¹The entrance gave on to the outer court. It had palm trees on its pillars, each side, and eight steps leading up to it.

³²He took me to the east gate and measured it. It was the same size as the others. ³³Its 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. ³⁴Its porch gave on to the outer court. There were palm trees on its pillars on either side, and eight steps leading up to it.

³⁵He 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. ³⁶It had windows all around. Its area was fifty cubits by twenty-five cubits. ³⁷Its entrance gave on to the outer court. There were palm trees on its pillars on either side, and eight steps leading up to it.

³⁸There was a room entered from the entrance of the gates. It was here that they had to wash the holocaust. ³⁹And 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. ⁴⁰Going northward up to the gate, there were two tables outside and two more tables at the entrance end of the gate. ⁴¹There 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. ⁴²There 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. ⁴³Rims, a handbreadth broad, went all around the top, and on these tables was put the flesh of the offerings.

⁴⁴He 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. ⁴⁵He told me, "The lodge looking south is for the priests in charge of the Temple, ⁴⁶and 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."

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

⁴⁸He 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.⁴⁹ 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 ¹He took me into the Sanctuary and measured its door pillars: six cubits deep on the one side, six cubits deep on the other. ²The 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.

³He 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. ⁴He 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."

⁵He measured the wall of the House: six cubits. The width of the side cells was four cubits, all around the House. ⁶The cells were one above the other, thirty of them in three stories. ⁷The 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. ⁸Then 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. ⁹The outer wall of the side cells was five cubits thick and the pavement formed a veranda outside the cells of the House. ¹⁰Beyond the rooms was an area twenty cubits wide right around the House. ¹¹And 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.

¹²The 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. ¹³He measured the length of the House: a hundred cubits. The length of the court plus the building and its walls: a hundred cubits. ¹⁴The breadth of the facade of the House with the quadrangle: a hundred cubits. ¹⁵He 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,¹⁶ were all paneled with wood, from floor to windows, and the windows were

screened with lattice-work. ¹⁷From the door to the inner part of the House, and right around the whole wall of the inner room, outside and inside, ¹⁸were carved cherubs and palm trees, palm trees and cherubs alternating; each cherub had two faces – ¹⁹the 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 ²⁰from the floor to above the entrance, as also on the wall of the hall. ²¹The pillars of the House were square.

In front of the Most Holy Place, ²²there 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."

²³There was a double door for the Temple, and a double door for the Sanctuary. ²⁴These doors had two hinged leaves, two leaves for the one door, two leaves for the other. ²⁵On 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. ²⁶There were screened windows with flanking palm trees on the walls of the House, and of the cells at the side of the House.

42 ¹He took me northward into the court and led me to the rooms facing the outer court, and the building to the north. ²They were one hundred cubits long on the north side and fifty cubits wide. ³On 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, ⁴and in front of the rooms was a walk, ten cubits broad measured inward and a hundred cubits long; their doors looked north. ⁵The 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. ⁶They 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. ⁷The outer wall parallel to the rooms, facing them and giving on to the outer court, was fifty cubits long, ⁸the length of the rooms facing the outer court being fifty cubits, while on the side facing the building it was a hundred cubits. ⁹Beneath the rooms there was an entrance from the east, leading in from the outer court.

¹⁰In the thickness of the wall of the court, on the south side fronting the court and the building, were rooms. ¹¹A 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. ¹²They 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, ¹³“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. ¹⁴Once 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.”

¹⁵When 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. ¹⁶He measured the east side with his measuring rod: a total of five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. ¹⁷He then measured the north side: five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. ¹⁸He then measured the south side: five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. ¹⁹On the west side he measured five hundred cubits. ²⁰So he measured the entire enclosing wall on all four sides: length five hundred, breadth five hundred. This separated the sacred from the profane.

43 ¹He took me to the gate, facing east. ²Then 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. ³This 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.

⁴The Glory of Yahweh arrived at the Temple by the east gate. ⁵The spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court: the Glory of Yahweh was filling the House. ⁶And I heard someone speaking to me from the Temple while the man stood beside me. ⁷The 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, ⁸setting 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. ⁹From now on if they take their prostitutions and the corpses of their kings away from my presence, I shall live among them forever.

¹⁰Son of man, describe this House to the people of Israel, to shame them out of their filthy practices. ¹¹If 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. ¹²This is the law of the Temple: all the surrounding area on top of the mountain is a most holy area.

¹³Here are the dimensions of the altar (in big cubits, each of a cubit plus a hand-breadth). The base: one cubit high and one cubit wide. The ledge all around it: one span. This is the height of the altar: ¹⁴from 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. ¹⁵The altar hearth: four cubits high, with four horns projecting from the hearth, ¹⁶the hearth being square: twelve cubits by twelve cubits; ¹⁷and 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.”

¹⁸He 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. ¹⁹To 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. ²⁰You 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. ²¹In 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. ²²On 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. ²³When you have finished the purification you must offer a young bull without blemish and an unblemished ram chosen from the flock. ²⁴You are to present them before Yahweh, and the priests will sprinkle salt on them and offer them as a holocaust to Yahweh. ²⁵As 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. ²⁶In this way the altar will be atoned for and will be purified and inaugurated. ²⁷At 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 ¹He brought me back to the outer east gate of the sanctuary. It was shut. ²Yahweh 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. ³The 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.”

⁴He 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. ⁵Yahweh 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. ⁶And 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. ⁷You 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 ⁸when you let them perform your duties in my sanctuary. ⁹For, 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.

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

¹¹They 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. ¹²But 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. ¹³They 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. ¹⁴I shall let them work in the House and serve it and do everything to be done in it.

¹⁵The 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. ¹⁶They may enter my sanctuary and approach my table to serve me; they may perform my liturgy. ¹⁷Once 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. ¹⁸They 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.

¹⁹When 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. ²⁰They are neither to shave their heads nor to let their hair grow long, but must cut their hair to a reasonable length. ²¹No priest is to drink wine on the day he enters the inner court. ²²They 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. ²³They are to teach my people what is sacred and what is profane and make them know what is clean and what is unclean. ²⁴They 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. ²⁵They are not to go near a dead person, lest they become unclean, except for father, mother, daughter, son, brother or unmarried sister. ²⁶After one of them has been purified, seven days must elapse; ²⁷then 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. ²⁸They 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. ²⁹Their 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. ³⁰The 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. ³¹Priests 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 ¹When 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. ²The 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. ³Out 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. ⁴This 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. ⁵An 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. ⁶You 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.

⁷The 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. ⁸This 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.

⁹Yahweh 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. ¹⁰Have scales that are fair, a fair ephah, a fair bath. ¹¹Let the ephah and bath be equal, let the bath hold one tenth of a homer and the ephah one tenth of a homer. ¹²Let 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.

¹³This 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. ¹⁴The 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). ¹⁵You 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. ¹⁶Let all the people of the country be bound to give this offering for the prince of Israel. ¹⁷The 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.

¹⁸Yahweh says this: On the first day of the first month, you must take a young bull without blemish, to purify the sanctuary. ¹⁹The 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. ²⁰You 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. ²¹On the fourteenth day of the first month, you must celebrate the feast of the Passover. For seven days everyone is to eat unleavened loaves. ²²On that day, the prince must offer a bull as a sacrifice for sin, for

himself and all the people in the country. ²³For 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, ²⁴with 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.

²⁵For 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 ¹Thus 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; ²and 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. ³The 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. ⁴On the sabbath day the prince shall offer six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram for the burnt offering. ⁵The 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. ⁶On the day of the New Moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, six unblemished lambs and one unblemished ram; ⁷he 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.

⁸When the prince goes in, he is to enter by the entrance of the gate, and he must leave by the same way. ⁹When 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.

¹⁰The prince is to come with them, coming in like them and going out like them. ¹¹On 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. ¹²When 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. ¹³Every day he must offer an unblemished lamb one year old as a holocaust to Yahweh; he must offer this every morning. ¹⁴Every 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. ¹⁵The lamb, the oblation and the oil are to be offered morning after morning forever.

¹⁶Yahweh 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. ¹⁷But 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. ¹⁸The 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."

¹⁹He 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. ²⁰He 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." ²¹He took me into the outer court and led me to each of its four corners; ²²in each corner was a compound; there were four small compounds, forty cubits by thirty, all four being the same size. ²³Each of the four was enclosed by a wall, with hearths all around the bottom of the wall. ²⁴He 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 • ¹The 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. ²He 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.

³The 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. ⁴He 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. ⁵When 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.

⁶The 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. ⁷There I saw a number of trees on both sides of the river. ⁸He 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. ⁹Wherever 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. ¹⁰Fishermen 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. ¹¹The swamps and the marshes will not become wholesome; they will be used as saltbeds.

Ex
15:25
2K
2:21

¹²Near 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

¹³Yahweh says this: Here are the boundaries of the territories to be allotted between the twelve tribes of Israel, with two portions for Joseph. ¹⁴You 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. ¹⁵Here 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, ¹⁶Berothah, Sibramim lying between the territories of Damascus and Hamath – and to Hazerhatticon on the borders of Hauran. ¹⁷The frontier will extend from the sea to Hazar-enon, marching with Damascus and Hamath on the north; this is the northern frontier. ¹⁸On 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. ¹⁹On 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. ²⁰On the west the Great Sea will serve as frontier straight up towards Hamath; so much for the western frontier. ²¹You are to share out this land among yourselves, between the tribes of Israel. ²²You 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. ²³You 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 ¹This 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. ²Bordering Dan, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Asher. ³Bordering Asher, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Naphtali. ⁴Bordering Naphtali, from the eastern to the western frontier: Manasseh. ⁵Bordering Manasseh, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Ephraim. ⁶Bordering Ephraim, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Reuben. ⁷Bordering Reuben, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Judah. ⁸Bordering 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.

⁹The part you must set aside for Yahweh is to be twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide. ¹⁰This 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. ¹¹This 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. ¹²And 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. ¹³The 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. ¹⁴They must not sell or exchange any part of it, and their part can never be alienated, since it is consecrated to Yahweh. ¹⁵The 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. ¹⁶Here 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. ¹⁷And 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. ¹⁸What 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. ¹⁹These people are to be drawn from all the tribes of Israel and shall till this land. ²⁰The 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. ²¹What 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.

²² 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.

²³ Here are the rest of the tribes: from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Benjamin. ²⁴ Bordering Benjamin, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Simeon. ²⁵ Bordering Simeon, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Issachar. ²⁶ Bordering Issachar, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Zebulun. ²⁷ Bordering Zebulun, from the eastern frontier to the western frontier: Gad. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ This is the inheritance of the tribes of Israel

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

³⁰ Here are the ways out of the city. On the north side, being four thousand five hundred cubits long, ³¹ 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. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ 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. ³⁵ 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