PIERRE II

The biblical course

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The spiritual itinerary - In the search of Truth

1. INTRODUCTION

This "Spiritual Itinerary" is directed to those who want to discover Truth, happiness and inner peace, peace of the soul; it is aimed at **YOU** reader, if you care for Truth.

This Itinerary entails three phases. The first two (the "Preliminary" and the "Awareness" phases) are a preparatory for the "Spiritual Itinerary". They are not indispensable, but recommended according to the disposition of each:

1. The PRELIMINARY is a psychological preparation for a good start towards the goal. Before getting started, you need to clearly know what you want and if you are motivated enough to reach the Truth.
2. The SELF AWARENESS phase invites and prepares you to enter and discover yourself, to realize your state of mind.
3. The SPIRITUAL ITINERARY itself places you before the Supernatural and opens up the path for you to reach it freely... if you want to...

2. PHASE I – THE PRELIMINARY

Truth and happiness are inseparable: if you are in Truth, you should only be happy. If you are not, deep in your heart, it is because you do not have within you the true Light which warms and comforts the soul. The more truth we accumulate, the happier we are. Only **knowledge** of the Truth makes a man free (see John 8,32).

Before embarking on this path of research, make sure that you are in a good psychological disposition and that the time has come to get started. Carefully answer these three questions:

1. What psychological state are you in? And why? (Happy or unhappy, due to your financial situation, your social status, your culture, your philosophical ideas, human love, etc...)
2. What spiritual state are you in? And why? (Believer or nonbeliever by inherited thoughts or upbringing in a confessional community from birth, by habit, subject to the customs and prejudices of your particular society, etc...)

3. Are you satisfied with your state or would you like to evolve? If you do not want to sublimate your existence, this Itinerary is not for you. But if, on the other hand, you long for Truth in order to evolve, you will have to make an **effort**. In this case, continue reading this Itinerary.

Please note the following: if you have not **chosen freely and of your own accord**, your spiritual condition on a sound and objective basis, and if you have not embraced **your** ideas after a meticulous and conscientious research, you will be subjected to religious, racist, or other prejudices and will never flourish. Tossed around by ignorance, you will be easy prey to anxiety and nervous agitation, the unconscious fruits of insufficient and uncertain knowledge or total ignorance. These harmful fruits have generated religious, fanatic and religious wars, as well as pernicious sects having suicide as their ideal...

The brilliance of knowledge revives the human soul. Conversely, the darkness of ignorance atrophies it, rendering it lifeless and dissatisfied. This is reflected on the outside by aggressive and impatient behavior, or on the contrary, in states of sadness and depression.

A lack of certainty in your beliefs will expose you to doubt and a lack of confidence in yourself. Always on the lookout for that "new thing" that might satisfy you, you will continuously face deception and will end up despairing real Happiness or be satisfied with the mediocre.

Be aware of this sort of sad "nostalgia" that occasionally invades the soul: that state is fed by ignorance. It must be defined as the "nostalgia of happiness", of a happiness lost, but recoverable under its own conditions. Time is given to us to retrieve it through **knowledge**. Seek and ye shall find.

2.1 The De-Conditioning Process

To free yourself from the harmful grip of ignorance, you must first **de-condition yourself**, that is, to liberate yourself from the personality imposed unconsciously by your family and social surroundings. Therefore, forget your familial identity, your social rank, your past memories (good or bad) that mark you deeply; make a clean sweep of the prejudices which instill in you a false personality **to retrieve yourself**. Begin finally, to rationally and logically seek Happiness, the fruit of Truth. You are capable of knowing the Truth, to discern It, to free It from deceit.

You have intelligence. Use it.

You have a heart. Open it.

You have logic. Draw **your own** conclusions.

Continuously stimulate your enthusiasm. Add love and joy into it. Do not allow negative forces to paralyze you with laziness and fear of the Unknown.

Rise and take your first steps into **your inner** realm. It is yours! Do not feel like a stranger to yourself, or afraid, otherwise others will subtilize your soul.

With good will and perseverance, you will reach the Great Happiness that awaits you like a trophy at the end of the road, at the summit of the mountain within yourself.

2.2 Indispensable Conditions for success

1. A profound desire to know the Truth: no one can give anything to those who are not thirsty.

2. Sincerity: a full and conscientious commitment of will and intelligence to discover the Truth and to comply to it without hypocrisy and without restriction. To act in good faith.

3. Courage to break away, though gradually, from old habits, ideas, friendships and social relationships that hinder spiritual development and prevent the liberation of the soul.

4. You must begin from the principle that the Truth **is one and objective**; both a concept and its opposite cannot be true. No one can make his **own** subjective truth: the sun either exists or does not exist for everyone; it is the same for God.

5. Freedom of choice; but you bear **the responsibility** of your choice. Being capable of assuming this responsibility by valid arguments means having reached a trustworthy maturity.

The main pitfall is to make for yourself a subjective "truth", illusory to your own size, rather than questioning yourself and trying to embrace the One Truth.

2.3 Conclusion

After having reflected on this Preliminary, do you feel ready to undertake the search in this spirit, not by mere curiosity, but by the firm resolution to change and become a new self? You will end up richer and mature to the point of no longer recognizing the old person you used to be.

If your heart says "Yes", do not disappoint it. Answer its call. You will, by perseverance, discover the world of Happiness in which so many no longer believe in and which, without being of this materialistic world, is nevertheless in this world, being **in you**. It is for you to discover. Do not let yourself be distracted by the vicissitudes of everyday life.

An old Hindu legend recounts:

> There was a time when all men were gods. But they abused their divinity so much that Brahma, the god master, decided to remove their divine power and hide it in a place where it would be impossible for them to find. The major problem was to find a suitable hideout.
>
> When the lesser gods were convened to solve this problem, they proposed the following: "Let's bury man's divinity in the earth". But Brahma answered: "No, it is not enough, man shall dig and find it".
>
> So the gods replied: "in that case let us throw the divinity into the deep oceans". But Brahma answered back: "No, because sooner or later man shall explore the deep oceans, certainly one day he shall find it, and bring it back up to the surface."
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> So the lesser gods concluded: "We do not know where to hide it, since there does not seem to be a place on earth or in the oceans that man should not be able to reach one day." So Brahma said: "This is what we shall do with man's divinity: we shall hide it deep inside him, the only place where man shall never think of looking."
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> Since then, the legend concludes, man has circled the earth, explored, climbed, plunged and dug in search for something which lies within him.

3. PHASE II – SELF AWARENESS

Self-Awareness is a psychological work program, an effort of introspection that will help you discover yourself as you are, and prepare you to evolve into what you should be. It is a "Psychological Itinerary" complementary to the "Spiritual Itinerary". I invite you to recur to it along the way, if you deem it necessary; its a measure of your state of mind.

Socrates said: "Man, know thyself". This is an invitation to become aware of your own self. What follows is an outline to assist you in exploring your inner universe.

A human being is composed of three vital complementary levels:

1. Corporal: relative to the physical and material aspects. It is the body.
2. Psychological: relative to the intellectual and emotional aspects. It is the soul.
3. Spiritual: relative to the supernatural. It is the spirit.

The last two aspects are physically intangible, yet intimately linked to the body. A perfect harmony must reign between these three levels. Any unbalance perturbs the human personality. To insist on one plan and neglect the others disrupts our being. We must take into consideration the hierarchy that exists between these three levels: The most important is the spiritual followed by the psychological and finally the physical. This last part of our selves -the body- is certainly important. It is the tangible part of our person and can veil the rest of our personality. Being the most perceptible, the most immediate, the body risks overshadowing the rest as we often see. And yet, the body must serve as an instrument to discover our two other invisible dimensions, because they are of much greater vital importance. That is why we must be careful to make the body an instrument of discovery by disciplining, instructing and guiding it wisely from within, where the centers of the soul and the spirit lie.

Man's only obstacle, his only enemy, is **himself**.

"Self Awareness" means to know oneself. We have to push ourselves to explore the depths of our being in order to discover our soul and spirit.

This task is both easy and difficult at the same time:

- It is easy because it requires no other means than ourselves, and other instruments as vigilance and determination to change ourselves to achieve inner harmony, at any cost.
- It is difficult because of obstacles (conscious or subconscious) such as psychological laziness, the fear or refusal to discover ourselves as we are, and the attachment to materialistic and worldly pleasures. It takes a lot of moral courage to admit one's faults and wanting to be free of them.

A good way to reach self-knowledge is to apply the following three points:

1. Personality appraisal
2. Discovery of our complexes
3. Calm

3.1 Personality Appraisal

It is an exercise that allows us to check our starting point, our progresses or our setbacks. This assessment maintains us in a state of dynamic evolution on which our transformation depends. The key to this transformation is the discovery of our state of mind, our qualities and our faults, like the following examples:

- **Qualities**: moral courage, desire for perfection, self-confidence, patience, tenacity and perseverance, kindness, love, altruism, sociability, joy, optimism etc...
- **Faults**: laziness, carelessness, arrogance, vanity, sensuality, susceptibility, jealousy and envy, egoism, intolerance, fanaticism, avarice, lack of openness etc...

The unearthing of our state of mind is indispensable; it is the first step towards evolution upon which the remedy to be applied depends on. We should not panic upon discovering our faults, but calmly consider this state from which we want and can evolve, if we feel concerned.

The next step is to compare your current condition to **the ideal state** to be reached on the three vital levels of human personality, of which here is an overview::

1. **The corporal level** concerns physical life: vitality, health, robustness, good reflexes etc... On the alimentary plan, quantity and quality of food must be looked after to avoid overweight, which is the cause of many illnesses. The body must be cared for with physical exercise: "a healthy body, a healthy mind.".
2. **The psychological level** concerns the intellectual and affective life of the soul: - The intellect includes the realm of intelligence, the power of attention and concentration, memory, imagination, etc... - - The affective life is related to love. Love of self and others must be balanced. A careful and selective social life –depending on the moral qualities of others– supports our evolution (read Ecclesiasticus 12).
3. **The spiritual level** concerns our spirit and is tied to the supernatural. It is the level that governs our whole personality. If we are well enlightened at this level, happiness overflows in our entire being. It is why this level is by far the most important. It must be discovered to give it the fullness of Truth. This is the goal of our research.

Having become aware of our faults, we must, to each of them, apply the opposite virtue: to indifference, interest and motivation; to pride and arrogance, modesty and humility; to laziness, effort; to vanity, renouncement and simplicity; to avarice, generosity; to fanaticism, tolerance etc... To be happy, a price must be paid and in order to heal, a change must be made. It is pointless to criticize others, attempting to perfect them, to want to change the world without evolving yourself. The greatest revolutions begin **in us** and **through us**. It is by evolving ourselves that we will succeed in raising others.

3.2 The Discovery of Our Complexes

Many people surrender along the way, due to some inner wounds that discourage them, some sentiments that sow confusion in the soul. These are the complexes.

Certain facts of life sometime mark us from our childhood. Following an emotional or other shock, their effects remains buried in our memory, producing powerful negative feelings (inferiority, superiority, aggression, guilt, etc...) Unbeknownst to us, they drive some of our actions, carpeted in a subconscious part of our soul.

The feeling of inferiority does not always mean a diminished moral worth. It is necessary to look for **the roots** of this feeling: physical defect, lack of affection, family drama, lack of culture, poverty, etc... On the other hand, one can feel superior without being it. These complexes cause discomfort in the subconscious. Our job will be to detect these complexes, to become aware of them in order to cure them; this is "Self Awareness". But in the beginning, courage is needed to admit what we are! Sometimes friendly or professional help (psychologist etc...) is needed, which is not always easy to find.

We must be able to discern the true source of discomfort that bothers us: is it due to our complexes or to the ill-treatment from others? We should not underestimate the effect that the behavior of others has on us. The system of modern society is not kindhearted. So you have to protect and defend yourself to live... or sometimes survive and learn to adapt to various situations.

This presupposes an objective observation of our own behavior towards others. We all tend to project onto others negative or positive feelings within us: "we judge others according to ourselves", without taking a step back and without arming ourselves with discernment.

For example: the aggressive person sees other people as aggressive and complains about it. Conversely, an honest person believes that everyone is honest and is surprised to be robbed by someone he considered honest. This can lead to great deceptions, especially in the affective domain where the heart is involved.

3.3 Calm

To overcome our faults, we have to work on ourselves with patience and calm. Accept yourself as you are! If we cannot accept ourselves, come to terms with ourselves, how can we expect others to accept and support us?

A culture of calm protects us from external attacks. We gradually progress towards self-control. He who manages to control himself, controls the most critical situations, he can appease violence and audacity, and direct diversions most favorably towards inner peace and social harmony.

Inner calm is favored by relaxation of the body and the mind, as well as with controlled respirations taught in yoga classes.

The effects of calm:

- It facilitates the normal functioning of the nervous system.
- It increases the output of effort, while reducing.
- It dominates impatience and the tendency to get carried away.
- It promotes reflection and better decision making.
- It reinforces assurance and builds self-confidence.
- It attracts the trust of others.
- It is a powerful weapon in facing adversities with higher chances of triumph.

3.4 Practical Advice

This simple appraisal can be written down in a personal notebook. Observe yourself with sincerity and objectivity, accepting help, if possible, by someone more experienced.

Perseverance will transform our personal, inner, familial, communal and professional lives with a lot of joy and love.

This process generates progressive results, but always certain and effective. Time is given to us for this. One should not be impatient or hasty to quickly reach satisfactory results. In doing so, we risk losing everything. **Normal** growth should take the time necessary to reach healthy maturity. A man cannot reach the age of forty without passing through his thirties.

Providence will help us in measure of our **faith** and **perseverance**.

Faith is the antidote to fear.

The worst is to be expected from fear; with faith, we hope for the best.

We must be confident in ourselves and in the help of the Creator.

3.5 Meditation

Meditate in depth, the following ideas:

Master Eckhart (German Dominican from the XIVth century) said:

> "... it is not outside, but inside, deep inside..."

The psychoanalyst Jung used to say:

> "One must patiently observe what happens silently in our souls, because every man has, by his own nature, within his own soul, something that can grow."

Jung also said:

> "The soul has, by its own nature, a religious function... the main task of adult education is to pass the archetype of the divine image, or its emanations and effects onto the conscious."

Finally remember Socrates' words: "Man, know thyself". But this is not enough, as we can only know ourselves through the one and objective Truth. We should say: "Man, know the Truth and thee shall know thyself". This is what Jesus meant when He said: "You will come to know the Truth and the Truth will set you free" (John 8,32). The Truth will only set us free if we accept It.

4. PHASE III – THE SPIRITUAL ITINERARY

This "Spiritual Itinerary" is in four steps:

1. **God**: does He exist?
2. **The Religions**: are they all the same?
3. **The Choice**: the divine Revelation, the Bible (the Biblical Course)
4. **Happiness**: living in the discovered Truth

We will examine these steps, one by one, methodically.

There is not much to say about the Happiness stage: it is the outcome of the Itinerary, the happy terminus that we want to reach. Here, you will find rest after your labors and will be able to speak about it better than I. Therefore, we will only study the first three steps.

Arm yourself with patience, focus your attention and your power of concentration in order to reap a fruitful harvest.

4.1 FIRST STEP – God

4.1.1 God: does He exist?

The first question to be resolved is that of God: does He exist or not? It is from there that the road forks: one for believers and the other for atheists. I suggest that you answer intelligently ten questions to personally make these discoveries.

Before thinking about these questions, it is important to take a step back to make sure that the answer is really yours, coming freely from **personal** research and logic, without external influence (religion, family, prejudices, material interests, etc. . .)

To achieve this, you must have already made the effort of liberation, of **de-conditioning yourself**: which I spoke of in the Preliminary.

Give yourself time to think. Never excuse yourself because of lack of time; we can always find the time and the means to do what we want. Time is given to us to seek the Truth. Let us not waste it elsewhere (TV abuse, sports games, card games, alcohol, etc. . .) Let us give important activities first place.

Place yourself in an environment favorable to reflection. Alone, in a quiet place -preferably mother nature– imagine that you have just been born. This means that you have neither a family identity nor a social status. Forget your name in order to discover your Self. There you are, all alone in this silence, surrounded by trees swaying in the breeze, listening to the murmur of the leaves and chirping of the birds. You are alone in the world. You peaceably become aware of your body, of your person. You simply, exist.

Answer the ten questions that I propose below. Take all the necessary time to answer them carefully. You may have an answer ready or may need to wait a long time to get one, to dispel any doubts concerning it. Never mind the time it takes, so long as it is well spent.

It is paramount that you never back down once you have discovered the Truth on a particular subject. Never give up, after having seen the Light, for material gain or from pressure by prejudices. Some may criticize and discourage you. But you, hang on! Insist on listening to your heart and your intelligence: do not abandon **your own logic**. It is important that you

feel with certainty that you are answering freely, that you are using your own intelligence to reach a conclusion after careful reflection, just as a smart detective would do when faced with a complex situation.

Here are the questions; do an effort to answer them honestly, although you may judge them as naive:

Do you believe in the existence of God? Why? This is the first question that comes to mind; from it stem the results of our research.

Commence, if this suits you, by not even using the word "God", and in your own language, give a name to this "Vague Supernatural": Force, Energy, Perfection, Beauty, Love, Chance, Fire, Light, etc... Especially since, etymologically, "God" derives from "Zeus" (the supreme god of ancient Greek mythology). This name was translated "Deus" into Latin, then given by the first Roman Christians to the Creator, it became "God" in French.

So let us remember, if you want, this name for convenience. Do you believe in God? Yes or no? What are the reasons for your answer? You have to conclude yourself with a deductive and intelligent mind. For example: a policeman walks into a room, sees a body lying down in a pool of blood, and the room is in total disarray. What must his conclusion be? Another example: you think you are the only who has the key to your room. You leave the room and lock it with your key. You come back and notice a wristwatch on the table. What to conclude intelligently? Chance? Or that **someone else** has the key to your room? It is a certainty that "someone" has entered. Only a stupid policeman would not see a crime in the first example and would not realize that someone else has the key to your room. It is with this same elementary intelligence that you must conclude what is concerned with the existence of God, starting from the existence of the world and the cosmos.

A physical universe exists. Where does it come from? The majority of believers base themselves on the creation, and its exemplary harmony to conclude in going back to the Creator. This was the case for example, with Voltaire and Einstein, the dean of modern science.

Voltaire said:

> "I cannot believe that the clock (creation) exists without the clockmaker (God)."

Einstein puts it this way:

> "The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. The one for whom this emotion is alien, who is no longer able to be seized with stupor, is only a dead man.
>
> To know that what is impenetrable for us really exists, it manifests itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in its most primitive forms. This knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiosity. The cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest stimulus for scientific research.
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> My religion consists of a humble admiration of the Illimitable Higher Spirit who is revealed in the smallest details, perceptible by our frail and feeble minds. That deeply moving conviction of the presence of a Higher Rational Power is revealed by the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God." (*"Living Philosophies", 1931; and "Des Savants Nous Parlent de Dieu", by René Courtois, Ed. Foyer Notre Dame, Brussels*)

I have cited these two examples –among so many others– from scientific and logical conclusions to help you intelligently conclude for yourself the real cause of the universe. Meditate them well.

As for atheists, they base themselves, among other things, on the existence of Evil in the world to conclude that God does not exist. This is a non-valid argument, because Evil is not an entity in itself, it is only conceived in relation to Good: Evil is a Good destroyed, amputated (crime, theft, physical or mental illness, etc. . .) Therefore, we can only discern hatred because we know love; and recognize illness in relation to good health. You will further discover that Evil cannot have its source in God, who is Perfect Good. You will also understand that Evil was introduced into the world by man himself.

Others claim that social disorder, religious wars and evolutionist theories are all evidence that God does not exist. And yet, this disorder and these wars are due to bad management and bad faith of man, and not to the inexistence of God. As for evolution, it would not only reveal a certain organized structure in creation, but the Programmer of this evolution: God. Furthermore, there is no rational proof of the non-existence of God.

Question: a watch, a car, a meal, can they be produced by accident? Similarly, can an organized and meticulous creation be the product of chance? It is up to you to respond intelligently! What would this chance be? And where does it come from? Let us call God "Chance".

If, at this stage, you believe that God does not exist, we can no longer help you in your search. Here, our spiritual paths part, but our human brotherhood must remain to build together, in harmony, our earthly City and society, accepting to be different and yet respectful of our mutual convictions.

But if on the other hand, you conclude that God exists, we can pursue together our search to get to know Him better, convinced, us too, of His existence. So pass on to the second question.

Is He Personal or Impersonal? A Personal being is all in all intelligent, conscious, and responsible; man, for example. On the other hand, matter, animals and plants are not. Animals are endowed with an instinct that is not yet intelligence. Bees, for example, build their hive in a hexagonal way, not by intelligence, but by instinct. They are, so to say, "programmed" and cannot do otherwise, or surpass themselves to do better. It will always be like this for them. They are not capable of inventing a machine to gather nectar from flowers in their place. Furthermore, we do not put a dog in prison for biting a man, the animal cannot be held responsible for its actions since it is not a person. And again, we will never see a group of donkeys organizing a public demonstration to claim the right to a maximum load to carry and a limited number of working hours. This type of activity presumes intelligence.

To believe in a Personal God is to believe that He is Supreme Intelligence, Knowledge, Love, Consciousness, and Responsibility. (Reread the text by Einstein previously quoted)

Is He alive or inert? Do you think that God is alive, active and productive, or inert and lifeless like neutrons and protons, without intellectual and affective activity?

An active and productive being is alive. We believe that there is in God an intensity of infinite life, total knowledge, perfect intelligence and love. He knows and perfectly loves His Self and His creation, products of His free love.

Is He Matter or Spirit? Matter is perceived by the senses. It is detectable by instruments of precision. In the past, man worshipped the sun, the moon, idols, thinking that God was matter. We think that God is "the Unlimited Higher **Spirit**" (Einstein). This Spirit can only be grasped by man's spirit, in the intimacy of his conscience, enlightened by intelligence and the love of Truth.

Is there a direct link between Him and us? We believe that a link exists between the Creator and his creation. It is a link of Cause (God) and effect (us, His creation).

Is this link established in you or is it broken indeed? Let your intuition answer.

If this link is broken in you, would you like to re-establish it?

Can we get in touch with Him? How? This contact is possible and can only be spiritual, being between spirits. In the "Awareness" phase you have seen that man is body, soul and **spirit**.

Some call this contact "prayer"; it is a simple "dialogue" with God. You must free ourselves from fearful worship and attitudes imposed by some religious leaders. These cults are inspired by paganism. God is a tender Father who desires to talk to His children frankly, yet respectfully.

If you do not desire **ardently** to restore this link with God, it will not happen.

Can He help you in your search? If you believe Him Almighty and Wise, you will conclude that He is able, even willing to assist you by enlightening you because he loves His creation: He loves you ardently.

Are you ready to ask for His help? Some prefer to look for God alone, without God's help.

As for us, we are convinced that no one can, all alone, discover and understand God. Human science already surpasses us, and we have recourse to various scientific institutes and teachers to understand a small part of creation; all the more so when it comes to the Creator. It takes a certain humility to have recourse to God in order to know Him, because He, and He alone can reveal Himself to those who love Him. We already so often find it difficult to understand man. Also, if God does not reveal Himself, we can neither understand Him nor know Him.

Contact Him through your heart, from all your heart and tell Him: "Please help me, to know You, to love You". You will discover that He is sensitive to love, tenderness and humility as many are.

Is He silent, hidden and elusive, or does He reveal Himself? God expresses himself not only in Himself, but also to those who seek Him. He cannot be indifferent to the man He created. We are convinced that God yearns to contact man and longs to reestablish the bond broken by man throughout History. Being a Personal God, therefore intelligent and caring, He reveals Himself to those who seek Him passionately and desire to contact Him.

Has He revealed Himself in History? This is what interests us. We want to know if God has revealed Himself to men. In the multiple spiritual paths that present themselves to us, it is in that of Divine Revelation where God has revealed Himself to man, that in which we want to embark.

Without this Revelation, we would not have understood the veritable character of God, nor how He behaves with man. It is the prophets, speaking from God, who teach us that He is "Good and Compassionate", that He dwells in the hearts of believers; unlike the despot gods of various mythologies; external, distant and vague, with inhuman demands, and to whom animals, men, and children were offered as sacrifice.

Here ends Phase I of this Itinerary. We come out of it, believing in a **Personal, Revealing God**. We are, at this stage, at the crossroads of multiple religions which present themselves to us in the world. Which one to choose? We should get to know them first. Let us move then, to the Second Step: "The Religions".

4.2 SECOND STEP – THE RELIGIONS

Having completed the phase concerning God's existence, let us pass on to the religions.

There are multiple religious paths in the world. To be able to choose one of them, we must know them. They are divided into two groups: The "Philosophical Religions" and the "Revealed Religions".

4.2.1 The Philosophical "Religions"

These are not really religions, but individual trials, human quests in search of peace of mind. They were founded by noble souls such as Krishna, Confucius, and Buddha, who were driven by an ardent desire to purify their soul through detachment from the material. They set a standard of high morality: respectful of human beings, renouncing superfluous considerations. Purification rites (baptism, ablutions, incense, hymns, etc...) are supposed to lift the soul to peaceful zones.

Some practices conduct to reflection and meditation. Physical disciplines control body agitation, including breathing. These practices, found in "Yoga", are excellent and can be practiced without adopting creeds, such as reincarnation, the veneration of so-called sacred animals (white cows, monkeys, etc...) Such teachings are merely human suppositions. There is no divine revelation or prescriptions in these philosophical currents, not even mention of the unique God, of His qualities (good, just, merciful, etc...), nor of a divine plan to save man as in the revealed religions. An abundant literature exists on this subject. Here, I briefly present the most important philosophical trends.

Buddhism Buddhism was founded by Gautama in the VI century BC on the flanks of the Himalayas in India. At the age of 28, Gautama left his wife and family in the search for Truth. He frequented the various schools of Wisdom but did not find the Truth which he felt within himself. After having wandered for years, he sat down one day to meditate under a fig tree and suddenly entered an intense ecstasy, he felt overwhelmed, enlightened and he knew what he had to do. On that day he became the Buddha, the "Enlightened one", "the Wise One", the "one who is awake". He understood that he should not be attached to materialistic interests nor to

worldly pleasures. At a glance, he perceived the vanity of strictly material preoccupations. He decided, on the spot, to pass this "Knowledge", this "Light" ("Buddhism") to others.

In short, for the Buddha, the world of senses is illusory. Only our desire can attach us to it... and lose us. Pain comes from our attachment to the earth. Reincarnation is a process of punishment that aims at purifying us, by teaching us how to be liberated from materialistic fascinations. But the circle of reincarnations can be interrupted by detachment, the renunciation of pleasures. Having given up all desires, one then perceives the illusion and the vanity of sensuality, and henceforth becomes, enlightened, and thus has access to "Nirvana", which corresponds to the tranquility of the consciousness freed from the chains of bodily pleasures.

Buddha did not distinguish between legitimate bodily pleasures and noxious illegitimate pleasures which, being irregular and unbalanced, obstruct the life of the soul and spiritual joys. Moreover, Buddha did not see these spiritual delights that accompany the discovery of Truth, and its immense joy and living it. His Nirvana was limited to obtaining an undisturbed soul, a tranquil conscience. Now, if we must renounce the desires of vanity, we must on the other hand revive with enthusiasm for what is good, and discover all that can sublimate the soul. This feeling, desire, is a powerful engine; it is a part of human nature and must not be repressed. Without an enthusiastic desire to find genuine Life, we cannot thrive or do anything good; life on earth would be tasteless and becomes unbearable, meaningless.

More than a philosophy, Buddhism is a system of ethics, a correct way of life which consists of eight directives: righteous ideas, righteous intentions, righteous speech, righteous actions, righteous life, righteous effort, righteous attention and strict meditation. For a Buddhist, these directives form the "Noble Path of Liberation". Buddha never claimed that his teaching came from God.

Divine Revelation teaches us that through true and pure Love of God and his neighbor, one reaches even higher summits than Nirvana. The latter may satisfy man's psychological life, his soul, but Revelation transcends this level and reaches the spirit. There lies our vital intensity, the highest and most vibrant summit of our being.

Hinduism Hinduism preceded Buddhism by approximately two centuries. The Buddha was Hindu in the beginning, but felt unsatisfied and sought elsewhere after frequenting many Hindu schools. After having been "enlightened", he decided to work alone in the search of Truth.

Hinduism is a system difficult to define. It has no list of doctrines common to all members, nor a unique philosophical system, no hierarchy and no holy books equivalent to the Bible and the Qur'an, no uniform ritual exists because Hindus are divided into multiple sects (similar to the many Christian and Muslim confessions). Every Hindu group has its own rituals and each Hindu follows the rituals of his group, according to the rules of conduct and worship established by the custom, particularly concerning food (often vegetarian), marriage and adoration of the gods.

Hinduism gives each individual nearly full liberty in the domain of speculation and research but imposes very strict rules of conduct. Thus, a monotheist and an atheist, a skeptical and an agnostic (unbeliever) can be good Hindus as far as they admit the Hindu mode of culture and existence. What really matters is the conduct, not a doctrine or faith. Gandhi -who believed in God- said: "A man may not believe in God and still consider himself a Hindu. Hinduism is the pursuit of Truth without respite, and the Truth is God".

Speculations vary as to the essence of the divinity. Some Hindus are polytheists, others are pantheists. Metempsychosis (the return of the soul on earth after death in form of vegetations, animals or human beings according to the degree of purification necessary) is generally taught,

whereas Buddha admitted only reincarnation (the return in a human body). This was already a progress because the human body alone is worthy of a human soul.

Hinduism has a vague notion of an outright Spirit, neutral (neither male nor female), eternal, original cause and source of all that exists, and the end to which everything returns. This spirit is a "Triade" or Trinity of gods, the "Trimurti": Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Conserver) and Shiva (the Destroyer who, by destroying an old world, generates new life at the same time). Furthermore, Hindus worship a host of minor deities, demons, spirits and sacred objects. The cow is considered a sacred animal. In addition to the few herds to provide milk and butter, there are a considerable number of undernourished animals, belonging to no one, who wander in villages and towns and are fed by donations from the faithful. The law prohibits killing them, even to shorten their suffering. During famines, some Hindus deprive themselves of their meager rations to give them to cows. Monkeys are also sacred animals and Hindus stoically endure their depredations.

Confucianism Confucius was born in China in the VI century BC. He was a politician and did not claim to be a religious reformer, not being really interested in the problems of religious life. His teaching is a high politico-military morality (behaving well with his enemies etc...) He believed in Heaven but refused to comment on the afterlife: "Since you cannot understand life, how can you understand death?" He taught nothing about the spirits: "Since we cannot serve man, how can we serve spirits?", he also said. Nevertheless, he offered sacrifices to his ancestors "as if they were physically present".

The teachings of Confucius were aimed at generating "a Superior Man", cultured men who would follow "the Middle way" and guide others in this Path of moderation in everything.

Confucius existed in a polytheist environment but taught that there is only One almost inaccessible Supreme Sovereign who makes his presence felt and decides the fate of those who can appeal to Him, beyond the various established creeds. Revelation on the other hand, teaches us that God is accessible and is willing to be contacted. Confucius' respect for the Creator led him to a spirit of tolerance based on a keen awareness of the immense gap between what man thinks he knows about God and himself, and what he does not know about it. Confucius never claimed that he taught on behalf of God.

In China, Communism fought Confucianism because the latter was considered too tolerant and moderate and also because of the worship of the ancestors.

There exists, moreover, an unlimited number of African and South American "religions", fetishist and sorcerer beliefs. What I have cited as an example of the grand spiritual currents, suffices to discern between human research and divine revelation. Briefly, all these religious expressions are attempts to grasp God, a human unconscious but urgent cry launched towards God: "Where are You? What are You?" God answers by revealing Himself in the Holy Scriptures: "Here I am!"

4.2.2 The Revealed Religions

In the Revealed Religions, God Himself answers those who seek Him. By this Revelation, the Creator presents Himself to be known as He is. This knowledge of the Creator elevates man to his own dignity, then to God in Whom is found the fullness of Truth, Happiness and Peace.

Among all the spiritual paths which present themselves to us, which one to choose? The one, of course, where God reveals Himself.

Three religions present themselves as revealed: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. These three in fact, are but one religion, all being accomplished in the person of the Messiah, Jesus, sent by God to unite men of good faith of all races, colors and nations. Divisions between believers are due to fanaticism, ignorance, and human interests.

Judaism 4000 years ago, God intervened directly for the first time in our world by revealing Himself to Abraham, the Syrian. Through him, God formed a community of believers to make himself known and prepare for the Coming of the Messiah, Savior of all mankind. This community was given the name "Jews". Their religion is Judaism. They put down in writing their history and teachings in the Bible. Contemporary Jews are still waiting for this Messiah. They think he must restore the political throne of David and rebuild the Temple of Solomon. Not having understood God's plan for the spiritual salvation of all men, they rejected the universal messianism of Jesus.

Christianity Christians believe in the Revelation made to Abraham. Christianity began 2000 years ago with Jesus of Nazareth, recognized as the universal Messiah by Christians. The first Christians were Jews convinced that Jesus was the expected Messiah. They carried this teaching to the four corners of the Globe. Of the many biographies of Jesus, only four were retained and considered inspired by God: the four Gospels. Letters were written by the first converts, the Apostles of Jesus, and treasured by future generations. These letters, as well as the 4 biographies of the Founder are called "the New Testament" or "the Gospels". They were added to the Jewish Bible and considered by the Christians as an integral part of the Bible.

Throughout history, Christians were sometimes divided by human circumstances, sometimes by spiritual controversies. This gave birth to three large Christian churches: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant.

Islam In the VIIth century AD, Mohamed appeared, the prophet of the Arabian Peninsula. He spoke to polytheists of the region of the one God who revealed Himself to Abraham and then to Jesus. Mohamed presented himself confirming the entire Biblical message, witnessing that God had revealed himself to Abraham, and that Jesus is truly the Messiah. He condemned the Jews for their refusal in believing in Jesus. The Qur'an is the book of Islam.

So the "three" revealed religions agree that God revealed Himself to men through Abraham. We will therefore study this Revelation more closely, starting chronologically: with the Bible. We will see the Books of the Old Testament, then those of the New Testament. Finally, you will have to read the book "A look of faith at the Qur'an" which will prepare you to read the Qur'an.

4.2.3 Reflection

The books of the Revelation This Spiritual Itinerary presents the reasons for our faith: it is based on Divine Revelation. We banish any sectarian and fanatic sentiments, being opposed to the teachings of this Revelation.

You who call yourself Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, etc... if you were not born in this path, would you have chosen it? And why? From your answer you will know if you will be able to decondition yourself or not. This deconditioning, this liberation is indispensable before

undertaking the study of the Books of Revelation. Faith does not come through inheritance, but by a personal choice clarified by knowledge. If you feel liberated from fanaticism, considering all men equal and called to find the Truth, you can continue with an open mind to the objective search for the Truth. I therefore invite you to go forth with the study of the "Biblical Course".

Atheists and faith in God Some "atheists" think they do not have Faith. This is often due to some "believers" who present a distorted and false image of God. In fact, many so-called believers, even amongst the clergy of different religions, do not reflect the **True** Divine Spirit. We believe that whoever genuinely thirsts for Truth will eventually discover God's true Face after **the indispensable De-conditioning effort** mentioned in Phase I of this "Spiritual Itinerary". So:

If you **truly** love God, you will inevitably end up believing in Him.

But if you do not love Him,

You will find a thousand and a thousand pretexts to refuse Him,

Masking your hatred by unbelief.

In short, it is all a question of love:

To love or not to love! This, indeed, is the question...

If you love God, you will certainly find Him!

Because He Himself will then come to you.

And to find God is to find Happiness!

'For in Him is found the Truth in its plenitude, Rest and Joy.

The problem of evil – Why is there evil in the world? God who is good, why did he "create" evil?

These are questions that we often hear.

To find the answers we have to think very carefully and use our logic by starting, for example, by convincing ourselves that God, who is good, cannot have created evil; for every tree can only give its fruit.

So, where does evil come from?

A reflection on evil imposes itself. Evil is not an entity in itself, but a lack of goodness, an infirmity: sickness is a lack of health, blindness is a deprivation of sight, theft is a dispossession, murder is a deprivation of life, lying is a distorted truth, injustice is a lack of justice, irregular bodily pleasures are a deviation of human energy. All these infirmities prevent man from developing spiritually. Evil thus defined, it becomes clear that God cannot take pleasure in "creating" it, nor takes pleasure in seeing his creatures suffer. He has no interest doing so. Any logical, impartial person can notice that.

On the contrary, God gave meaning to creation. There is an orientation, a direction to take in life: we must not go against traffic or drive too fast, or drink and drive, etc... in order not to hurt oneself or others. However, many refuse to take the path traced by God, and prefer to do what is only in their head. Therein lies the source of evil in the world. We drive at 200km/hr while intoxicated, we provoke accidents and deaths and... it is all Gods fault!!!

So it is man who introduced the bitterness of evil into his home. He never stops watering this maleficent plant with selfishness and a passion for power and domination. Man's lust is at the

origin of wars between brothers. Man kills man his brother in order to dispossess him and subject him to his demands. And this, against the precepts of the Divine Creator. Whose fault is it then?

It is the Divine Revelation which, in the **symbolic** account of the fall of Adam and Eve, informs us of the source of evil in the world. Men and women chose to believe the bad advice inspired by the devil, instead of trusting divine instruction and attaining fullness of life. They thus introduced diabolical thought into the intuition of man. This was the first sin, the split between God and his creation. After introducing the unbalance between man and God, "Cain" carried on the maleficent act by killing his brother "Abel" and introduced evil between man and man his brother. God, who warned man, is certainly not the culprit.

God's goodness manifests itself towards sinners through the grace of forgiveness. This grace is symbolized by the "tunics made of skins" that God gave Adam and Eve to hide their shame. Indeed, God reaches out his Hand to all men to take them out of their misery. But, he cannot force the hand of man who is free, and cannot compel him to do good, or prevent him by force from committing evil. Nor can God oblige man to seize divine grace, to take advantage of divine aid to save himself. He stretches out his hand, it is up to us to grasp it.

God solicits; He proposes. He never imposes Himself.

So man cannot be **forced**, neither to do good, nor to avoid committing evil. And this for two reasons:

1. **The Creator's nature**: God is not a dictator. He advises, but does not oblige his creatures to do good. Free Himself, He created minds and men in His image:

2. **Human nature**: Man is neither a slave nor any animal; a dog that is tied or muzzled so as not to bite. Free and dignified, he must use his affective and intellectual faculties in his own interest and the general interest. To commit evil, man must lose heart and intelligence. This is the worst infirmity, because it is the source of all evil. It would be justified to blame the Creator if He had created in infirmity from the start. However, in the beginning, the creature, in its human dimension, was impeccable, but subject to evolve towards God. It was human pride that rejected any possibility of collaboration, any synchronization with the work of the Creator. Hence the imbalance and the source of all evil on Earth. It is man who freely commits acts advised against by his Creator. He is a Father who wants no harm to man. What interest would He have in seeing his creatures moan? He is not a sadist. On the contrary, he never stops giving advice like a father, to avoid practices and attitudes that harm body and soul (drugs, illusionary pleasures, injustice, selfishness, pride, etc. . .)

Why did God create?

Life, true life, that conceived by the genius of the Creator, is beautiful. He wanted us to share it with Him. The basis of creation is thus, an altruistic good act. Few bother to search in depth, to recognize their missteps which are the real causes of their misfortune, to overcome their harmful prejudgments. They would gain so much, if not all, by overcoming themselves. They would find themselves freed from misconceptions by an act of humility and objectivity. The one who seeks sincerely, objectively and with detachment, without bitterness or restraint, finds infallibly!

Why then create, knowing that the devil and the fallen man should not enjoy life? Why then create, knowing that evil will come out of it?

The Creator is free. Infinitely free. It is out of this movement that He created, thus expressing a feeling of infinite love for those whom He called to Life. Now, if He had not created, foreseeing

-among minds and men- that creatures would become evil out of jealousy or defiance, then God would not have been free. He would have depersonalized Himself. If in fact because of such opposition, God had refrained from creating, He would have been subjected to enemies even before their existence. This is clearly illogical, because the Creator is infinitely free. As man can freely act within the framework of his nature, God can moreover do what He wants according to His **infinitely free nature**. The opposition of created nature is unable to curb the Almighty Will of the Great Architect of Creation.

Angelic spirits and fallen men are free to auto-destruct. But what God created was initially perfect, each according to its own nature. Such is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

In Jesus Christ, God gives back His eternal Life with immense love to those who collaborate in this redemption. "No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends", says Jesus (John 3,16; 15,13 / 1 John 4,9). Therefore, one should be humble and thankful enough to accept and reach out to grasp the grace offered for free. There are, alas, so few who wish to understand.

The wise man will be able to recuperate, through Jesus, what the devil, through Adam, managed to take away from him.

4.3 THIRD STEP – THE CHOICE: THE DIVINE REVELATION

4.3.1 Introduction

Having chosen the Revelation, we will deepen our knowledge by studying the books that speak of it. I therefore propose that you scrutinize the Bible by "The Biblical Course" and the Qur'an with the text "A Look of faith at the Qur'an".

Only a pure heart will reach the end of the search. It is therefore to you, "Pure Heart", that I address and address this Biblical Course. You have purified your heart by "deconditioning" it, you have liberated yourself from the chains of prejudice and hatred. Your thirst to know the naked Truth will lead you to hear its sweet and invigorating melody.

"Pure Heart", to you alone I address myself, to you who is ready to sacrifice everything to raise you up. To you who suffers from ignorance, who seeks to understand in order to love. To you who desires to resurrect from darkness and embrace the Sun. To you who is fed up of sleeping to the point of being determined to break the coffin of worldliness, to break with the mediocre and the banal. To you who discovered the illusion of vanity, who is ready to pay the high price of true Happiness and Truth, who has the will to persevere, to overcome all obstacles, to face all challenges in order to arrive to the summit and quench your thirst at the all-pure Spring of endless life. "Pure Heart", I address myself to you.

I offer you the fruit of forty years of study, research and fatigue. It is a fruit picked from the Tree of Life, "Gold purified in Fire" (Revelation 3,18). He has given me the Blessings that I wish for you. If you come to taste it, know that you owe that to my spiritual family, and especially to my wife Marie-José and my spiritual children Beatrice, Philip and Mireille: I owe it to them to be able to present this course to you.

You may have tried to read the Bible, but difficulties kept you away. Do not be discouraged, because, to understand the Bible **according to the Spirit of God**, you need a trustworthy guide. The Book of Acts of the Apostles reports that the apostle Philip had asked an Ethiopian who was reading a biblical extract from the Book of the prophet Isaiah: "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Ethiopian replied: "And how could I, unless I have someone to guide me?" Philip then sat by his side and explained its contents (Acts 8,30-31).

This Biblical Course is a trustworthy guide; “make it sit very close to you”, like Philip next to the Ethiopian, and follow it step by step, systematically and tirelessly, little by little each day. You will possess, in the end, Life through Knowledge.

Pope Pius XII said:

> “Ignorance of the Holy Scriptures is a wound in the side of the Church.”

Also, whenever you grasp an obscure point, this wound will heal, the lungs of your soul will expand and breathe the joy of knowing and understanding God a little better. And this knowledge will lead you to love which, in turn, will push you to want to know more about your marvelous Creator. You will then want to resemble Him, to have his Spirit, his mentality instead of your own, which is quite narrow. This is the “Resurrection” and the “Rebirth” of which Jesus speaks (John 3,5-7 and 5,25). Then the eyes of your heart will open and you will see Life at its Source. “Happy are **the pure in hearts**, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5,8). To see God is true Happiness.

After the study of this course, with time, and if you are a diligent reader, the Bible will have no more secrets for you, and its Spirit will be **in you**, revealing to you directly, from within, the advice from the loving Creator. Because it will teach you, it is its goal, to live in permanence with Him and enjoy his warm company from hereon.

Because, in the end, the purpose of the Bible is to communicate to you a Spirit, that of God; this Spirit is God Himself in you. Biblical knowledge is not an end in itself; it serves nothing if it does not lead to the acquisition of the Spirit of God, in a manner He sees fit, wanting and loving Life, the true one. It is not a question of clinging to the material life of this materialist world, to its deceptive and always disappointing joys, but to spiritual Life, that of your soul. Open yourself to the Eternal world which you are called to discover from here below, this is the reason for your existence on earth. That is the great biblical adventure which you are about to undertake. May this adventure be your greatest ambition in this passing world, where only spiritual achievement remains forever.

Begin by buying a good Bible: "The Jerusalem Bible" or "Crampon" for example. Skim through it. At first, you will feel that you are a little lost. It’s normal. Later, after this course, you will see that the Bible and yourself will be inseparable friends for life.

Yes, inseparable friends **for life**. Because do not imagine that you will discover everything all at once, once and for all, from the first reading, without ever reverting to this Sacred Book. The more you consult your Bible, the more it will be revealed to you; its Spirit will speak to you from the inside, especially if you read it with love and enthusiasm. You have to get used to spending **your whole life**, at least ten minutes a day, to read Biblical texts regularly, even after completing this course.

Never be content of saying that you have read the Bible 2, 3, 5 or 10 times, as some do, claiming that they “know it by heart”. To speak in this way is to show that one has not understood the soul of the Bible. With the Holy Scriptures, we do not make a reading account of how many times we read the bible, but a daily and continual frequentation of their texts. Let not a day go by without you washing your heart by reading a text, just as you wash your face every day. To this day and after 40 years of diligent frequentation, I continue to discover a finesse here, a nuance there, which permit me to better understand the intention of the Biblical writer. And that brings me even closer to God.

In the appendix of this course, you will find a limited study of the Qur’an: "A Look of faith at the Qur’an". You will see that the Qur’an is none other than the Bible, since it presents itself as a translation of the Bible "in manifest Arabic speech", intended for Arabs of the Arabian

Peninsula of the 7th century AD. At that time, they could not read the Bible since it existed only in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, all languages foreign to the Arabs.

Reading the Qur'an will free you from the sectarian fanaticism in which many wayward believers have perished and continue to perish, who, out of chauvinism, are content with themselves in reading the Bible alone or the Qur'an alone. You must know both, remembering that the Quran transmits the Biblical message, confirms it, and introduces the Gospels.

If I start with the Bible, it is because it precedes the Qur'an chronologically. The Gospel will give you an open mind, if you are docile, which will allow you to read the Qur'an objectively and without prejudice. You will find that those who slander the Bible or the Qur'an think that they differ from each other, or that they contradict each other; they are deluding themselves. So go ahead in telling yourself that you will read both books. You will understand that they convey the same message in a different language and style because they address different societies.

Application and diligence are the indispensable elements for your success; your spiritual and prophetic formation depend on them.

Let us go together now to the Biblical Prairie. Follow patiently this Biblical Course, composed of 15 lessons, and apply yourself to reading the chapters of the Bible whenever I refer you to them.

What is the Bible? 4000 years ago, 2000 BC, the whole of mankind was unaware of the existence of the one Creator God. Man was a polytheist and each society had its mythology of multiple gods, with different names governed by a god, supreme master, "Baal" for the Canaanites, "Jupiter" for the Romans, "Zeus" for the Greeks, "Ahura-Mazdâ" for the Mazdaeans (current Iran), etc...

The unique Creator had to reveal Himself, personally, to humanity to make himself known to it. Abraham the Aramaean, was the first man to whom God personally revealed himself around the year 2000 BC (Genesis 12,1-3). Were it not for this revelation, all of humanity would have sunk into complete ignorance of the history of creation and the identity of its Creator.

This divine revelation, made to Abraham, was a total upheaval for him and his entourage. Having occurred at a time in history when monotheism was unsuspected and unacceptable, when polytheism had its unchanging rules, rigid and lucrative cults, such a revelation was not at all suitable to everyone. Indeed, the various mythological clergy subsisted thanks to the offerings presented to the gods, and the manufacturers of idols profited very well from the lucrative trade of their products. Even today, in our society of the 21st century, the revelation of the one God upsets more people than it rejoices.

The Bible narrates the story of the dialogue established by God with Abraham, of the covenant between them, and of the first monotheistic society that resulted from so. The latter tried to explain, according to the scanty scientific light of the time, how God, He alone, created the universe. They also wanted to explain the source of evil and the reasons for human misfortune. This was preserved in writing in the Bible.

The lack of knowledge of the Biblical writers (the scribes) forced them to refer to mythological narratives, but by monotheizing their content. Thus, it is no longer "the gods" who created, one the sky, the other the sun, another the moon, the stars, the sea or the wind, etc... but the one God who revealed himself to Abraham, and He alone, by his Omnipotence, who created all things.

The first monotheist society deviated from the line drawn by God (1 Samuel 8,5-20 / 11,14-15 / 12,19). He sent prophets to bring it back to the divine path (Jeremiah 7,22 / Jeremiah 8,8 / Amos 5,21-27 / Micah 6,6-8 / Hosea 8,1-4 / Hosea 9,15). They announced that God will send

a supreme prophet, the Messiah, to enlighten the whole of humanity, not the Jews alone, by the knowledge of God (Isaiah 42,1 / Romans 3,29), knowledge jealously retained by the first monotheist society (Acts 11,1-3).

This Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, who has come to guide all hearts thirsty for truth towards the fullness of light. This is, in short, the Biblical story perfectly embodied in Jesus who says:

> "... whoever listens to my words and believes... has passed from death to life." (John 5,24)

> "'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me!' As scripture says: From his heart shall flow fountains of living water..." (John 7,37-39)

> "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life..." (John 14,6)

> "I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you and your joy be complete." (John 15,11)

> "Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11,28)

The Truth that we seek, the Happiness which we aspire for, are not found in cults, nor in doctrines, nor in religious or esoteric research groups, nor in buildings of prayer, but in the encounter and the welcoming of **the Person** who possesses them and distributes them **free of charge**, to those who thirst for them: Jesus the Messiah (Revelation 21,6 / 22,17). Jesus is the synthesis of the whole Bible. Any Biblical knowledge excluding him is in vain because:

> "Eternal Life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17,3).

What is the Qur'an? The Qur'an presents itself like the Biblical inspiration "in manifest Arabic speech" (Qur'an XXVI; The Poets,192-196). It was addressed to the Arab world through the Prophet Muhammad. More information can be found in the text A Look of faith at the Qur'an from which the following is an extract:

"The trap, which the Christians and Muslims have fallen into, is to consider that the religion of the Qur'an is opposed to that of the Bible. The Qur'an is not responsible for this error. On the contrary, it is presented as a summary of the Biblical message, inspired to Muhammad "in manifest Arabic speech", addressed to the inhabitants of Arabia, because they did not have -like the people of the Bible- holy messengers to warn them.

The Qur'an says:

> "It is indeed a Revelation (*the Qur'an*) from the Lord of the universe, brought down (*from Heaven*) by the Trustworthy Spirit, upon your heart (*Muhammad*), so that you may be a warner **in manifest Arabic speech**; it (*the Qur'an*) is also **in the Books** (*the Bible*) **of the ancients** (*Jews and Christians*)." (Qur'an XXVI; The Poets,192-196)

It should be noted that the Qur'anic Inspiration is already found in the Bible, which preceded the Qur'an. The Qur'an therefore does not differ from the Bible, since it emanates from it. The only difference is that it was revealed "in manifest Arabic speech" (Qur'an XIII; Thunder, 37):

> "So also did We send it down **as an Arabic** code of law."

> "Thus We revealed to you **an Arabic** Qur'an, in order that you warn **Mecca**, the Mother of Cities, **and its surroundings**..." (Qur'an XLII; Deliberation,7)

> "Or do they say: 'He forged it?' Rather, it (*the Qur'an*) is the Truth from your Lord, to warn a people to **whom no warner had been sent before you**, that they may be guided." (Qur'an XXXII; The Prostration,3)

4.3.2 The Bible: The Biblical Course

Please refer to our text: "The Biblical Course"

4.3.3 The Qur'an: Look of faith at the Qur'an

Please refer to our text: "A Look of faith at the Qur'an"

4.4 FOURTH STAGE – HAPPINESS

All the research work undertaken in this Spiritual Itinerary is aimed to lead to inner and profound happiness, that of the conscious mind to possess the treasures of eternal life. This happiness is the fruit of life with God, what the Bible calls "Immanuel" and which means, as we have seen, "God-with-us".

This stage cannot be explained; to be understood, it must be lived.

You have received enough light to live the Immanuel and understand this Biblical word:

> "How good the Lord is—only taste and see!" (Psalm 34 (33),8)

Meditate well: Matthew 1,23 / John 14,21-23 and Hebrews 9,28 / John 17,21-24 / Revelation 21,1-5 / Revelation 21,22-27.

Read the text "The Universal Restoration".

2

The biblical course

1. First Lesson – The Books of the Bible

The Bible is a collection of 73 books; it is thus a small library in a single book. This is why it is called "Bible", of the Greek "To Biblio" which means "the Book". This word comes from "Byblos", the ancient Lebanese port where, for the first time, the manuscripts were gathered, no longer in scrolls, but in books. Hence "the Bible" means **the Book**. The Jews and Christians are known in the Arab world as "the People of the Book" (Ahl el Kitab), those who follow the Bible.

Of the 73 books contained in the Bible, 46 form the books of the Old Covenant (or Old Testament) and 27 of those, the New Covenant. The Jews only recognize the books of the Old Covenant and refuse to consider it "old", believing that their alliance with God remains valid, in spite of their many treasons denounced by the prophets in the Bible and their refusal to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. The prophets, however, had declared this covenant broken already eight centuries **before** the arrival of Jesus (Isaiah 24,5 / Jeremiah 11,10 & 31,32), proclaiming that God will establish a "New Covenant" (Jeremiah 31,31), revealed in the books of this New Covenant, the Gospels (see Matthew 26,28 and Luke 22,20). The Christians believe in the 46 books of the Old Testament (a Covenant they consider outdated) and in the 27 books of the New Testament, established by the martyrdom of Jesus.

The Bible is thus divided into two large parts: the books of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament. It is important to understand the books of the Old Testament to realize the importance and the need for the New Testament, new in its Spirit and the revelation of the **true face** of God.

The Old Testament

The 46 books of the Old Testament are divided into 3 groups of books:

1. **The Historical books:** They tell the story of the creation (the book of Genesis), then of Abraham and the Jews until approximately 130 BC, which means until the beginning of the Roman Empire in the Near-East, particularly in Palestine (see 1 Maccabees 15,15-24). This group is composed of 21 books.

2. **The Wisdom books:** These are books of wisdom and high morality. The style is often poetic. They contain councils and prayers springing out spontaneously of a heart inspired by God to teach us on how to address the Creator. These books are 7.

Example of scroll

3. **The books of the Prophets:** Each one of these books speaks of the prophet of whose name it bears and brings back his words and testimony to us. They are 18 books.

The New Testament

The 27 books of the New Testament are divided into three groups:

1. The 4 Gospels and the book of Acts of the Apostles.
2. 21 letters (known as "epistles", of Latin "epistola") sent by the Apostles to the first Christians.
3. The Book of Revelation.

Each biblical book is divided into chapters and each chapter into verses, the same in all the Bibles and all the translations. This facilitates the references and the location of texts; Example: Genesis 12,3 means chapter 12, verse 3 of the book of Genesis.

The first five historical books have a particular historical importance. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Find them in your Bible. The Jews call them "Ha Torah" (the Torah) which means in Hebrew "the Law". When the Gospels speak of the Law, they are referring to these 5 books (John 1,45). The Christians call them the "Pentateuch", from the Greek "penta", which means five and "tevki" which means "scrolls", because the Bible was formerly written on leather scrolls which the reader unfolds as he goes along.

Today, thanks to printing, we are able to have a Bible in only one volume and easy to transport. In the past, the books were written manually by specialized scribes. Some Biblical books such as for example the Books of Genesis and Isaiah the prophet, each contained several scrolls which were not easily transportable, and no one could possess all the Holy Scriptures. These were kept in the Temple of Jerusalem and in some synagogues where they were taught, read, consulted and discussed. Some books are very small and hardly fill a page of our modern volumes, but it became a habit in calling them "book" even if they were but one paper (as the book of the prophet Obadiah, the letter of Jude and the last 2 letters of John).

Make an outline of the name of the biblical books to have the structure of the Bible in summary before your eyes. That will help you find and distinguish the books of the New Testament from those of the Old Testament.

1.1 The authors and the duration of the compilation

It took 1000 years to write the Bible, from Genesis to the Book of Revelation. Its drafting began towards the Xth century BC and finished about 95 years after J.C. with the Gospel of St John and his Revelation. St John was the last biblical writer.

Having been written over a period of a thousand years, the Bible is the work of several authors whom one calls "the sacred writers". They come from various social backgrounds: they are priests, kings, prophets, shepherds, Apostles of Christ of whom two were simple fishermen: Peter, who wrote 2 letters, and John, who wrote a Gospel, 3 letters and the Book of Revelation, the last of the biblical books. Luke the evangelist was a doctor, a cultivated and educated man. Some sacred writers are and will remain unknown, like the writers of Genesis, the books of Samuel and Kings, etc...

Before printing was discovered, the Bible was hand written by scribes devoted to this purpose. They were erudite in regards to the biblical texts and religious laws. It was against the scribes who condemned him that Jesus placed his anger. Because they, who had written the Bible, knew about the prophetic texts which announced him; their refusal of his message, announced by the prophets, is thus unjustified and condemns them (Matthew 23).

Apart from the many biblical writers, there is one Author who, along the centuries, has inspired and supervised the biblical work in its entirety: God. It is the divine Spirit which pushed the ensemble of human writers, spread out over a duration of approximately a thousand years, to put in writing all what they knew of God, his apparitions and his manifestations to those men chosen by Him in order to conclude his plan: to make Himself known to all men. These sacred writers were sometimes cultured, like the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and the Apostles Matthew, Paul and Luke, and sometimes simple shepherds and fishermen like the prophet Amos and the Apostles Peter and John. This shows that God does not need a culture person to reveal Himself.

So there were several human authors, but the principal Author is God. Throughout the centuries when the Bible was compiled, God watched over the fulfillment of his plan and putting it in writing to reveal himself to men of all the coming times, to reveal himself to you today and to those who will come after you until the end of humanity on earth. The Spirit of God has been for sacred writers what the muse is to poets, all things considered.

We can see that the biblical writers expressed Divine Revelation with precision and fidelity that evolved over time and experience. There has often been confusion between the Revelation of God and the personal desire of the writer, between what God wanted us to understand and what was understood. It takes great finesse and discernment to grasp the language of God. This requires time, experience and prayer. We must purify our souls and raise ourselves to the intention of God, who goes beyond our overly materialistic nature. Indeed, God says in the Book of Isaiah: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts... Yes, the heavens are as high above earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaiah 55,8-9).

The more the prophets got familiarized with the language of God, the better they seized the true meaning of his words, his true intentions. God wanted this incomprehension of His Word to be reflected in the biblical text. Thus, after having spoken, for example, of circumcision to Abraham and Moses, God later explains it through the prophet Jeremiah as the need to circumcise (ie to purify) **the heart**, not the foreskin (Jeremiah 9,25). Only love is capable of purifying the heart.

It is with Jesus that God expressed Himself best: Christ accurately reports the true words and intentions of God. This is why He is called "the Word of God" by the Gospel (John 1,1) and the Qur'an (chapter 3; The Family of Imran,45. See the text "A Look of faith at the Qur'an"). It was he above all who insisted on love (Matthew 19,19) and love which purifies (Luke 7,47).

Jesus, the Word of God par excellence, is the synthesis of the whole biblical message. He is the living and active Bible **in us**; we must also succeed in introducing Jesus in us, so that He can act in us and with us. It is in order to know and understand Jesus that we must study the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. Then we will realize how to introduce the Spirit of Jesus which is the Spirit of God into our daily life.

1.2 Oral traditions

Abraham appeared in 2000 BC. The scribes started writing the Bible approximately 1000 years later. But before the drafting of the Bible, how did the story of Abraham pass on to the following generations? Orally: the first community of believers narrated the story by word of mouth, in the family, the stories of the ancestors, how God appeared to Abraham, then to his descendants to distance them from the idols. Along the centuries, the stories passed from father to son. So the events remained alive in people's minds. However, passing orally from father to son along the centuries, the same narrative was told differently concerning certain details of no importance. What some attributed, for example, to Abraham, others said of his son Isaac.

This gave rise to several "oral traditions", which slightly differed from each other. You will thus find the same story repeated twice, once attributed to Abraham (Genesis 12,10-20) and another to Isaac (Genesis 26,1-11). In the same way, there are two accounts of the creation in Genesis: the first: Genesis 1,1 to Genesis 2,3 and the second: Genesis 2,4 to Genesis 2,25. You will notice that the manner of creating differs in the two accounts. The man for example, according to the first account, is created **after** the plants and animals, but is created **before** them in the second account. The difference between the two accounts is in the mode of creation, but it is always God who is **the unique Creator**. This is the important message that the Bible wants to convey to us, a message that is still contested today by atheists and materialists who reject all of the divine revelation.

What are the reasons for these different oral traditions?

The most important are:

1. The long duration (many centuries) elapsed between the event and its writing makes one forget to whom a specific fact happened: was it with Abraham and his wife (Genesis 20,1-18) or with Isaac and his wife (Genesis 26,1-11)? Some oral traditions attributed it to Abraham and others to Isaac. The editors, later on, not wanting to omit anything, reported the two accounts to satisfy everyone and unite the ranks. We should not see therein as a historical accuracy.

2. The multiple narrators.

3. The evolution of the mentality of the scribes and believers.

Therefore, there were several oral traditions of which the most important are:

1. The "Elohist" tradition where God, in the original Hebraic text, is called "Elohim".

2. The "Yahvist" tradition, where God is called "Yahveh".

3. The "Sacerdotal" tradition, introduced by the priests and the Levites where the rigidity and narrowness of their mentality are observed, as well as their attachment to cult worship. The Book of Levites (Leviticus) is one example.

These oral traditions should not be an embarrassment to you; just take note, so that you have a better understanding of certain differences when you start reading the Bible.

These oral traditions also differed from the North to South of Palestine, the inhabitants being influenced by the mythologies of neighboring countries. So some believed that creation was completed in six days, others thought differently, according to what they had heard from their neighbors in bordering countries. But the Jews all agreed on an essential fact: only one God created everything, and it is this only God who spoke to Abraham. This is the important revelation to safeguard; the form of creation is less than secondary.

It was this revelation of the **unique and creator** God that distinguished the Jews from the other peoples around them who were, at that time, all polytheists and idolaters.

When, in the Xth century BC, the religious Jews in charge decided to put their History into writing, they included the various oral traditions to protect the unity of the Jewish community. These various oral traditions help us understand the Revelation in spirit, according to the intention of God, not according to the letter or according to human and political interpretations. You will understand that better when you study Genesis.

1.3 The authenticity of the biblical text

Since a couple of years now, archaeological discoveries have called into question the historical authenticity of the biblical accounts. According to two Israeli archeologists, Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, authors of the book "The Bible Unearthed"* argue: "These are accounts which were knit together from souvenirs, details of ancient customs, legends on the birth of different people of the region".

Even if names of persons and places quoted in the Bible do not have any archaeological evidence, the fact remains that **the biblical text** was written by men inspired by God with the aim of elevating their contemporaries spiritually. (**Published by "The Free Press" A Division of Simon and Schuster, Inc New York, USA. 2001*).

It is up to us to read these texts with discernment and dig out the gold. The prophets themselves, Jeremiah in particular, contemporary of the writing of the Bible, condemns "the lying pen of the scribes!" (Jeremiah 8,8).

How can we be sure that the biblical text we have in our hands today is the original one? Some claim that this text was falsified and that, consequently, we can no longer depend on the Bible.

There are three kinds of evidence for the authenticity of the current biblical text; there is, on the other hand, no evidence of its falsification.

1.3.1 The archaeological evidence

Archaeology unearthed an incalculable number of texts of the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments. No literary work of Antiquity, even post-biblical, has been as faithfully transmitted as the Bible, supported by archaeological evidence. We have so many and such ancient biblical manuscripts that there is no room for doubt about the authenticity of the biblical text.

For the Old Testament The "Dead Sea" scrolls

The most important archaeological discovery is that of the "Scrolls of Qumran" or of "the Dead Sea" in Palestine. These leather scrolls on which a greater part of the Old Testament is written, were providentially discovered in the caves of the plateau of "Qumran" adjacent to the Dead Sea, in 1947, by a Palestinian shepherd who was looking for his lost goat. He found it in one

Excerpt from the “Sinaiticus”

of the caves whilst stamping his foot on a certain place. After getting closer, he saw under his foot the lid of a jar made of earthenware which contained a leather scroll written in Hebrew. It was the debut of the discovery of many scrolls, thus buried, of various Old Testament Books. They had been hidden underground by a Jewish religious community, the “Essenians”, who lived in Qumran and whose specific mission was the writing and the protection of the biblical texts. These discovered rolls date back to 200 BC.

It was customary to bury documents which they wanted to protect; this custom is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah who told his secretary: “Take these sealed deeds... and put them in an earthenware pot, so that they may be preserved for a long time.” (Jeremiah 32,14).

The Dead Sea Scrolls are currently at the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem; microfilm copies are available in all the world’s large museums. The text of these scrolls is identical to what we have in our Bibles today.

For the New Testament The Rylands papyrus

The oldest manuscript known as “the Rylands papyrus”, is a small fragment of papyrus from the year 125 AD, after the name of the archaeologist who discovered it. It contains a text of the Gospel of St John 18,31. This reassures us about the authenticity of the text, considering John died around the year 105 AD and that this papyrus only dates back about twenty years after his death.

Chester Beatty

Another more quantitatively important archaeological discovery is that of the papyri (plural of papyrus) of “Chester Beatty” dating from the 3rd century AD. They contain a greater part of the New Testament. They are preserved in the University of Michigan in the United States.

There are still three very old whole copies of the Bible, Old and New Testaments:

- **The “Vaticanus**” In Latin. It dates from the IVth century AD. It is in the Vatican museum, from where it derives its name.

- **The "Sinaiticus**" In Greek. It also dates from the IVth century AD. It was found by a Russian Prince in the end of the XIXth century in the Greek Orthodox Convent of St. Catherine in Sinai, from where it derives its name. It is in the British Museum.
- **The "Alexandrinus**" It dates from the Vth century AD and is in the British Museum.

The text of these three ancient Bibles are the same and identical to those of our modern Bibles.

1.3.2 The logical evidence

- The multiple Christian rites are a guarantee of the authenticity of the biblical text, because they are the same for all.
- The text of the Old Testament is the same for Christians and Jews.
- Some Muslims and Jews claim that the Christians falsified the Bible. Their claims are based on an imposter: the alleged "gospel of Barnabas". And yet, it is demonstrated that this "gospel" was written in the XVIth century by a Jew "converted" to Christianity, then again to Islam. According to this "gospel", the Messiah is not Jesus, but Mohammed. This contradicts the Bible and the Qur'an, which both recognize that Jesus is the true Messiah. Therefore, no Christian and no Muslim can believe in the "gospel" of Barnabas without disavowing their faith. Furthermore, let us recall that archaeological discoveries have demonstrated the authenticity of the current biblical text.
- All the biblical scholars recognize the authenticity of the biblical text. Among Muslims, two great scholars: the late sheikh Afghani and the late sheikh Mohammed Abdo (former Mufti of Azhar, Cairo) categorically deny the falsification of the Bible.

1.3.3 Proof of faith

God, who revealed the biblical message, cannot permit that its content be falsified and its prophecies lost, especially those that concern the Messiah.

1.4 The biblical languages

The Bible was originally written in two languages: In Hebrew for the Old Testament and in Greek for the New Testament (except the Gospel of Matthew which was written in Aramaic, for it was to the Jews that Matthew addressed his Gospel). The Old Testament was also written in Aramaic by the Jews who were exiled to Babylon (Iraq) in the VIth century BC, and where they learned this language.

The Books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek, the international language at that time (see Acts 21,37), like English and French are today.

1.4.1 The "Hebrew" Bible

We call "Hebrew Bible", what is the original text of **the Old Testament in Hebrew**. This Bible does not therefore contain the Books of the New Testament, considering that the Jews do not believe in Jesus. It was kept in the Temple of Jerusalem and in the synagogues in the

form of scrolls. Biblical translators refer to it as a solid base in their translations of the Old Testament.

1.4.2 The "Greek" Bible

In the 3rd century BC, Jews of the Diaspora (those who lived outside of Palestine) no longer spoke Hebrew and thus, could not read the Hebrew Bible. So those of Alexandria in Egypt asked the Jews of Palestine to send them biblical experts to translate "the Torah, the Books (*of Wisdom*) and the Prophets" (*that is how the Jews named the Bible*), from Hebrew into Greek for them. They sent 70 biblical scholars to them. When they arrived to Alexandria, they translated all the biblical books from Hebrew into Greek, adding 5 other books that the Jews of Palestine read in the synagogues and the assemblies, without however acknowledging them as inspired books. So these five books were not part of the "canonical" books, i.e. not recognized officially as inspired by God.

They are:

- For the Historical books: Judith and Tobit;
- For the Wisdom books: The Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus;
- For the books of the Prophets: Baruch;
- Two chapters were also added to the book of Daniel: Daniel 13 and 14.

Later, the two books of the Maccabees were also translated into Greek and added to the precedents already translated, bringing to 7 the number of books translated into Greek and added to the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible. This group of 7 books with chapters 13 and 14 of Daniel are recognized as the Deuterocanonical Books, in which one is free to believe or not.

You will find in the Second Book of Maccabees, the echo of the close ties between the Jews of Palestine and their Egyptian co-religionists, and the invitation made to the latter to obtain the Biblical text: "Greetings to their brothers, the Jews in Egypt, from their brothers, the Jews in Jerusalem, etc... May He (*God*) open your hearts to his Law (*Torah*)..." (2 Maccabees 1,1-4) ... "Nehemiah founded a library and made a collection of the (*biblical*) books dealing with the kings and prophets, the writings of David... In the same way, Judas made a complete collection of the books (*biblical books of the Old Testament*) dispersed in the late war (*deportation to Babylon*), and these we still have. If you need any of them, send someone to fetch copies for you." (2 Maccabees 2,13-15). The interest of the Jews of Palestine to those of Egypt was due to the fact that the latter formed the richest and most powerful Jewish group of the Diaspora, like the Jews of America today.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is known under the name of "the Greek Bible" or "the Bible of the Seventy" because of the 70 Jewish scholars who translated it into Greek. It differs from the Hebrew Bible by the 7 "Deuterocanonical" (not officially recognized) Books which were added. This is the Greek Bible which the Jews of the Diaspora, who did not understand Hebrew, consulted at the time of the Apostles, to verify the words of Paul (Acts 17,2 / 17,11).

The Jews then refused and still refuse today to recognize the 7 Deuterocanonical Books as inspired by God. This is why they are not found in the Hebraic Bible. The Protestants also reject these 7 books and do not introduce them into their bibles. On the other hand, the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles contain these books.

Therefore, according to whether you find these 7 books or not, you will be able to recognize a Catholic Bible from a Protestant one. These books contain nothing that differs on the

doctrinal level between the various denominations. As for the 27 Books of the New Testament, they exist in all Christian Bibles. It is only in the XVI century, after Luther (the founder of Protestantism), that Protestants removed the seven Deuterocanonical Books from their Bible.

The Hebrew Bible, and the Greek Bible of the Seventy, are used as a basis for all biblical translations. When the Books of the New Testament were written, they were added by the Christians to the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Seventy).

1.4.3 The "Latin" Bible (or "Vulgate")

In the IVth century AD, St Jerome translated the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, which became the international language at that time, and remained so for a long period, a language employed in the religious and scientific worlds (medicine, etc...) Jerome translated it into a popular version (vulgaris) so that ordinary people could understand it. This is why this Bible was known by the name of "the Vulgate", meaning "The Popular", accessible to the people. This Latin translation was used a lot and for a long period in the Western religious world, before the Bible was translated into all the languages of the world, since only about a hundred years. Today the Bible is translated into more than 2000 languages. Therefore, the Evangelical Message is currently spread throughout the world. This is a sign of the times predicted by Jesus (Matthew 24,14).

When a Bible mentions that it is translated from the original languages, it means from Hebrew and Greek, not from Latin, which is already a translation from the original Hebrew and Greek. Before buying a Bible, make sure that it is translated from the original languages.

2. Lesson 2 – The first 11 chapters of Genesis

Now you are going to begin reading the first Book of the Historical Books: Genesis. It is also the first Book of the "Torah" or "Pentateuch". Genesis is composed of 50 chapters, the first eleven of which tell us about Prehistory, of what happened before Abraham since the creation of the world, of the creation of Adam and Eve, of their revolt against God, up to the Flood with Noah. These first eleven chapters form a distinct block from the rest of Genesis and Biblical history in general. A lot was written about these first eleven chapters and many religious thinkers have devoted books to them.

In the first eleven chapters, the sacred writers attempt to answer the questions concerning the supernatural and life on earth: where does the universe come from? Why is life on earth so difficult? Why is there pain, sorrow and death? The answers: There is a unique God, Creator. He created man happy, but he disobeyed and departed from his Creator; in doing so he experienced misery. God then drew up a plan to save man from his foolishness.

From chapter 12, Genesis tells us about religious history with the appearance of Abraham, the first among men whom God called, to establish with him a plan aimed at saving from spiritual ignorance all those who would believe in his words.

Begin by reading chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis only, then continue reading this course. You will remark that Genesis reports two different narratives of the creation, due to the different oral traditions.

2.1 The first story of the creation (Genesis 1,1 to 2,3)

You must have found some "non-scientific" points in this narrative. You are right because the Bible is spiritual, not a scientific treaty. What is asked of it is **spiritual** accuracy; it gives it

Conception of the cosmos

by asserting that God is the unique creator of the universe. Whether He created it in 6 days or otherwise is not important. The intention of the Bible is to reveal the existence of the One Creator.

To dare to reveal the existence of one God and Creator, 2000 years BC, in a polytheistic and idolatrous world, requires extraordinary courage. Socrates was condemned to death 1500 years after this revelation for having believed, in Greece, land of philosophy and civilization at that time, that there is only One God (called by him "The Prime Engine" because it gives vital movement to everything). Even today, there are atheist societies that forbid talk of God in countries at the vanguard of scientific progress. There are still millions of polytheistic fetishists in the African and American bush. When you think of all of that, you can better appreciate the level of difficulties and dangers that our ancestors in the faith were exposed to, when they began writing the Bible three thousand years ago to reveal the existence of the One God.

In order to better understand this first account of creation, you must know that its writers, had a very elementary knowledge of God, and a false concept of the cosmos. They only knew of the existence of God and did not know that the earth was round and circled around the sun. They thought that God needed light to see clearly before creating. Therefore, He first created light on the first day, and "separated light from darkness. God called the light day and the darkness night... the first day." (Genesis 1,4-5).

It was only in the XVIIth century that Galileo discovered that the earth was a sphere and that it orbited the sun. Prior to that, man believed that it was flat and that it floated on a huge expanse of water, stabilized by 7 columns deeply entrenched in that water (1 Samuel 2,8 / Proverbs 9,1).

To explain the rain, they thought that water was stored very high in the sky, above the vault. This water did not fall onto the earth because the Firmament was holding it back. They believed that this solid vault divided "the waters under the vault from the waters above the vault" (Genesis 1,7).

This vault had windows and locks that God opened to let the rain fall. The only difference between what believers and pagans said about it was that the latter thought that **the gods** had created the universe and opened the locks of the sky to let the rain pass.

They still believed that the sun, the moon and the stars were divinities. The Revelation explained that they were created by God. Believers thought that they were hung from the vault to light the earth, just as you hang a chandelier from the ceiling.

One should not ask the Bible to reveal that the earth is round, not flat and that it is it which turns around the sun, not the contrary. The Bible has a specific purpose: to reveal God to men. This is what the sacred writers tried to explain from their conception of the cosmos.

Knowing that, you can now better understand why Genesis 1,6 says that God created the Firmament "to divide the waters under the vault from the waters above". There is nothing

Vision of the world in antiquity

scientific about that. The writer's aim is to reveal the One God who created the whole universe and that the gods of mythology never created anything, non-existent themselves. So, there is no god who created the sun, another the sea, another the moon, etc... Polytheism is thus swept away by the knowledge of the unique Creator of the universe.

As some people worshipped the sun and the moon, the writers of Genesis postponed their creation to the 4th day to depreciate them in the eyes of their worshippers. The Book of Deuteronomy reveals, indeed, that even among the Jews, some worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars (Deuteronomy 17,2-3 / 2 Kings 23,5). Notice that the names of the sun and the moon are not even mentioned; instead, they are called "the two great lights... the greater light to govern the day, the smaller light to govern the night..." Here again, it is scientifically wrong to say that the sun was created on the 4th day, since science shows that the sun existed millions of years before the earth. And how could the sun have been created on the 4th day when, according to Genesis itself, there had been 3 evenings and 3 mornings before? Mornings without sun? Genesis also says that these two lights were created "to divide light from darkness" (Genesis 1,18). Now, on the first day God had already "divided light from darkness" (Genesis 1,4). It is therefore necessary to grasp the spiritual intention of the writer: to reveal that God is the unique Creator, and to abolish the idolatrous worship of the sun, the moon and the stars.

This brings us to an important point: should we understand the Bible to the letter (from the "literal sense" of the text) or in spirit (from the "allegorical" or "spiritual" meaning of the text)? Should we believe immutably that God created in 6 days of 24 hours, that the sun was created on the 4th day, neither before nor after, or rather should we take into consideration the scientific level of that time? What counts for us, is the spiritual meaning: to discover what God wants to tell us through the partial knowledge, the literary form, and the style of the Biblical writers of the time.

A modern Biblical writer would have written the stories of creation differently, saying for instance: "In the beginning, God created neutrons and protons evolving at a temperature of 100,000,000 degrees centigrade, millions and millions of years ago. These molecules condensed while re-cooling to form the "raw material" from which God formed the cosmos. He first created the sun, a part of which tore off and cooled down to form the earth, etc..." This way of presenting creation does not change anything of the essential: it is still God alone who created everything. This is what matters for spiritual Knowledge.

As some adored the "great sea-monsters" (sharks, whales, crocodiles etc...), especially among navigators, Genesis 1,21 also intentionally placed them among the animals created by God.

Today, aimimg at some Asians who worship the white cow, the Biblical writer would have added that this animal is a creature of God; the readers would have concluded for themselves that it is nothing divine at all, and would have stopped worshiping it.

Remark that man only, among all the creatures, was made in God's image (Genesis 1,26). This "likeness" of man to his Creator is not physical but spiritual: man is also spirit, he is not only made of flesh, bones and blood. God endowed man with a conscience, unlike animals, which only live at the level of instinct. It is a fall for mankind to live only at the corporal level.

Man's elevation spiritually means that he is "dominant" over all animal creation. Also, when God finished creating man, and only then, "God saw all He had made, and indeed it was **very good**", not just "good" as with other creatures. Man is therefore, the goal of the creation of the universe (Genesis 1,31).

Have you noticed that in this narrative of creation, mankind is created both male and female, man and woman being created at the same time (Genesis 1,27)? To the contrary, in the second story, the woman was created after the man and was taken from the latter's rib. Another difference between the two narratives: in the first, man is created on the 6th day, after all the other creatures; according to the second story, the man was created first, then the animals, and finally, the woman. Here is another example of the different oral traditions.

What is common to both narratives is the intention of the writer, which is:

1. It is God who created the first human couple. The mode of creation does not matter.

2. The man should respect the woman and deal with her as his equal, because: – She was created at the same time as him (according to the first story) or from him, from his own rib, very near to his heart (according to the second story). – The man was fashioned from the earth, but the woman, from a more evolved material: man's flesh.

These texts aim then, to promote woman in times when she was not appreciated. We should not therefore understand human creation literally, since we have two different texts. Discover, through these two forms, the moral lesson: God created both man and woman equal, to love and respect each other, because they were made for each other, one complementary to the other. And, above all, because they are in God's image, Who is love, respect and dignity.

God asks the first human couple to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1,28). That is why man, who owes much to his parents, should not leave them except to live with his wife, with whom he "becomes one body" (Genesis 2,24). This atmosphere of love should reign in a couple who want to keep the image of God. Read what Jesus says on this matter in Matthew 19,1-2, and also Paul's advice to couples in his letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 5,21-33). You will see later that the first human couple will lose the image of God by disobeying Him. Our effort aims to reconquest our resemblance to the Holy Father. This is the purpose of Divine Revelation.

A final point to consider in this first account is God's "rest" on the 7th day (Genesis 2,2-3). God does not rest like men because He does not get tired like them. The mention of "rest" on the 7th day is intended for man, so that they rest, one day a week, instead of spending all their time worrying about earthly life and accumulating money. God invites man to devote one day a week to step back and think about spiritual life (Exodus 35,1-3).

The aim of these last two texts of Genesis and Exodus is to save man from materialism, as the majority of people only think of money. Some have understood them to the letter, believing that God has rested, and still rests, every Saturday, and that man should not do anything on this day. This is the case of the Jews who interrupt all activity on Saturdays, even good ones (exercise, etc...), to the point of almost total paralysis (it is forbidden for buses to run, planes to take off, etc...) They were angry with Jesus because he healed on Saturday (the

Sabbath); Jesus answered them that, contrary to what they thought, God works constantly (John 5,16-18). In Israel, religious Israelis "respect" Saturdays to the extent that they do not walk more than a kilometer, do not take neither taxi, bus, or plane. Jewish fundamentalists got the airport to close on Saturdays: they stone the buses in circulation on that day. But when it comes to taking the initiative for war on a Saturday, they never hesitate... ! Jesus -predicting the disasters that will destroy Israel- advised the Jews in these ironic terms: "Pray that you will not have to make your escape on a Sabbath..." (Matthew 24,20) It is then that they will have to run far, a distance that those who understand the Torah literally cannot afford on a Saturday... This is the danger of literal interpretation: "The written letters bring death, but the Spirit gives life", says Paul (2 Corinthians 3,6)

2.2 The second narrative of creation (Genesis 2,4-25)

I have already mentioned that in this narrative, the woman was created from the man's rib; three other points should be considered:

1. The Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil,
2. The names given by man to the animals,
3. The condition of the first human couple.

2.2.1 "The Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil" (Genesis 2,17)

It stands in the middle of Paradise, it is not a botanical reality but a metaphor, an action or an attitude that God judges as bad, and that man must avoid under penalty of suffering the consequences. Man must have a certain comportment towards God: a filial and affectionate relationship, simple and totally trusting. Note that it is a tree "**of knowledge**" and not an apple as some think. It is a reality of moral order, not a vegetable.

How should we understand the nature of this "tree of knowledge of Good and Evil"? It is to appreciate yourself, without reference to God, on what is good and what is bad, to feel free to judge good what the Creator advises against. We often hear today, some people say: "Why is such a forbidden action bad?" And they go so far as to conclude in the name of liberty that it is good... even if, for God, it is bad (drugs, homosexuality, pedophilia, violence, pornography, etc...)

It is why the prophet Isaiah had said: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, etc..." (Isaiah 5,20).

Some allow themselves to be attracted by the desire or the curiosity to know Evil, to experience it. It is useful to know Good by practicing it, but always harmful to indulge in Evil. One must pray not to "succumb to temptation" of evil which knows how to make itself attractive by taking on the aspect of good (Matthew 6,13). "Satan himself goes disguised as an angel of light", says St Paul (2 Corinthians 11,14).

The tree of knowledge of Good and Evil therefore represents a temptation: the desire to liberate oneself from God to judge like him, to be his equal and render no account to Him, no advice to ask Him, to decide for yourself, "like an adult", to be independent of God. Now, it is not in this spirit of conflict that we live with God, but in a spirit of divino-human collaboration, a spirit of exchange between father and son. We all need advice on one thing or another; a man at work consults those who have more experience than him and, to obtain a professional diploma, one should have the humility to first go through university. You cannot be a good

teacher without having been a good student. Maturity cannot be reached without going through childhood. Why then, when it comes to God, the Master of Life, should we think of taking one's "independence" to judge on vital things, often so complex and delicate? That kind of independence is "a tree of knowledge" of Evil which one does not touch with impunity. One should triumph over the desire for this false independence, chase away such arrogant ideas if one wishes to live well. For too much mulling over a temptation -as Eve did in Genesis 3,6- one ends up falling into the trap. So let us accept to attend the school of God if we want to learn what real life is. Let us be neither agents, nor victims of Evil.

This is the teaching of Genesis 2,17. Its purpose is to keep man in the life-giving mentality of God, the Holy Spirit.

2.2.2 Names are given by men, not by God, to animals

Notice, indeed, that the Creator does not give animals their names: "These he brought to the man to see what he would call them; each one was to bear the name the man would give it." (Genesis 2,19) It is a manner of expressing man's freedom and a certain independence which renders him a collaborator of God, superior to the animal. Here appears an aspect of the collaboration between God and man in the administration of the world, an administration counseled by God who would have given happiness to man, if he had respected it from the start.

To give a name is a significant and important act by which one establishes an affectionate and intimate bond with the named being, like the names given to domestic animals that we keep at home or, of much greater importance, those that we give our children. In the case of John the Baptist and Jesus, and because they were sent by God, it is God Himself who imposed their name even before their birth (Luke 1,13 / 1,31). He manifests thus, that they are his envoys. For us, it is still important to know a person's name or even a domestic animal's name. All carry a name, and what is nameless has no valor. It is why the writers of Genesis did not give the sun or the moon names when they were created (Genesis 1,14-19).

2.2.3 The state of the first couple in Paradise

It is about the state of mind, the psychological and spiritual condition of the first couple. According to the second narrative, Adam, without Eve, felt all alone: "Yahweh God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helpmate.'" (Genesis 2,18) Yet, no animal among them was found to fill the emptiness of the man's heart: "But no helpmate **suitable** for man was found for him" (Genesis 2,21). The man was in need of a **person**, a companion with whom he could dialogue with and who would be, like him, created in the image of God, endowed with intelligence and capable of loving to understand him. It is the only "helpmate **suitable** for him".

God decided therefore that man should be a human couple, complementary to each other: male and female. Amazing decision! God did the first "surgical operation" under anesthesia in human history: "So God made the man fall into a deep sleep. And while he slept, He took one of his ribs and enclosed it in flesh. God built the rib he had taken from the man into a woman, and brought her to the man." (Genesis 2,21-22).

Have you noticed how, at the sight of the woman drawn from him, the man **exclaimed** with enthusiasm, all joyful: "This at last (*unlike the other times with the creation of the animals*) is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh!" The man is evidently very happy to find himself before a being like him, a person of another sex who emanated from him.

Man's first reaction was wanting to name the charming person standing there in front of him. He does not ask her her name, he knows that she does not have one; he names her by referring to himself: "She is to be called Isha (Woman)", because in Hebrew "man" is "Ish", "Ish" names his female complement after his own name: "Isha". In English, the word "woman" comes from "man". Man's name was given exclusively to his human partner. Unlike animals, she is the feminine reflection of his own face. He recognizes himself in her. Having emanated from his flesh, "a man thus leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife, and they become one body." (Genesis 2,24 / Matthew 19,3-6)

So, by uniting himself with his wife, he finds himself, completes himself; he replaces in himself the extracted rib. It is why God condemns, in the Gospels, those who, in the end times, prohibit marriage (as some religious do): "The Spirit (*God*) has explicitly said that during the last times there will be some who **will desert the faith** and choose to listen to deceitful spirits and doctrines that come from the devils... **they will say marriage is forbidden**..." (1 Timothy 4,1-3). This does not mean that marriage ought to be a moral obligation: some find in God the Spouse Whom their heart yearns for. That spiritual union with God is a divine call to all men; whether it is done directly, through a freely chosen celibacy, or through marriage. In all cases, God should be the First Love; it is He who will then, orient believers towards celibacy or towards a matrimonial union. There is no absolute law with or against marriage. To each his vocation, all vocations are equally holy since they are a practice of the divine will. Happiness is nothing but the fruit of the accomplishment of this will.

What was the state of mind of the first couple in Paradise? Man and woman bathed in happiness because God created them pure, innocent, spotless: their conscience was clear. Where then did evil come from? No bad thoughts were put into them by the Creator. And how is it possible that God, who is Absolute Good, put Evil in the soul and mind of man created by Him? Good only comes from good. It is why Ish and Isha were happy, without any worries of life or any psychological complexities which gnawed at them. At peace with God and with each other, "they felt no shame in front of each other." (Genesis 2,25) They looked at each other in the face without having to be ashamed of a thought unworthy of their condition, and they were able to look at God in the face".

It is only after their revolt against God that man and woman will experience shame. This situation still prevails in the world today, because of the evil designs and unjust behaviors of men along the centuries. We no longer really look at each other in the face, and the shadow of evil hangs over the majority of the world. Few people for example, are able to resist the attraction of money, glory, power, or look at a naked body without having unhealthy, imbalanced or repressed desires. But at the beginning of humanity, it was not so: man and woman used to look at each other with a true, deep and pure love. They were immaculate, "naked" of all sin and clothed in the Grace of God, living in permanence with the Creator.

Since God created man in innocence, how did evil enter the world? This is what Chapter 3 of Genesis will reveal. Read it before you continue this course so to better understand the explanations that will follow. But first, be aware of the joy you felt in understanding what you have already learned. Have you felt the lungs of your soul expand and breathe the oxygen of spiritual joy when you discover the truth about Biblical points that were obscure to you?

2.3 Man's revolt against God (Genesis 3)

Through this symbolic narrative that you have just read, Genesis teaches us how evil entered into the world: man committed the error of believing the devil, instead of listening to God's advice. Here, the snake symbolizes the cunning devil. It is man himself then, who introduces evil into the world. Indeed, he alone is responsible for it. He preferred to believe the devil

and neglected God's selfless advice. Seduced by the misleading prospects of this enemy, man became Satan's slave. He quickly spread harmful ideas and diabolical desires into the hearts of subsequent generations. Henceforth, the devil had had his agents, his brood on earth, to drive humanity away from God. The whole story of salvation consists of exorcizing man by reintroducing into him the thoughts of God, thus liberating him from this diabolical influence. The man freed from the devil gets to ask God ardently: "May your will be done. . . " and never mine again.

The devil approached the woman, not the man, because the latter, having spoken with God, was more difficult to seduce. Remark the craftiness with which the evil serpent engages the woman. To make sure that he will not rejected by her, he initiates the dialogue with malice by posing a simple question, but in such a way as to distort the divine advice: "Did God really say you were not to eat from **any** of the trees in the garden?" That way of presenting the problem contained the seeds of a revolt against God. Satan wanted to push the woman into rebellion by making her believe that she was not to eat from "any of the trees". Before the satanic intervention, the human couple was satisfied with their fate.

And the woman explains to the devil: "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, 'You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death.'" The devil knew that! But the dialogue was already initiated and for him that was what counted. This was the first satanic triumph over humanity. Satan could henceforth, after having won the attention of the mother of mankind, pursue this ancient internal dialogue with mankind in its entirety. He boldly continued to speak to the poor and reckless woman: "No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." The woman was seduced by the idea of being independent like God, of deciding for herself what is good and what is not.

What is worse is that the devil gave a false image of God, that of a dictator, jealous of his prerogatives, miserly with his privileges and wanting to prevent man from evolving by forbidding him to eat from the tree of knowledge. And yet it is the contrary that is true: God advised man not to touch it, in order **not to die**, but be immortal like God, living and happy forever. Because the death of man is due to the false discernment of good and evil. To be "like God", we must think "like Him", discern according to Him. This is the Holy Spirit that Jesus has asked us to demand from God (Luke 11,13). This Spirit gives us eternal life and, through Him, we become like God, immortal.

What attitude should the woman have had in front of the devil's advances? Indifference! It is the greatest contempt. She should at least have been cautious and asked for the identity of her interlocutor: "Who are you?" She who was made in the image of God should have compared that image to the one who spoke to her. That was the attitude of Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth, before the Angel Gabriel: "She asked herself what the Angel's greeting could mean". (Luke 1,29) If "Isha" had asked herself what her malignant interlocutor's words meant, she would have surely embarrassed the accursed serpent. Indeed, the devil knew very well that God had not forbidden man to eat from **all** the trees in the garden: the woman also knew that; and she should have armed herself with discernment to confound the devil. But she was blinded by pride: to become like God. It is, however, "like God" that God Himself wants us to become. We can only become so **through** Him. Man wanted **without** Him. In that resides his fault.

The woman yielded and dragged her husband in her outburst against God. After having "eaten" the forbidden fruit, their eyes, both of them, opened, indeed, as the devil had said to the woman, but to see how ridiculous was the situation in which they had willingly put themselves. They were ashamed of their fault, realizing that they were no longer contemplating the life-giving face of God, but the cynical face of their satanic seducer. Their eyes were opened to this heart-breaking spectacle, realizing that they were deceived. Jesus came to reopen the eyes of

his faithful to the vivifying Face of God: "Happy are the pure in heart: they shall see God". (Matthew 5,8)

This experience was a shock for the first couple. Nothing was ever the same again, everything had changed between God and them and between themselves. They no longer dared to look at Him, or face themselves. They realized that their happiness was due to divine grace and that they had lost it. Now they felt naked, deprived of the benefits of the divine rays. Man wanted to experience evil and got to know its bitterness instead. This bitter taste of emptiness is due to God's withdrawal from the soul that resists Him, leaving it in solitude, plagued by sadness. Because God offers Himself, and never imposes Himself.

The devil succeeded in separating man from God. So misfortune, sadness and shame were the "fruit" picked by man from "the tree" that he was not supposed to touch. These depressing feelings are the source of human complexes; they generate all sorts of imbalances: guilt, inferiority, false modesty, etc... Man often tries to pick himself up, but to fall into the opposite extreme: cheekiness, pride and arrogance, liberalism, etc... Man cannot recover without God.

The first human couple's fall is known as "the original sin". Its consequences were not limited to the first parents, but contaminated their descendants. All of us have inherited the stains of this original sin, just as a child suffers the consequences of a family or social imbalance.

The shame choked the man and the woman to the extent that their corporal nudity became unbearable. The fig leaves they used as a loincloth to dress themselves are symbolic: to hide the fault committed spiritually by covering the body. And yet, it is at the level of the soul that the fault occurred. The Bible often uses the expression "stripped bare" to reveal the true intentions of the soul, to denounce crimes and sins (see Jeremiah 13,26 / Lamentations 1,8 / Nahum 3,5 / 2 Corinthians 5,1-5). Man and his wife did not want to be seen by God in their miserable state, so they covered their bodies. For the first time, they were afraid to face Him. When God approached them, in their stained conscience, they turn away the eyes of the soul, like any guilty person who feels uncovered. Adam and Eve run away when they hear God approaching, instead of running towards Him spontaneously. This flight before God has marked mankind: man is afraid of God, avoids his gaze and moves away from Him. This is the heritage of original sin.

Note that neither the man, nor the woman ask for forgiveness. The man throws the blame on the woman and, indirectly, on God Himself for having given her to him: "It was the woman **you put me with**; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it." He seems to blame God for giving him the companion who was his joy at first. The woman, in turn, places the responsibility on the devil. It would have been so wonderful if the man and his wife, together, had apologized to the One they had offended: "A fault confessed is half forgiven", as the saying goes. But man often prefers to exculpate himself and make others responsible for his faults.

Adam and Eve... are us too! How can we repair the error? Who cares about this? When we do a fault, we should apologize for it. How many people ask God forgiveness from the bottom of their hearts, and not from the tips of their tongues?

What exactly was the condition of the first human sin? Several commentators and interpreters have sought to understand it. I believe, like some interpreters do, that it was a human attempt to usurp the divine sovereignty: to dethrone God and reign in His place, to be self-sufficient and decide on life's issues without God, to choose by oneself what is good and what is bad, to decide alone on what makes a person happy or unhappy. Man's failure opened up his eyes: he considered that, without God, he cannot be entirely happy. He was ashamed of that. Jesus came to re-give us God, to put us back in His vivifying company. It is why the prophets who announced His coming called Him the "Immanuel", which means in Hebrew "God-with-us" (Isaiah 7,14 / Matthew 1,22). Jesus brings man back to God. There is no other way (John 14,6); divine forgiveness is obtained through faith in Jesus (1 John 2,12 / Colossians 2,13).

Some think that original sin was sexual. This does not seem to be the case because God asked the first couple to multiply and to fill the earth (Genesis 1,28). However, if that sin took place in the form of a sexual act, then that act was performed without God, or in a spirit of defiance to God, in a spirit of pure sensuality, on the level of pure instinct and the unique pleasure of the flesh (as so many do in the world of pornography), excluding feelings of profound love and of the couple's spiritual communion with God.

That would explain why, after the fault, God says to the woman: "your yearning (**sexual desire**) shall be for your husband. . . " (Genesis 3,16). After the fault, the heart will no longer regulate relationships between man and woman, but sexual desire: and henceforth men will "dominate" women, as we can see in several societies since ancient times. The couple's harmony was ruptured, giving way to a growing imbalance that was difficult to overcome. We see this imbalance which leads to divorce, polygamy, adultery, and the so often tragic family situations around the world. This is the fruit of the devil's spirit introduced by man into the heart of mankind from the moment of original sin.

We must not believe that only our first parents are responsible for this tragic fault: billions of people after them, to this today, continue to aggravate the situation, proclaiming their solidarity with the first couple's sin, without thinking of drawing the lesson from the past. And still, by the millions, people resist the Spirit of God, preferring their own or that of the ancient viper, who sidetracked the first man.

The modern man, dazzled by false science and swollen with pride, persists in believing that he can do without God; he wants to judge by his small head what is good for him and what is bad. Mankind has thus contributed to pollution and nuclear danger which threaten the very existence of mankind. Spiritual pollution is even more serious and results from the fact that man neglects Heaven's advice and only listens to Hell's suggestions. And when man is doing badly, instead of questioning his attitude, he resents God. . . who had however advised him not to do what made him sick and sad. Think of the drug addicts and homosexuals who demonstrated against God after having been infected with "Aids" . . . That resembles the patient who refuses to take the medicine prescribed by the doctor; his illness worsens and his anger spills out at the doctor. . . instead of blaming himself.

Note that God only curses the devil because He knew very well what he was doing. But the man and woman were not **fully** aware of the gravity and the consequences of their act. Also, God leaves us a glimpse of hope of future redemption in announcing that the children of the woman will take their revenge and will one day triumph over the children of the devil. God indeed says to the devil: "Be accursed beyond all cattle. . . I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. **It will crush your head** and you will strike its heel." (Genesis 3,14-15) This verse is the first announcement of the coming of a human descendant -the Messiah- who will save men from the psychological and spiritual prison into which the demons threw them. The woman and her descendants who crush the devil's head are the Virgin Mary and her Son, Jesus, with all his people, men of good faith from all over the world.

In his infinite mercy, God gives man the opportunity to redeem himself, to repair his fault. This possibility is symbolized by the clothes made out of skins with which the Creator covers the nakedness of man. Adam and Eve wanted to cover their shame with "fig leaves" (Genesis 3:7). This garment is not resistant. Also, God, as a good Father, "made clothes out of skins" to express His compassion and encourage man to find a way out of his confusion. This allows those who love God to find the way back to Him, knowing that He is understanding, that He will help them remodel themselves to His image lost by sin (Romans 5,12-16 / Colossians 3,10). For sin destroys the image of God in us. Through sin, Satan fashioned humanity in his image. Jesus came to re-give man the image of God.

After the fall, "the man called his wife" Eve, "because she was the mother of all believers" (Genesis 3,20). This new name of Isha indicates a new situation: the woman is no longer classified after the man, but according to her great mission: to give life to humanity. Because Eve, in Hebrew is "Havva", which means "life". Notice that the man's name "Adam" is not mentioned. Later, Adam's name was given to him in relation to his origin, because "Adama" in Hebrew means "earth", "clay" or "mud" from which God formed man. Hence his name "Adam" which translates to "Earthly", "Clayey" or "Muddy" in relation to his extraction. The name of Adam is first mentioned in Genesis 4,25.

After the fall, God's attitude changes towards man: with a touch of irony, he says of his creature: "See, the man has become like one of us, with his knowledge of good and evil!" The man deserved this mockery. He also deserved to be removed from Paradise before committing another act of stupidity: "He must not be allowed to stretch his hand out next and pick from the tree of life **also**, and eat some and live for ever!" (Genesis 3,22). Another deserved and humiliating irony. For man would want to live forever... as God... without dying, but on earth, and without having to appear before the Eternal Judge. Is this not the desire of many men who are looking for serums of longevity? And by the most ridiculous means: companies embellish the bodies of interested customers at a high price and keep them in special refrigerators while waiting for the uncovering of the "miracle" product that when injected into the body, "resuscitates" the client... delighted to find life in this underworld... These "resurrection" companies must however at that time still be alive!

What does it mean for man to be expelled from Paradise? Is it to be exiled from an earthly place? No, it is not about that: the Paradise in question is a state of mind: happiness. Man was totally happy before deciding to take charge of himself, of "liberating himself" from God. The Creator gave everything to man, for free. He lacked nothing, neither spiritually nor psychologically as he was fulfilled by the love of his Creator; nor materially, being fulfilled by the abundance of the earth's produce. Life was problem-free in every way. What makes life difficult, if not impossible at times, are the economic systems introduced by men hungry for possession, a harmful lifestyle (luxurious social life, alcoholic beverages, cigars, cigarettes, gambling, casinos, clothing branded haute couture etc...) Yet the earth produces calmly and constantly for all. The products are so abundant that some rich countries have them in surplus; this surplus is destroyed to maintain high prices, instead of being distributed to the starving Third World. International trusts and consumer societies have not made people happy: it is unemployment, inflation, dissatisfaction in the world. The greater part of the world economy is devoted to weapons destined for destruction... And the earth that God created continues to give man what is best... And man is bent on making the earth less and less habitable and capable of feeding it, polluted and saturated by toxic waste (nuclear and other).

Man has always persisted in wanting to lead **his own** life as he wishes, without God. The result? The rich have everything that money can buy yet are not satisfied: because money can neither buy happiness nor a clean peaceful conscience. Despite the abundance in which they live, many rich people prefer suicide rather than life. That is because they live without God. Man's "independence" made his life hard and unpleasant. That is why God said to the man: "Accursed be the soil because of you (***by your fault***). With suffering shall you get your food from it, every day of your life... With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread (***because of your bad management***)..." (Genesis 3,17-19). Man always tends to reject God's advice, preferring to surround himself with less effective human counselors. And yet, God is that "Marvelous Counselor" of Whom the prophet Isaiah speaks (Isaiah 9,5).

Thus, man was banished from happiness by rejecting the Source with his own hands. From then on, he's a vagabond in search of a substitute for true happiness, thinking that he finds it sometimes in money, sometimes in pleasures or in vain glory. The text of Genesis says that

"God expelled him from the Garden of Eden to till the soil" (Genesis 3,23). If God sent man away, it was because he wanted to lead his own life without God's intervention; so let him go and wear himself out cultivating the soil, that soil which was ready to give him everything without fatigue (Read Matthew 6,24-34). But man preferred to be engulfed by material things.

Thus, **original sin** had two unfortunate consequences on the whole of humanity.

1. The first, the most harmful, is psychological and spiritual:

The spirit of man and his soul fell into the body, becoming submissive to the flesh, insensitive, as if anesthetized. The shock received literally made them lose consciousness. Man thus lost his spiritual and psychological faculties, becoming fragile, unable to orient himself **from within**. This fall led to the wandering of the heart and the intellect; anguish settled in the human soul. Poets, philosophers and intellectuals of all times sought in vain to understand and analyze the reasons for human anxiety. Only Divine Revelation enlightened us.

Man's disobedience has introduced Satan into the subconscious of all mankind. Satan obtains the right of residence and intervention in the will of man and henceforth speaks on his behalf. He disguises himself by usurping the identity of the man. So when we say "I" or "I want", we have to discern who is speaking. **Who is this "I", who speaks in us?** Who wants? God, Satan or I? Therein lies the crux of discernment. Christ comes to "reconnect" us to God and to free us from satanic interference. That is why Jesus says to his enemies: "The devil is your father, and you prefer to do what your father wants" (John 8,44). They were not aware of it, but nevertheless very willing. It is always beneficial to make sure that what one desires is in harmony with God's Will, with His plan for the liberation of mankind.

Fallen entirely into his body, man could only discover the life of the soul through physical sensations, since reflection and sentiments were locked up in the body. From now on, man lives earth to earth, unable to find by himself and in himself the life of the soul of which he only feels a vague nostalgia.

In spite of this, God, through Jesus, reaches out to man. He who grasps this divine hand sees his soul rise to its destination of origin. This return of the soul to life is called by the Gospels, "The First Resurrection" (Revelation 20,5-6 / John 5,25-26).

2. The second consequence is of a material and temporal nature:

The life of man on earth is made difficult by the fault of man himself.

The whole history of human salvation aims at getting man out of trouble where he has voluntarily got stuck. It took all the love and the genius of God, his tender Creator, to get him out the error of his ways through his Envoy: Jesus.

The moral of this story is that we must not engage in a dialogue with temptation: we do not argue with the devil, just as we do not play with fire. Let us not be like Eve who lingered on contemplating what was forbidden, finding it good when God said it would give death. Let us believe God, even if evil "seems" good to **our** eyes. May Eve's fault serve in unmasking death which presents itself to us in a seductive form. Let us be like Mary, that young pure-hearted girl who merited to be the worthy Mother of the Messiah, the Savior of man. She never accepted to listen to the seductive voice of the satanic "serpent", she simply ignored it, having eyes and ears solely for God, wanting to fulfill save His plan. This is why we call her the "New Eve", the new Mother of the living, ie believers, She whose children crush the devil's head (Genesis 3,15).

I have explained the first three chapters of Genesis at length to instill in you a spirit that allows you to understand the Bible according to God's intention. Be careful of literally understanding the stories you read about creation and the fall. Seek the deep spiritual meaning through allegories, without letting yourself be chained by the literal meaning that closes the horizon

of research and comprehension. The world was not created in 6 days, nor the sun on the 4th day; a snake did not physically appear to Eve: this snake symbolizes the ideas inspired by the devil to mankind in general, not necessarily to the woman, in a subtle and tortuous way, like a snake, to seduce without being recognized.

On the other hand, we can believe in the theory of evolution without ceasing to believe in God. In this case, God would have created evolutionarily. There is no scientific basis to support those who claim that evolution demonstrates the non-existence of God: if there is evolution, then there is "the One" who makes the things evolve: God. It is He who will have "programmed" this evolution, as an embryo develops (evolves), from the tiny seed, to adult human size. Those who believe in the fixist theory (ie that God created man as he is, without evolving from an inferior animal stage) and the proponents of evolution thus agree on the essential point for the Bible: God is the only Creator. It is up to science to determine the mode of creation! ...

Now read chapter 4 of Genesis before continuing the course.

2.4 Cain and Abel: man kills his brother man (Genesis 4)

You have just read a symbolic story, which reveals how evil spread on earth between man and man, his brother, after what was perpetrated by man against God, his "Father".

This narrative, like those that precede it, is allegorical and should not be understood literally, for it did not exactly occur in this way. If there was on earth, literally speaking, only Adam, Eve, and their two children; who else then did Cain fear to be killed by when he says to God: "whoever comes across me will kill me" (Genesis 4,15)? So it is about the generations, and the names of Cain and Abel are only symbolic: they are not historically true. Everyday Cain kills Abel.

Why did God refuse Cain's offering and accept Abel's offering? There is a lesson that the Bible wants to give us. Many stop at the historical development of this narrative, without trying to discover **its morality**.

To understand this text, you have to read between the lines. Note that Cain presented "products of the soil" (*... anything... bad things in order to get rid of them... and to get over with this cumbersome task of offering something to Yahweh*). On the other hand, Abel "offered the **first-borns** (*what was best*) of his flock, and **even** of their fat (*very precious to guard for cooking... But for Abel nothing was too good for God*)". This means that Cain offered reluctantly, with avarice and restraint, without love. On the contrary, Abel spontaneously offered his best, and with all his heart. We then understand the attitude of God. We act the same way and often refuse, we too, gifts offered to us from people with bad intentions.

To refuse a gift from someone is to reject the person who presents it. One must have good reason for doing so. Facing God's rejection, Cain should have become aware of his own shortcomings, out of respect for dignity of the One to whom he wanted to offer his imperfect gifts. He should have pulled himself together, apologized, and then redeemed himself by presenting a good offering in good heart.

God said to the Jewish priests through the prophet Malachi, "You disdain me... You bring the stolen, lame or diseased animal, you bring that as an offering! Am I to accept this from your hands? Cursed be the rogue who owns a male which he has vowed to offer from his flock, and instead sacrifices a blemished animal to me!" (Malachi 1,13-14)

The prophet Amos also said to the Jews on the part of God: "I take no pleasure in your solemn festivals. When you offer me holocausts, I reject your oblations" (Amos 5,22), then it adds that the offering that is pleasing to God is the practice of good and justice (Amos 5,24). It was because these offerings were made in the spirit of Cain that God refused them.

All that is given without love has no value in the eyes of God. Jesus praised a poor woman who had put only some small change in the money basket of the poor, judging that she had put more than the rich, having given wholeheartedly and from her necessity, not superfluously (Luke 21,1-4). In this same spirit, Paul says that giving all his money to the poor without giving love serves to nothing (1 Corinthians 13,3).

Seeing himself rejected, Cain attacks his brother instead of repenting. He thus poisons his state, lets himself be enveloped in jealousy and envy to the point of killing his only brother. And when God asked him for news of his brother, he replied arrogantly, "Am I the guardian of my brother?" Far from being his guardian, he was his executioner! So God curses Cain for his crime, for his impenitence and impertinence.

Cain's curse is the second one mentioned in Genesis. The first divine malediction fell on the devil. Cain represents the descendants and image of the devil on earth. This accursed progeny will be Satan's instrument throughout the centuries. The Woman's children, the "New Eve's", are called by God to fight and overcome this diabolical progeny (Revelation 12,17).

What is the meaning of the sign that God marks on Cain so that no one kills him? It is symbolic and represents this felon's fury whose face is marked as such forever. His grim forehead, his stern face and his wicked gaze reflect the hatred anchored in his soul. It is not Cain then, who must be afraid of "whoever comes across", but, on the contrary, each person will now have to keep their distance from this criminal, just by his appearance.

It is Cain and his fellowship who terrorize people, for if a Cain is killed, he will be avenged by "7" others. Cain, driven out by God, hesitates to distance himself under pretext that he would be killed. He wanted to stay with God, not to repent and change his life, but to be safe... all whilst committing evil. God then said to him, meaning: "Go, get out of here: it is not you, criminal, who should fear the others; it is rather you who instills fear into 7 others", ie a multitude (Genesis 4,15). The number 7 is symbolic: it designates plenitude; Jesus told Peter to forgive 77 times 7 times who repents sincerely, ie an unlimited number of times (Matthew 18,21).

Cain eventually "left the presence of Yahweh and settled in the land of Nod" (Genesis 4,16). This country is symbolic: Nod means "wandering" in Hebrew and symbolizes the perdition of the soul. It is not a geographical place, but a wretched state of mind, even worse than that due to original sin. For this kind of fault which deserves the curse of God, there is no hope of the liberation of the soul: it is the sin against the Spirit of God for which forgiveness is not possible, since there is no repentance (Luke 12,10 / 1 John 5,16-17).

Through Cain and his kind, evil spread and worsened in the world, the sons of Cain became even worse than their criminal father. This is the meaning of the story of Lamech (Genesis 4,19-24). Read it again: Lamech threatens his two wives, Adah and Zillah, with the worst retaliation, exteriorizing his intractable and bestial character: he killed a man who had only wounded him and a child because he had hit him; because "if Cain is avenged 7 times, Lamech is avenged 77 times more. . . !" After Cain, violence increased, and his descendants are infinitely more violent than their criminal ancestor. You now better understand the expression "to be avenged 7 times"; remember that the symbolism of the number 7 is fullness or plenty, as when we say, "I repeated that 100 times..."; what we want to say is that we have repeated such a subject a sufficient number of times to be understood.

God, wanting to restore good on earth, gives Adam and Eve another son: "When Adam was 130 years old he became the father of a son, in his likeness, as his image" (Genesis 5,1-3). This new son is the ancestor of man who must fight evil spread by Cain and his descendants.

Notice that this new son, named Seth, is in the image of Adam, not in the image of God, deformed in Adam through his fault. A distorted image, but not completely and irretrievably

destroyed, as was the case with Cain and Lamech. Restoration of the divine image is thus possible in the case of Seth and his ilk. This spiritual "cosmetic surgery" aims to reshape the moral aspect of man to that of God's. It is modeled on the luminous Face of Jesus who, in turn, gives us the prototype of the face approved by God, that of Mary his Mother. Abandoning herself to divine will, Mary replied to the Angel Gabriel announcing the birth of Jesus: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me." (Luke 1,38) May Mary help us regain the image of God to evolve towards human perfection, whose summit is to resemble God.

So then, after Adam's sin, man begot his children in his image, not God's, who was perfect in Adam before the fall. This is the sad heritage of original sin: a divine image that has become blurred, almost unrecognizable according to the case, but recoverable under certain conditions. Therein lies the responsibility of parents. What image of God do parents give to their children? What idea do they themselves have of God? Do they, at least, care to know God, to discover his true "Name", his true face, who He really is, to reveal Him to their offspring? Do they want to be good parents by helping their children evolve, or to stop them by their own distorted image? There are many questions that this text invites us to ask ourselves in the deconditioning and awareness program written in the beginning of this spiritual itinerary. The prayer taught by Jesus: "Father, Hallow be thy name", employs all its importance and means: "Father, may I know your true face, in order to reflect it".

Eve called her newborn Seth (in Hebrew "Shat" means "Granted"). She called him Seth because God "**granted** her another son" to replace Abel. Seth is after Adam's image, not God's. Remember well his name because the Biblical writers had him as Adam's successor and the ancestor of the "sons of God" on earth, the lineage of "the Woman" who will crush the head of the evil serpent (Genesis 3,15).

Read chapter 5 of Genesis and pay attention to the phrases that are repeated rhythmically and **intentionally**: "Such and such (*the name is said*) fathered such and such (*the name is said*) and (*others*) sons and daughters (*whose names are not reported*)". There is an intention for that: those whose names are mentioned are considered ancestors of the Jews. Those who are not mentioned are ancestors of other peoples. Remember, giving a name is to give valor, and refraining from doing so means disdain. This imaginary genealogy has a goal to separate man into two categories: the chosen who are named, and the fallen who are not named.

The writers of Genesis (scribes and Jewish priests) believed that only Jews were "after the image of God". This genealogical tree was invented by them to raise the dignity of the Jews to the detriment of Pagans (goyim) of that time. Therefore, it has no historical reality.

Jews consider themselves the only "sons of God" on earth, direct descendants of Seth and his lineage **that carries a name**. They present themselves as the "chosen people". According to them, the "other sons and daughters" of Seth's lineage, those who are not named, are not after the image of God, not being after the image of Seth and his named descendants. That is why they are not considered by the Jews as men, but creatures a degree lesser than men (the Jews), and a degree above animals, somewhere in between the Jew (who is man) and ape.

The spiritual interpretation of this genealogy is the following: Seth's descendants who are "named" and their lineage, represent all the righteous and good men of all races and nations; the other "sons and daughters" not named, represent the bad and homicidal descendants.

Two symbolic names to be retained in this fictitious genealogy are Enoch and his son Methuselah. Enoch, for he did not die, but rather "vanished (*from the earth*) because God took him" without letting him pass through physical death because of his rectitude: "Enoch walked with God", Genesis tells us (Genesis 5,21-24). Notice Enoch's age: 365 years old, the number of days of a solar year. Another man of integrity shared Enoch's fate and did not die: the prophet

Elijah, who went up to heaven alive. You will read his story later (2 Kings 2,11-13). Enoch and Elijah are two great figures to know: they became symbols of an ardent and courageous faith. Their going up to heaven can be understood as a symbolic or real fact; one must above all retain the moral of the story: faithful believers do not die, as Jesus taught (John 8,51). As for Methuselah, he is the one who, according to Genesis, lived the longest on earth: 969 years.

This brings us to comment on the longevity of these men's lives. Is it real or symbolic? A bit of both at the same time. It is real, even though exaggerated, because the more evil and the more materialism increase in the world, the more are men susceptible to various diseases and often die relatively young. It is common for example, nowadays, where daily life demands stressful activity from some, to see a young person be struck down dead by a heart attack. Cigarettes and a hyperactive life shorten life. The turbulent rhythm of modern life is contrary to human nature. Our ancestors managed a calmer pace of life. Moreover, "they walked with God". The lesson to draw from our ancestors' longevity who bore God's image is the following: we should walk with God if we want to live long. It is why the sacred writers reported that God, after the increase of evil, decided to shorten "man's life on earth to no more than 120 years" (Genesis 6,3-5).

Read Genesis 6, then continue reading the course.

2.5 The increase of evil and punishment by the flood (Genesis 6)

According to Genesis 6,2, evil increased on earth because "**the sons of God**, looking at the **the daughters of men**, saw they were pleasing, so they married as many as they chose." Who are these "sons of God" and these "daughters of men"? For the scribes and rabbis who wrote that text, solely the Jews are "sons of God" (in Hebrew "beni Elohim"), from **a divine race**. This mentality was acquired with time; it is due to the fact that 4000 years ago, the Jews were the only ones who believed in the one God when the rest of humanity were pagans, polytheists and idolaters. The Jews thought they will be for all time, the only "sons of God", like the Canaanites were "sons of Baal", the Greeks "sons of Zeus", and the Egyptians "sons of Râ". Jesus shocked the Jews when he taught that all who will believe in Him, of every race and nation, will become sons of God (John 1,12).

The fault of the Jews was to think they were the only ones worthy of God. They wanted to monopolize Him, to own Him. God was uniquely their God and should belong to no other people. Also, when Jesus' Apostles wanted to teach the Pagans, the Jews prevented them from doing so (1 Thessalonians 2,16). Paul rose up against them: "Is God the God of Jews alone and not of the pagans too? Of the pagans too, most certainly!" (Romans 3,29)

According to the scribes and rabbis, the Jews, being sons of God and of a divine race, should not marry non-Jews; they would be lowering themselves if they took for wives the "daughters of man". Children born from such marriages were not considered Jews, as Jews are only those born of a Jewish mother. Only the "sons of God" should marry the "daughters of God". They were not even supposed to frequent non-Jews for fear of being dragged by them to the worship of idols (Numbers 25,1-2).

Mixed marriages were severely condemned (Deuteronomy 7,3-4 / 1 Kings 11,1-2 / Ezra 10,44 / Nehemiah 10,31). However, there are numerous examples of mixed marriages mentioned in the Bible, even amongst the kings (king Solomon: 1 Kings 11,1-2 / king Ahab: 1 Kings 16,31). The Book of Ruth reports Ruth's story, a non-Jewish Moabite who married a Jew. When he died, she married another Jew, "Boaz", and is listed with the latter among the ancestors of the Messiah (Matthew 1,5). This confuses the narrow and fanatic mentality of the scribes who fabricated stories from anything to justify their racism in the name of God.

Genesis 6,2 should not be understood literally; we should seek its spiritual meaning, which is: the "sons of God" are those who seek God, believers and persons of good will from throughout the world. Jesus teaches us that "all the peacemakers shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5,9). This concerns all men, not just the Jews. These "sons of God" (men or women) must not be seduced by the body and physical beauty, but by the spirit of the person to marry. They must make sure that the spouse is a divine choice and will be an aid in ascending to God, not an obstacle to the soul's elevation. The purpose of marriage is to be closer to God, not to have material interest.

The expression "son of man" was understood pejoratively and applied to non-Jews. Jesus, to oppose this chauvinistic spirit, applied this title to Himself (John 3,14), with that of "God's only Son" (John 3,18). He is this "Son of man" announced by the prophets (Daniel 7,13), the head of the **human** lineage of the woman who shall crush the infernal serpent's head, but He is also God's only Son; and "to all who accept Him, He gives power to become children of God" (John 1,12). By this verse, the Gospel enlightens us on the **spiritual** meaning of Genesis 6,2, considering that all true disciples of Jesus are "sons of God". In that sense, Paul says: "Merely by belonging to Christ you are the posterity of Abraham" (Galatians 3,29). The lineage by blood is of no valor to God.

Seeing that man desires to be carnal rather than spiritual, God withdraws his humiliated Spirit from this ill-considerate creature. As a result, human life was shortened to 120 years. That means that we cannot live long without God. We should not understand these 120 years numerically, since there are holy people who do not live that long, and others who live more, without caring about God... These latter will not taste the joys of Eternal Life. This is the teaching of Genesis 6,3: to have a long life means taking part in **eternal life**.

As for the "Nephilim" (giants) mentioned in Genesis 6,4, "the heroes of days gone by", they represent man before the propagation of evil on earth: it was man's dignity that was great. Men who came after God have withdrawn his Spirit from humanity, seem like dwarfs compared to their ancestors.

The greatness of these ancestral "giants" was due to God's Spirit which inspired them, giving them a **spirit of grandeur**. It was God's Spirit in them that made of them "the heroes of days gone by, the famous men" such as Seth, Enosh, Enoch and Methuselah, etc...

This text of Genesis, like many others, should not thus be understood literally, one should not think of the large physique of these giants (the "Nephilim"). We must not, moreover, compare them to dwarfs (physically), nor to the race of pygmies, who are able, they too, of becoming children of God and spiritual giants. Indeed, Jesus came specifically to give back to His disciples of all races the Spirit of God which had left an unworthy humanity (Genesis 6,3). Read John 14,16-17. This gift of the Divine Spirit is granted to true believers, independently of the size of their physique.

2.6 The Flood (Genesis 6,5 to 7,24)

Archeology has discovered, buried under the Atlantic, a continent which we named "Atlantis". Under the waters of the Pacific is buried another continent called "Mu". These continents crumbled into the 2 oceans following a general cataclysm which took place 25,000 years ago. Traces of a very evolved civilization was discovered in the two continents. This civilization was exterminated. Survivors had transmitted the information to the following generations and humanity had thus guarded its memory.

Additionally, archeology informs us of this cataclysm: some **pre-Biblical** > Babylonian narratives mention a flood that destroyed humanity. These narratives were written in 2000

BC, so 1000 years **before** Genesis was written. When the Biblical writers wrote the story of the flood, they were only narrating a story **already known** centuries before, and put down in writing by **other people**.

The Babylonians had written it in "Cuneiform" letters, ie in the form of nails, the Babylonian alphabet consisted of little stems in the form of nails, placed together differently for each letter of the alphabet.

There is an essential difference between the Babylonian and Biblical narratives: the Babylonian narrative says that "the Gods decided to destroy humanity because of its errors. Ea (or "Enki", one of the Babylonian gods) averted Uta-Napishtim and made him build a boat, etc... The Biblical editors took up the story in their own account, monotheizing it, saying: "YAHWEH God decided to destroy humanity because of mankind's wickedness". Uta-Napishtim's name was changed to Noah, to give it a Hebraic consonance.

The following is a reproduction of the text from the book translated from French "DELUGE ET ARCHE DE NOE" ("The Flood and Noah's ark") by André Parrot (Edition: "Cahiers d'archéologie Biblique", 15 February 1955 p.32). He explains how the Biblical writers of Genesis were inspired by stories which existed elsewhere, but made them monotheistic, purifying them thus, from their mythological and polytheistic content, and giving Hebraic names to the protagonists:

> **THE FLOOD AND NOAH'S ARK**
>
> And so, the flood marked an extremely clear-cut event in History, without any contestation. Its memory endured very well in Mesopotamia and in Palestine, where Jesus referred to it during his last days of preaching (Matthew 24,37-39 / Luke 17,26-27).
>
> In summary, we have at our disposal, in the Biblical and Babylonian literature, an ensemble of texts that refer to a devastating cataclysm, from which, thanks to an "ark", a family managed to escape: Noah's in the Bible and Uta-Napishtim's, Athrahasis', Zinsudra's, Xisuthro's, for the Babylonians. The connection between all these stories is undeniable; it is obvious to the less informed. We can do a synopsis, with some variances without a doubt, but also with an impressive agreement on the basics. We point out some striking connections:
>
> The text of the cuneiform tradition (*Babylonian*), is an excerpt from the famous epic of "Gilgamesh", a legendary king who gave his name to the story spread in the Near-East since the XXVIth century BC. The general theme of the story is the pursuit of immortality, the secret of which is to capture, in the bottom of the sea, a plant which gives back youth (*think of the tree of life in Genesis*). Several nations translated this account into their language, one finds a Sumerian version and, more recently, the Assyrian and Babylonian versions. The Assyrian version is the most complete and numbers 326 lines, of which around 200 are dedicated to the flood.

After having exposed a brief parallelism between the Genesis narrative and the Babylonian version, André Parrot concludes saying:

GENESIS	CUNEIFORM TRADITION
Yahweh decides to destroy humanity because of man's wickedness.	The gods decide to destroy humanity because of its faults.
Yahweh averts Noah and lets him build a boat.	Ea (Enki) averts Uta-Napishtim (Ziasudra) and lets him build a boat.
The boat would be filled with animals, in order to preserve the each race all over the earth.	That boat shall be filled with animals and seeds from every life.
The flood arrives. Yahweh erases all beings from the surface of the earth.	The flood arrives. All humanity is returned to mud.
Noah realizes that the water is lowering in letting birds go (crows, doves).	Uta-Napishtim realizes the lowering of the water in letting birds go (dove, lark, crow).
Noah builds an altar and offers a sacrifice to Yahweh.	Uta-Napishtim offers a sacrifice to the gods.
Yahweh smelled the soothing scent.	The gods smelled the good scent.
Yahweh stops cursing men (version J).	Enlil makes up with Uta-Napishtim.
Yahweh blesses Noah and his sons (version P).	Enlil blesses Uta-Napishtim and his wife.

Fragment of a tablet from the epic of Gilgamesh

> "Which narrative is the basis of all the others? We should answer: the oldest, and the oldest is, evidently, the **Babylonian** narrative (*not that of Genesis*). That frightens some exegetes who propose a suspicious average solution, likely to safeguard, in their eyes, the doctrine of inspiration: there would be a primitive tradition (*not found yet*) of which we possess two versions, the Sumero-Babylonian on the one hand, the Israelite on the other. We admit, very frankly, that this theory satisfies us rather poorly and we prefer to consider that, **in** the narrative and only **with** the Biblical account of the flood, we have the Israelite **version** of a Mesopotamian tradition, whose originals on clay tablets are in our possession, and that the Biblical storytellers have rethought in the light of monotheism. That tradition (*oral*) of the flood was brought, along with many others, most of the traditions of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, by the **patriarch** (*Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*) emigrants from the countries of the two rivers (*the Tigris and Euphrates where the Assyrian and Babylonian versions of the flood were well known*) and came to settle in the land of Canaan. The Israelites never detected that their ancestors had, at this period, worshiped "other gods" (Joshua 24,2), therefore shared beliefs far removed from the Yahwist faith. Here is why we have, in chapters 6 and 8 of Genesis, the story of the flood that the Mesopotamians copied in cuneiforms, long before the Yahwist authors (*Jewish*) had thought of fixing in writing. The extraordinary fidelity of the oral tradition in Israel had ensured for a millennium the preservation of this moving tradition".

André Parrot's conclusions do not undermine in any way the "doctrine of inspiration" as those attached to the literal interpretation of the Bible fear. The Biblical writer's intention was to spread monotheism through the polytheistic narrations of that period in the Near-East. Their goal was to sacralize the human story by stripping it bare of any mention of mythological gods, in order to reveal the one and only God: the God of Abraham.

I have explained at length these first chapters of Genesis to give you the spirit with which they should be understood. Henceforth, I will only point out the most important points:

Genesis 9,12-17: Speaks of the Rainbow as the **sign** of the **Eternal Covenant** between God and man. Remember well this symbolism of the rainbow because you will find it again in the Book of Revelation (10,1) around the head of the envoy of Christ in the Apocalyptic times; for it is he who will restore the **true Eternal** Covenant between God and man. This Covenant was already reestablished by Jesus, but later betrayed by the Christians. The mission of the Apocalyptic envoy is to restore it.

Genesis 9 to 10: These chapters present the 3 **symbolic** sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. This genealogy has no historical foundation whatsoever; it was established by the scribes with a racist aim favorable to the Jews like that of Seth in Genesis 5. Thus:

- Canaan, the ancestor of the Arabs is cursed and relegated to the rank of "the lowest of slaves", ie the slave of Shem (ancestor of the Jews) and Japheth (ancestor of the Westerners). Notice that the scribes hasten to curse Canaan, not Shem, their guilty ancestor; it is the progeny that is mainly targeted: the Palestinians and Arabs in general (Genesis 10,14). This curse, according to the scribes and rabbis, is valid for all times: no Palestinian, no Arab, for eternity, will ever be spared. They should be "the slaves of the slaves" forever, destined to serve Shem and his descendants, as well as Japheth and his descendants, the latter only being "slaves" in the service of Shem's progeny. But Canaan is "the slave of slaves".

- Is there further need to mention that Shem was blessed! It goes without saying, is he not the ancestor of the Hebrews? ... It is "**Shem's** God" who was blessed by Noah. He is neither Japheth's God nor, for stronger reason, Ham's.Shem "is the ancestor of all the sons of Eber"

(Genesis 10,21). We should understand this verse according to its Hebraic nuance (that we find in the Hebrew Bible translated into French by the rabbinate of France): "Shem, the father of all the **race** of Eber (*the Hebrews*)". The Israelites are hardly considered a race. According to them, the blessing of their ancestor Shem would be passed down **exclusively**, to each individual of their "race", making them solely the "sons of God", who is uniquely the God of Shem and his descendants: "the chosen people". The scribes thought that other nations could never get near to God. He is **exclusively** the God of Shem, the God of the Jews... Remember Paul's remark: "Is God the God of Jews alone and not of the pagans too? Of the pagans too, most certainly" (Romans 3,29). Here clearly appears the **universal** dimension of the teachings of Jesus and New Testament.

- Japheth is set off, "may he live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave!" (Genesis 9,27), the Bible of the French Rabbinate says: "may Canaan be **their** slave".

This amounts to saying that:

- The Jews (descendants of Shem) are the absolute masters of the world and of men.
- The Indo-European-Americans (descendants of Japheth) are their "slaves"; they can "live in the tents of Shem", therefore cohabit with the Jews, but without having rights to any personal possessions: they do not live in tents of their own, but "in Shem's tents" (a nuance not to be underestimated! ...) That makes Jews the undisputed owners of all earth's produce.
- The Canaanites (the Arabs) are at the unconditional service of the two precedent categories or races. That is why they are "the lowest of slaves", since they are the slaves of the "first" slaves, the descendants of Japheth, who are, in their turn, the slaves of the "Semites".

The authors of this genealogical fable did not hesitate to make Noah the only righteous man of that era, who deserved to escape the flood, a drunk, reduced to losing his senses to the extent of ridiculously stripping himself: "He drank some of the wine, and while he was drunk he uncovered himself inside his tent..." (Genesis 9,21).

Such rantings have divided humanity into a hierarchy of three races to the advantage of the Hebrew "race". Here is why Paul tells us to be wary of "Jewish myths" (Titus 1,14) and to "avoid pointless speculations, and those genealogies" (Titus 3,9) which some are fond of. The prophet Jeremiah denounced "the lying pen of the scribes" for having introduced into the Bible, in the name of God, proposals alien to God (Jeremiah 8,8); Jesus also revolted against the "hypocrite scribes and Pharisees" for having diverted the meaning of Divine Revelation in favor of their earthly advantages (Matthew 23 and 15,6-7).

We are invited today to **exorcize the Old Testament from the Bible**, emptying it of its racist content, introduced by the "lying pens of the scribes". On the contrary, there is nothing to exorcize in the New Testament, which is itself an exorcism. We are called to be experts in the Divine Word, believers who **discern**, in the Bible, what is from God and what comes from men. For us not to be misled, we have to be like financial experts who recognize real money from fake. This is not difficult when the Spirit of God guides us. Whoever knows God knows how He thinks, what He said in the Bible... and what He never said.

To exorcize the Bible is a holy task!

Genesis 11: The "Tower of Babel" symbolizes man's pride, who wants to build ever higher to impress and dominate. "Eiffel Tower", "sky-scrapers", or "Pyramids" are, but in another spirit, the current replicas of the high towers, the "Ziggurat", which were once built in Babel.

Mesopotamian Ziggurat

God exposes man's vanity by man. They, who speak but one language, ie that they understood each other, here they are now who no longer understand each other, each speaking his own language, seeing only his own interest. That means that selfishness and pride have divided men, each wanting to possess everything and be superior to the other, hence the conflicts which arise. This is how the story of the Tower of Babel should be understood. It is therefore not the construction of high rises that is to be condemned, but the spirit of vanity with which it is done that makes the act bad. Today, even those who speak the same language may no longer understand each other when one wants to dominate the other.

The **true** disciples of Christ have the Spirit of God, which unites the children of God. They are those who understand each other, even if they speak different languages. Because the language of love is unique, understood by a gaze, a gesture, a smile. At Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles, they amazed foreigners who understood them, each in their own language: "All these men (*the Apostles*) speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?" (Acts 2,7). It is because the Spirit of Jesus was there to restore what human pride had destroyed. The Pentecost heals the wound of the Tower of Babel.

Genesis 11 ends with a genealogy that aims to link –by any means– Abraham to Shem. The aim of this "genealogy" is the following: to present the Hebrews as existing on earth even before Abraham, to make believe that God, by choosing Abraham, chose a race, that of Shem, the ancestor of "Eber" (Genesis 10,21 / 11,10-26), an imaginary personage, supposedly the ancestor of the Hebrews, the "sons of Eber". I explain in the beginning of the 3rd lesson why it is false to believe that Abraham is of "Hebrew" descent.

Genesis 11,27-32 presents Abraham's family: Terah, his father, his two brothers: Nahor and Haran (who died leaving his son Lot to Abraham) and Sarah, his wife, who was also his half-sister. They lived in "Ur", a big city at that time (in the south of Iraq), they then emigrated to Haran, in the North of Syria, where God appeared to Abram.

Here ends the study of the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

3. Lesson 3 – From Abraham to Isaac (Genesis 12 to 24)

3.1 Abraham

Abraham came to earth twenty centuries BC, 4000 years ago. At that time, God was not known. Each country had its gods, where one was superior to the others, polytheism and

mythology were everywhere with gods that changed names depending on the country. Idolatry reigned everywhere under the form of statues made of wood or stone for the Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite gods, etc... The idols of Greek mythology still proliferated 1500 years after Abraham. The idolatrous empires (Assyrian, Babylonian, Greek and Roman) opposed the nascent monotheism with outright refusal. They fought it ferociously and persecuted the first believers. We find an echo of this resistance to monotheism in modern atheist regimes.

At Abraham's time there were neither Jews nor Hebrews. Contrary to what some claim, Abraham is a Syrian from Haran, not a Hebrew. The scribes, for racist purposes, tried to convince their co-religionists of a historical error by claiming that the Jews existed **before** Abraham as a Hebrew **people**. He is said to be descended from one of the sons of Shem, Eber, hence the Hebrew name. Some present this people as the "**race**" of Eber.

The sons of Shem, according to the writers of Genesis, are: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud and Aram. We should note that these sons of Shem are the names **of countries**: Elam was found in the south of Iran and its capital was Suse; Ashur was Assyria (current Iraq), Lud is probably in Palestine (the airport of Lod in Israel), and Aram is Syria. This comes back to say that all these regions, having belonged to the sons of Shem, are the property of the Hebrews by heritage and form "Greater Israel", the empire that the Israelis aspire to today. These limits appear on the current Israeli currency.

The biblical scribes, seeking to justify their sentiments of being the "chosen people", introduce Abraham as already a Hebrew at the time of his calling, being "son of Eber" descendant of Arpachshad (Genesis 11,10-26), son of Shem. This "Eber" would have given his name to the Hebrews (Genesis 11,14). This whole genealogical build-up aims at presenting the Hebrews as chosen by God, all together, in the person of Abraham. And so, the whole world should understand that all Jews, of all times and of all places form **the one** "chosen people", **the only race** chosen and placed by God above all other races.

This is why the scribes insert with finesse in Genesis 14,13: "Abram **the Hebrew**". This qualification is slipped surreptitiously "by the lying pen of the scribes!" (Jeremiah 8,8) to acquire racial and socio-political privileges. Moses, to combat this fanatic tendency reminds the Jews that their father Abraham, "was a wandering **a Syrian** (*Syrian*) ..." (Deuteronomy 26,5), not a Hebrew. It suffices to read Genesis to be convinced that all Abraham's family, his sons and their wives were Syrian. Nowhere does the Bible speak of a Hebrew people pre-existent to Abraham... Nor does History!

God thus chose **a man** and not a people, **a Syrian** (Aramaic) and not a Hebrew. The Hebrews still did not exist at the time.

God blessed Abraham and then said to him: "All the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you." (Genesis 12,3) The rabbis interpret this verse as follows: "By you will be blessed the Jews of all nations of the earth". This restrictive interpretation is not God's intention.

God's call was done to Abraham when he was 75 years old and his wife Sarah 65. At that time, he was in Haran in the north of Syria. God said to him: "Leave your country, your kindred... for a country which I shall show you; and I shall make you a great people..." (Genesis 12,1-2) The rabbis translate "a great **nation**" as giving a political, Israeli nuance to the divine choice.

Later, God changed the name of Abram into Abraham (Ab=father), "for, he tells him, I am making you father of many nations" (Genesis 17,5). Here emerges the **universal** plan of God: it encompasses all men and is not for the exclusive benefit of a particular group. The fanatical Jews see in this multitude no one else but the Jews dispersed among the nations to rule the world. These nations are the descendants of Japheth, the non-Jews "from whom came **the dispersal** (of the non-Jews) to the islands of the nations... each of their languages, according

to their tribes and their nations." (Genesis 10,1-5) The "islands of the nations" represent the Mediterranean islands and countries, as well as the non-Jewish world.

Jesus denounced the racism of the scribes and Pharisees. His disciples understood that God had never chosen a "people", but wanted to **form** a community of believers from which the Messiah was to be born. This community's mission was to prepare men, all men, for this grand divine plan, instead of guarding this design of universal salvation for itself. The Apostles understood that all who believe in Jesus are sons of Abraham, this filiation being **spiritual**, not carnal. St Paul says indeed: "By being Christ's, you are that progeny of Abraham" (Galatians 3,29). This blessed lineage is thus universal, comprising all nations and all races as announced to Abraham.

Abraham was called 2000 years BC; so Christ is exactly between him and us, people of the 21st century. Some wonder why God has waited so long to manifest himself to men. So many centuries had passed before Abraham! The answer is as follows: original sin made man lose his spiritual and psychological faculties. It took a long time for him to recover, along the centuries, a minimal capacity making him apt for reflection. So he was able to reach a certain degree of intellectual maturity to understand that God is **Spirit**, that he is unique, that he should not be sought after in material objects (the sun, etc...), nor in idols. Still today, many are unable to grasp the spiritual realities and existence of a unique God. In the so-called civilized societies, fetishism and superstition reign supreme. There are still polytheist tribes in Africa, Asia, America, and Australia. You will realize how difficult it is to reveal God to the people of our century: they must have a minimal spiritual interest and reached a certain moral maturity to accept God... or to refuse Him, preferring personal interests even after having known Him.

Therefore, André Gide, after having repented of his homosexual disorders and having declared his love to God, addresses himself to Him, saying:

> "Forgive me Lord! Yes, I know I'm lying. The truth is that, this flesh that I hate, I love even more than You". (Translated from the French book "André Gide par lui-même", Ecrivains de toujours, Editeurs du Seuil. Claude Martin, 1963.)

There are legions who think in this way.

Abraham was invited by God to leave his country, Syria, his family and his father's house. It was necessary to draw him away from his idolatrous and polytheist environment, to isolate him and keep him away from any spiritual contamination and opposing attacks. God sent him to a place where he was unknown in order to safeguard his plan and guarantee its healthy evolution. Abraham had to detach himself from the society that knew him, from his parents and friends who represented a danger to his new faith. It is the case of any person who begins to discover God and spiritual life; it arouses the animosity of materialistic people. Did not Jesus say: "A man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Matthew 10,36) Anyone who hears God's call and wants to let himself be attracted by the life of the soul, must know how to de-condition himself, to detach his mentality, to liberate it from links that may hinder their inner momentum. This is explained in the "Preliminary" and "Awareness" parts of our study. We must have the courage to break with any person who prevents us from evolving, including members of the family. The Psalm (45,10-11) says to a believing soul: "Listen daughter, pay careful attention: **forget** your nation and your ancestral home (*de-condition yourself!*), then the King (*God*) will fall in love with your beauty. He is your master now, bow down to him." And Christ also says regarding this: "No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me" (Matthew 10,37).

The following are the most important points of this lesson:

Mesopotamian and Near Eastern sites of Antiquity related to the history of the patriarchs

3.2 God promises Abraham a progeny and a land (Genesis 12,6-7)

After asking Abraham to leave his country, Syria, God announces to him that he will protect him and reward him: "Have no fear, Abram, I am your shield; your reward will be very great." This declaration does not satisfy the Called: "My Lord Yahweh, what do you intend to give me? I go childless…" And God, to comfort him, promises him descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15,1-6).

To this promise God added that of giving him and his descendants a land of welcome in compensation for the one he had left: "I shall give this country to your progeny" (Genesis 12,7). The scribes abruptly pass from the descendants claimed by Abraham to an unclaimed and unspecified land. A land not designated until later: the land of Canaan, Palestine.

This geographical gift to Abraham's descendants is at the origin of the notion of a "Promised Land", which the Hebrews, all along the centuries and wrongly, have attributed exclusively to themselves. To rectify this false interpretation, we must understand what, for God, this land and Abraham's true descendants are.

The land God promises is not a geographical location; it is the symbol of a higher and eternal reality. It is about divine happiness, that which Adam enjoyed before his expulsion from Paradise. This "Promised Land" symbolizes God himself, solely capable of fully satisfying thirsty souls for life and happiness; the Creator is the only stable and certain Homeland. For eternity.

St Paul confirms this **spiritual** fact of the Promised Land by saying: "It was by faith that Abraham obeyed the call to set out for a country that was the inheritance given to him and his

descendants... By faith he arrived, as a foreigner, in the Promised Land, and lived there as if in a **strange** country... He looked forward to a city founded, designed and built by God... " (Hebrews 11,8-10) This **non-terrestrial** City is God himself, for, as Paul also explains, "there is no eternal city for us **in this life** but we look for one in the **life to come**." (Hebrews 13,14).

As for the descendants of Abraham, they are the disciples of Jesus. Paul signals this fact by saying this: "Merely by belonging to Christ you are the posterity of Abraham, the heirs (*of the Heavenly Land*) he was promised." (Galatians 3,29).

God invited Abraham to settle in Canaan in order to live in peace with the inhabitants of the country. The divine intention was that this first monotheistic community would spread with fraternity and wisdom the light of the One God around it. God's aim was not to "drive out the local inhabitants before you... " as the scribes shamelessly confess in the Book of Numbers (Numbers 33,55). It is such verses that Jeremiah denounces as untrue (Jeremiah 8,8). God's aim by the calling of Abraham was never political or nationalistic, but spiritual and universal.

When the Jews infiltrated Palestine in the XIIIth century BC after their exodus from Egypt with Moses, they settled there and wanted to create an Israeli kingdom. This politicization of Judaism was condemned by God and the prophets.

Abraham's mission was not to establish **a nation** "like all nations", but to **form a monotheist community** made up of all nations. This mission was to reveal the One God and prepare humanity in welcoming the Messiah. The Jews deviated from the universal plan of God by transforming Judaism into political Zionism.

When the scribes wrote the Bible in the Xth century BC, the Israeli kingdom was already founded. Putting it into writing in the Bible was therefore done in an already politicized Zionist spirit. Divine Revelation passed through the Zionist prism and the scribes tried hard to insert in the texts a tone and insinuations favorable to their policy. The prophets did not fail to denounce this "dishonest" practice (Jeremiah 7,22 / 8,8).

To create an Israeli State, in the past as well as today, unspeakable crimes were committed and continue to be committed. The prophets Micah and Isaiah, eight centuries BC, had already denounced "the princes of the house of Israel who loathe justice and pervert all that is right, who build Zion (*Zionism*) with blood, Jerusalem (*capital of Israel*) with iniquity!" (Micah 3,9-10) "Woe to who add house to house and join field to field until everywhere belongs to them and they are the sole inhabitants of the land." (Isaiah 5,8).

Thus, according to the prophets themselves, Jewish nationalism could only be built on injustice.

In the XIIth century BC Gideon understood this. At the Israelite's request of proclaiming him king of Israel, he categorically refused: "It is not I who shall rule over you, nor my son; Yahweh must be your lord." (Judges 8,22-23) The prophet Samuel also refused to yield to the request of the Israeli chiefs who asked him: "... 'give us a king to rule over us, like the other nations.' It displeased Samuel that they should say so... " The prophet tried to dissuade them, "The people, however, refused to listen to Samuel. They said, 'No! We want a king, so that we in our turn can be like the other nations... " (1 Samuel 8,4-21) The people realized later on that in founding a kingdom they had gravely sinned and acknowledged to Samuel: "... for we have added to all our sins **this evil** of asking to have a king." (1 Samuel 12,19)

Jesus, in his turn, rejected such a terrestrial kingdom. Here is why, seeing that the Jewish nationalists, dazzled by his miracles "were about to come and take him **by force** and make him king (*political*), escaped back to the hills by himself." (John 6,15) In front of Pilate who asked him: "'So, then you are a king then¿, He declared: 'It is you who say it... Mine is not a kingdom of this world" (John 18,36-37).

Consequently, any Christian who recognizes the right of the Jews to consider Palestine as their promised land, demonstrate that they understood nothing of Jesus' message. A Christian who favors the creation of an Israeli state ceases to be a witness of Jesus.

Finally, notice how the specified borders of this "promised" land vary in the Bible according to the ambitions and cravings of the different scribes along the centuries: in Genesis 15,18, they extend from the Nile to the Euphrates, in Numbers 34,1-12, the Eastern border stops at the Jordan and the Dead Sea, quite far from Euphrates... In Joshua 1,4 it extends again to the Euphrates, but the western border retracts up till the Sinai and dares not to extend up till the Nile. If God had been the inspirer of Israeli borders, they would not have been so far-fetched. God does not contradict himself.

3.3 Melchizedek (Genesis 14,17-20)

It is very important to get to know Melchizedek because he symbolizes the Messiah as Paul explains in Hebrews 7,1-3: "Melchizedek, king of Salem... he has no father, no mother or (*known*) ancestry, and his life has no beginning or ending; he is like the Son of God (*Jesus*)..."

Now read chapters 12 to 50 of Genesis in a row. You will encounter some obscure points, foreign to our mentality and the customs of the 21st century. Do not stop there, but read on until the end. When you come back to this biblical course, you will have all the necessary clarifications. Notice throughout your reading how God **formed** a monotheistic society through Abraham amidst the pagan nations of the time. Notice his **spiritual**, non-political role. God formed this community from a Syrian man, and absolutely did not **choose** a Hebrew people, this being nonexistent at the time.

Chapter 14 recounts Abraham's battle to save Lot, his nephew. I explained to you why verse 13 mentions Abram "the Hebrew", a word slipped in by the scribes to give the impression that the Hebrews existed since the beginning of the world. Always remind yourself that the Ray of Divine Revelation was passed through the distorting prism of racist Zionist politics. To recover this Ray in its purity and in its limpidity, it is **necessary**, as I already told you, **to exorcise the Bible** from its politico-Zionist content, just as gold is purified from mud by fire, and as wheat is separated from the chaff.

After Abraham's victory, Melchizedek arrives to congratulate him and bless him. Who is Melchizedek? He is unknown in History. Genesis only reveals his **symbolic** aspects, traits, as Paul explains it, who "is like the Son of God", Jesus (Hebrews 7,1-3). Genesis reveals that he is **king and priest** at the same time. He is king of "Salem" (Jerusalem) while being a priest of "El-Elohim", Aramaic for "God Most High" or "Supreme God", higher and greater in power than all the other gods of Middle-Eastern mythology. Note that it is this Supreme God who is the "creator of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14,19). The God whom Melchizedek adored is therefore, without his knowledge, the only God Creator we know, the One Who revealed himself to Abraham, then to Moses and who was incarnated in His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

So Melchizedek symbolizes Christ who, like him, **is Priest and King at the same time**. Jesus is a priest because he offered Himself in sacrifice to God -not through another priest– on the altar of the Cross in Jerusalem, the city of Melchizedek. Jesus is also the spiritual king, sovereign of hearts, his reign is not political and englobes men of all races and languages. Jesus reigns over his believers from the **heavenly** Jerusalem (Revelation 21,2), symbolized by the terrestrial Jerusalem, the "Salem" of Melchizedek. It is from Jerusalem therefore, that Melchizedek and Jesus reign and offer their sacrifices. By introducing Melchizedek as king and priest of "Salem", God points out to another King and Priest who will emerge 2000 years later from this same city: Jesus, who also offers the Eucharistic Bread and Wine to his own every day.

Jesus is priest, but his priesthood is not like that of the pagans, limited to the slaughter of animals for God. Christ's priesthood is similar to that of Melchizedek who "brought bread and wine" because "he was a priest of God Most High", explains Genesis 14,18. Jesus clarified the real sense of the bread and the wine during his last Passover Supper with his Apostles: the bread is his torn Body and the wine is his blood spilled on the cross (Matthew 26,26-29). The bread and wine of Jesus thus make his sacrifice present. It is the sacrifice of the new sacerdotal order instituted by Him for the salvation of all believers. He dwarfed the animal sacrifices prescribed by the Torah, incapable of touching God's Heart: "Bulls' blood and goats' blood are useless for taking away sins", says Paul (Hebrews 10,4). That will become clear later.

Melchizedek, as king-priest, blesses Abraham, the holder of the Holy Covenant: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High (*El-Elohim*), creator of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14,19). Notice in verse 14,22 that Abraham, in his turn, swears before the king of Sodom by "YHVH, God Most High, creator of heaven and earth". He thus reveals that there is save one God creator, and that his name is not "El-Elohim", the "god" of mythology, abstract and unknown, but "YHVH" (word meaning "The One Who Is"), the God of Revelation, who manifested himself personally to man, through him, Abraham.

Melchizedek suddenly appears, like a scene out of context, interrupting the narrative of the meeting between the king of Sodom and Abraham, which resumes immediately after. This is also symbolic: the spiritual storms into our temporal life, it interrupts the course of the profane narrative to reveal itself to man, to grab his attention. Then, the narrative of the king of Sodom resumes its course: he continues his meeting with Abraham. This means that man must resume the normal course of life after having encountered the spiritual, but must strive **never** to forget this spiritual world which has revealed itself to him.

The astonishing thing in this narrative is that Abraham, he, holder of the Holy Covenant, gives Melchizedek "a tenth of everything" (Genesis 14,20). It is also this latter who blesses Abraham: "Now think how great this man must have been, if the patriarch Abraham paid him a tenth of the finest treasure he had captured... and he gave his blessing to the holder of the promises. Now it is indisputable that a blessing is given by a superior to an inferior (*Abraham*) ...", says St Paul (Hebrews 7,4-7). Melchizedek's grandeur is that he prefigures the Messiah's priesthood. King David explained this prefiguration in a Psalm (inspired canticle) 800 years later. He addresses himself to the Messiah to come in these terms: "You are a priest for ever of the order of Melchizedek" (Psalms 110,4).

So Melchizedek prefigures Christ because his priesthood represents that which God approves of, an adoration "in spirit and truth" as Jesus explains (John 4,23), not a human priesthood with its money trafficking and ritual worship (priestly clothing, incense, ornaments, specific gestures, etc...) God does not allow himself to be swayed by such a theatrical priesthood: He intervened in human history to reveal to us that Melchizedek's priesthood, pagan as it was, was more valuable to Him than the pseudo-religious cults. It is why He revealed that His Messiah's priesthood will not be according to the order of Aaron, a Hebrew -though an issue of Abraham, as you will later see- but according to an order foreign to this blood lineage. This was fulfilled through Jesus who instituted, by his crucifixion, a priesthood alien to the Jews. Jesus is priest; He is even **The High Priest** of a new priesthood, while not being from the tribe of Levi, as Paul explains in his letter to the Hebrews, chapters 5-7. For the Jews, only the Levite descendants of Aaron can be priests and sacrifice animals (Numbers 18). Through Jesus, God overturned this whole human conception of the priesthood by annulling, through the Cross, animal sacrifice.

With the Book of Revelation (you will see that later), God turns the **ritualistic** concept of the Christian priesthood upside down, by instituting a new priesthood. It is formed by all who

believe in the one interpretation of the Book of Revelation revealed by Jesus Himself on May 13, 1970 (see text "The Key of the Apocalypse").

Therefore, although Melchizedek's apparition was brief and it is only mentioned one more time in the Old Testament (Psalm 110,4), the reference to this enigmatic character holds a very precious lesson. It permits **courageous** believers to liberate themselves from the traditional worships, filled with superstition and fanaticism. They thus reach the highest degrees of spiritual union with God by a priesthood of the heart, according to "the order of Melchizedek", not according to any order of theatrical worship, be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or whatever else... Jesus had said: "**True** worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshiper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4,23-24)

This is the lesson to be retained from Melchizedek.

It would be good at this point to read chapters 5-10 of the letter to the Hebrews. St Paul comments marvelously on the role of Melchizedek, and exposes the importance of the new Priesthood of Jesus for the salvation of humanity. It is the salvation promised to Adam and Eve.

3.4 The Covenant of the Halves (Genesis 15,7-17)

God promised Abraham, whose wife was barren and elderly, descendants and a welcoming land. This long-awaited son did not arrive. Abraham, aged over 80, complained to God that a stranger to his house would be his heir: "'My Lord Yahweh... you have given me no descendants; some man of my household will be my heir.' But God says to him: 'He shall not be your heir; your heir shall be of your own flesh and blood.'" Abraham then asked to be reassured about the country that he was to live in after leaving Harân: "How am I to know that I shall inherit it?" He needed a tangible sign to believe, especially at that time, in a miracle. He understood the difficulty of his mission and of the pact with God and wanted God's "signature" affixed at the bottom of the "contract" between them. So God said to him: "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, etc..." Abraham "brought him all these, cut them in half (*after having slaughtered them*) and put half on one side and half facing it on the other..." (Genesis 15,1-11).

To understand this text, we must know that men of Abraham's time were superstitious. Also, it was customary that a contract was made in the following manner: an animal (or several animals, depending on the importance of the contract) was sacrificed to this end, then cut into two halves in between which the contractors passed. This passage between the two pieces of the animal meant that the pact was concluded and that the party who breaks the terms of the contract would suffer the fate of that animal (or animals), and would be torn apart by the gods. This custom was even practiced by the Jews well after Abraham; it is mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah in the VIth century BC, 1500 years after Abraham, who denounced the Hebrews' infidelity in these terms: "And these men who have infringed my covenant, who have not observed the terms of the covenant made in my presence, I will treat these men like the calf they cut in two to pass between the parts of it. As for the nobles of Judah and of Jerusalem, the eunuchs and the priests, and all the people of the country who have passed between the parts of the calf, I will put them into the power of their enemies..." (Jeremiah 34,18-20)

To denote that He would fulfill His promise to Abraham, God, in the form "of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch" passed between the cut pieces. Genesis explains why "that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram" (Genesis 15,17-18). God thus "signed" the contract with his chosen one. This vision was the tangible sign requested by Abraham.

It was a belief at that time that if carnivorous birds managed to devour the sacrificed animals' flesh, it would be a bad omen for the pact. This is why the Bible says: "Birds of prey came down on the carcasses but **Abram drove them off**." (Genesis 15,11) Yet another sign that this covenant will succeed. Abraham will therefore have his "land" and his descendants from Sarah, his old and barren wife. Despite the human impossibility of fulfilling the terms of the pact, "Abram put his faith in Yahweh, who counted this as making him justified (because of his faith)." (Genesis 15,6) Abraham's faith is a light for all believers. It incited the Apostles and St Paul, often referring to it and presenting it as an example: "Abraham put his faith in God, and this faith was considered as justifying him. Don't you see that it is those who rely on faith (*in Jesus*) are the sons of Abraham?" (Galatians 3,6-7).

This vision leads us to two very important conclusions that we must retain to understand the spirit of the Bible:

1) God is pedagogue: He employs the language of man and respects his mentality. He lowers himself to the level of man, speaks to him in human language to make himself understood, then He gradually elevates him to the divine mentality, which is the Holy Spirit. Also, in passing through the halves, He gives Abraham a sign that he could understand.

2) To understand a prophet, we should place him in his historical and social context. This is valid, not only for the two Covenants (the Old through the Torah, and the New by the Gospels), but also, today, for the Apocalyptic Covenant, that of the End of times, which is the Last Covenant, the final chance given to men to amend themselves. The apocalyptic messenger should be seen with a pair of new eyes and, in order to be understood, he should be placed in the historical and social contexts of his time: the XXth and XXIst centuries.

3.5 Ishmael (Genesis 16)

Abraham and Sarah, unaware of God's Omnipotence, did not understand how God would give them a son, given their old age and Sarah's sterility. Miracles were not yet known.

At that time, a law of king Hammurabi stipulated that, in the case of sterility, a legitimate wife could have children considered legitimate by permitting her husband to sleep with her servant. The child born of this extra-marital relation was nevertheless considered that of the married couple, provided he or she is received, at birth, in the arms of the legitimate wife to signify her full consent (today there are "surrogate mothers").

Sarah, whose faith seems to be less solid than that of her husband, seeing that a son would not come from her, pushed Abraham towards Hagar, her Egyptian servant, because she knew herself sterile: "'Go to my slave-girl. Perhaps I shall get children through her.' Abram took to what Sarai had said." (Genesis 16,2) This act will be reproduced later with Jacob, Abraham's grandson, who coupled with the two maidservants of his wives, Rachel (Genesis 30,1-6) and Lea (Genesis 30,9-13).

Ishmael was born from the union between Abraham and Hagar. Abraham was 86 years old then (Genesis 16,16). You notice that God was not pressed to fulfill his promise of giving Abraham a son from Sarah; it is His way of making man grow up in divine stature through patience.

So Sarah took the initiative of having a son in her own way. But God had a plan of his own which He will not modify. The birth of Ishmael did not prevent Him from appearing again to Abraham to reveal His miraculous plan to him: "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah. I will bless her and **moreover** give you a son by **her**". That seemed too marvelous to the old man: "Is a child to be born to a man one hundred years old, and will Sarah have a child at the age of ninety? Oh, let Ishmael live in your presence!" Abraham said to God, who "bowed to the ground and laughed to himself", before such an incredible announcement.

But God insisted: "Yes, your wife Sarah will bear you a son whom you must name Isaac. And I shall maintain my covenant with him" (Genesis 17,15-19). That was the announcement of the first miracle in human history. The Covenant meant that it was from Isaac's lineage that the Messiah will come.

3.6 Isaac (Genesis 17 & 18)

Abraham had to wait a long time for this son who was announced at the covenant "of the halves". Indeed, Isaac was born only fifteen years after this vision.

At the announcement of his birth, both his father and mother "laughed to themselves" (Genesis 17,17 / 18,12). Their laughing was the reason behind the name Isaac (Yitzhak), which means "to laugh" in Hebrew, like the Arabic "Yidhac": "God has given me cause to laugh; all those who hear of it will laugh with me. Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children! Yet I have borne him a child in his old age", the old man's wife comments joyfully who, at Isaac's birth, was 90 years old and her husband 100 (Genesis 21,6-7). Only God could announce such a surprise to Abraham and fulfill it. For the old couple, there was truly reason to laugh. We would have done the same. Many would laugha before a pregnant nonagenarian.

Isaac is important because he comes to concretely materialize the sign requested by Abraham from God: this son is the fulfillment of the pact "of the halves". This sign, unexplainable by science of all times, is a formidable witness for men of all ages. It thus does not only concern Abraham: it challenges us all because the Covenant that was to perpetuate Isaac was through the Messiah; He had to come from the line of this son of Abraham, not of another, because God says: "For Ishmael too I grant you your request. I bless him... **But my covenant I will establish with Isaac**. . . " (Genesis 17,20-21).

This miracle consolidated Abraham's faith; it must also strengthen ours. This is the purpose which God intended.

The plan of salvation announced to Adam and Eve is therefore accomplished by Abraham. It must appear as a divine initiative and intervention, irrefutable proof of the existence and Omnipotence of God, and of a divine plan that men must respect and follow. Only men of good faith will see and understand.

You may have remarked God's patience: it is but 13 years after the birth of Ishmael that the Creator specifies his plan to Abraham. He no longer thought of having other sons, nor did his wife. They were satisfied with Ishmael. But God had **his** plan, and to bring it to fruition, he had to overturn the human perspective. This is his Wisdom. Creatures must constantly learn to adapt to the will of the Creator; they will discover God's profound wisdom in yielding to his will without resistance, and will never regret abandoning themselves to God.

With Isaac, God demonstrated his Omnipotence, He thus prepared humanity for another miracle, even more wonderful, that of the Messiah's birth 2000 years after Abraham: Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary by direct divine action, without even the intervention of a man: "The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a virgin. . . Mary. . . and said to her: 'You are to conceive and bear a son. . . He will be called Son of the Most High. . . The Holy Spirit will come upon you. . . And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. . . '" (Luke 1,26-38)

Isaac therefore comes to prepare man for the welcoming of the Messiah. They are no longer justifiable if they do not believe in the **miraculous** birth of Jesus.

3.7 Circumcision (Genesis 17,9-14)

Circumcision is a pre-biblical custom; it existed before Abraham, often practiced by the Pagans for various reasons. In war, the vanquished were subject to "the humiliation" of circumcision

by the victors. This fact is reported by the Bible itself: king Saul demands David "one hundred Philistine foreskins, in vengeance on the king's enemies" (1 Samuel 18,25). This practice then, does not necessarily signify a covenant with God, even if the scribes of the Old Testament present it as "a sign of the Covenant" with God (Genesis 17,11).

Since Antiquity, circumcision was practiced throughout the world. Till today, some Australian, African and American tribes consider it as a sign of virility: a man refuses to give his daughter in marriage to an uncircumcised. Some even perform this operation on girls (ablation of the clitoris).

Abraham, seeing that the Pagans practiced circumcision for their gods, thought that he should, a fortiori, submit to this operation for the one true God. But with time, the prophets understood the symbolic valor of this act, and Moses already demanded that the **heart** be circumcised (Deuteronomy 10,16). Jeremy too, insisted on the purification of the soul through circumcision of the **heart** (Jeremiah 4,4). This great prophet never stopped inviting believers to introspection and to the "cleansing" of the conscience, denouncing the illusion and superficiality of the foreskin's circumcision, and stressing it is even practiced among the Pagans: "See, the days are coming—it is Yahweh who speaks—when I am going to punish all who are circumcised only in the flesh: Egypt, Judah, Edom... For all these nations, and the whole House of Israel too, are uncircumcised at **heart**" (Jeremiah 9,24-25). Note that Judah (the Jews) is placed in the same ranks as the Pagans then (Egypt, Edom) despite the circumcision, and that this custom was practiced outside the borders of Palestine.

Circumcision must be compared to modern cults inspired by paganism: priestly clothing, incense, kneeling, etc... All these forms of adoration are only illusions, a superficial religiosity incapable of pleasing God or aiding spiritual evolution. They are material obstacles to the true elevation of the soul. We can say the same for baptism by water; it is only a symbol. The only valid worship is that of knowledge and love, the worship of God in "spirit and truth" as already mentioned (John 4,23-24).

With the Gospels, we finally pass from the physical concept of circumcision to the spiritual concept, which renders this custom obsolete: "Because to be circumcised or uncircumcised means nothing: what does matter is to keep the commandments of God", says Paul (1 Corinthians 7,19). And: "Since in Christ Jesus whether you are circumcised or not makes no difference—what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love" (Galatians 5,6), "In him (*Jesus*) you have been circumcised, with a circumcision not performed by human hand, but by the complete stripping of your body of flesh. This is circumcision according to Christ", adds Paul (Colossians 2,11).

"The worship they offer me is worthless", says Jesus of the Pharisees and the scribes despite their circumcision (Matthew 15,9). Isaiah too, like most of the prophets, had denounced these cults: "The Lord has said: Because this people approaches me only in words, honors me only with lip-service while their hearts are far from me, and my religion, as far as it is concerned, is nothing but human commandment, a lesson memorized!" (Isaiah 29,13) We are astonished that "disciples" of Jesus still insist today on worshiping according to cults and rites denounced by Jesus and the prophets: "Hypocrites! It was you Isaiah meant when he so rightly prophesied: This people honors me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless; the doctrines they teach are only human regulations", repeats again Jesus (Matthew 15,7-9).

3.8 Revelation of the Holy Trinity (Genesis 18)

Chapter 18 repeats the annunciation made by God to Abraham concerning the birth of Isaac, but this time with Sarah's presence. In the first narrative, it is Abraham who "laughed to

himself" (Genesis 17,17), but in the second, it was Sarah who, "was listening at the entrance of the tent behind Abraham"... she who "had ceased to have her monthly periods... laughed to herself, thinking, 'Now that I am past the age of childbearing, and my husband is an old man, is pleasure to come my way again?'" (Genesis 18,11-12).

The two accounts are recognized by the repetition of the mention that Isaac will be born "at this time next year" (Genesis 17,21 / 18,14). There are two oral traditions, the second being respectful of the dignity of the Patriarch: it is not he who laughed and doubted, but Sarah whose faith is weaker than that of her husband, considered irreproachable. The first story is told according to the **elohist** tradition: "God (*Elohim*) said to Abraham..." (Genesis 17,9-22), and the second according to the **yahwist** tradition: "Yahweh appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre..." (Genesis 18,1-14).

God, who sees the hearts, grasps Sarah's inner laughter, He asked her why she had laughed, not to overwhelm her, but to make her realize his Omnipotence. She, feeling discovered, was afraid and denied saying: "I did not laugh". But God, good and understanding, replied paternally: "Oh yes, you did laugh". He did not consider as untruthful, the intimidated attitude of his "little" creature (Genesis 18,15).

The most important point in this second account is the revelation of the Holy Trinity. Indeed, God appeared to Abraham in the form of **Three Persons**: "He looked up, and there he saw **three** men standing near him." (Genesis 18,2).

The dialogue between God and Abraham is in itself revealing: the Patriarch addresses himself to these three Persons in the singular at times, and sometimes in the plural. He seems unable to understand whether he should address himself to one or three: "'**My Lord**, I beg you, if I find favor with **you**... A little water shall be brought; **you** shall wash your feet...' **They** replied: 'Do as you say.'" (Genesis 18,2-5) It is God-Trinity who storms into the world of men and reveals himself, already 2000 years before Christ, without being grasped by human intelligence, still opaque.

Reread chapter 18 attentively and reflect therein. What do you think of these three persons who appeared to Abraham? Why does the dialogue vary between the singular and the plural? Give **your** explanations.

Meditate on the manner this narrative is reported: everything is said simply, with freshness and with no false modesty, especially from Sarah. Abraham is quick to welcome his host with spontaneous enthusiasm and offers him the best of his herd (contrary to Cain's greed). And Sarah, withered with age, who "had ceased to have her monthly periods", wonders with her hidden laughter: "Now that I am old, is pleasure to come my way again" ... with a husband now an "an old man!" ...

These traits reveal to us Abraham's physiognomy: A simple man, upright and whole, with a generous heart, spontaneous and flexible enough to let himself be modeled by God. This explains why God chooses him. Do not forget that the divine choice fell on this man, a Syrian, and never a Hebrew "people", with a hardened heart and rebellious to God, as the prophets revealed (Isaiah 1,2-4 / Jeremiah 7,25-28, etc...)

3.9 Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)

After announcing Isaac's birth, God revealed to Abraham His determination to strike down Sodom and Gomorrah because of their perversities. These two cities, located south of the Dead Sea, were reputed for their debauchery, notably homosexuality, hence the expression "sodomy". God decided to punish them, as he had done before at Noah's period, with a dissolute

civilization. This was to serve as a lesson for future generations and serve as an example of the punishment that will befall on the wicked world in the end times (Luke 17,26-30).

Lot and his wife were invited to leave Sodom with their two daughters because they had not been contaminated by the sodomites. The vice of the latter was clearly homosexuality (Genesis 19,4-11). It was recommended to Lot's family not to look back while leaving (Genesis 19,17), ie to leave this past without regret, without leaving their hearts there because of possessions, homes, etc... but to look forward to the future, trusting in God. Lot's wife did not take this divine recommendation into account and was transformed into "a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19,26).

We must understand the **symbolic** meaning of this story: We must never hesitate to give up a life without God. Whoever desires to raise himself must free himself from worldly attractions to leap towards spiritual life without looking back, without entertaining our nostalgia of past pleasures: "Once the hand is laid on the plow (*spiritual life*), no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God", said Jesus (Luke 9,62).

3.10 Isaac's birth and the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21)

After Isaac's birth, "Sarah watched the son that Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. 'Drive away that slave-girl and **her** son,' she said to Abraham, 'this slave-girl's son is not to share the inheritance with my son Isaac.'" (Genesis 21,9-10) Sarah thus disavows Ishmael as her son and rejects him, exiling him with his mother... after having been herself the instigator of her husband's union with Hagar.

Sarah's attitude "greatly distressed Abraham because of his son, but God said to him, 'Do not distress yourself on account of the boy and your slave-girl. Grant Sarah all she asks of you, for it is through Isaac that your name will be carried on.'" (Genesis 21,9-12).

God allows this female jealousy to be present; He consented to the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael, not to discredit them and approve Sarah, as the rabbis interpret it, but to accomplish his Messianic plan through Isaac. It was necessary that peace reigned in the family without any quarrels. This is why God asked Abraham not to be sad because of this dismissal. God confirms His blessing, already given to Ishmael (Genesis 17,20), recalling that from "the slave-girl's son I shall also make him into a great nation, for he too is your child" (Genesis 21,13).

This divine blessing contradicts the attitude of many fanatic Jews towards Ishmael and the Arabs, on the pretext that their ancestor, Ishmael, was "driven out" by Abraham. It is not in this racist mindset that Ishmael's remoteness is presented in Genesis, which also considers him of Abraham's lineage. After the expulsion of Hagar and her son, an Angel appeared to them to support and comfort the distraught mother: "'Do not be afraid, for God has heard the boy's cry where he lies... for I will make him into a great nation.' Then God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well, so she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy..." (Genesis 21,14-21)

God never abandoned Ishmael, but his Messianic plan was to be fulfilled through Isaac.

3.11 The sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22)

The Pagans of the time had a custom of offering their children in sacrifice to the idols. This was even practiced by some Jewish kings after Abraham and was condemned by the prophets (Jeremiah 7,31). Abraham, under the weight of a crisis of conscience, wanted to offer his son to God like the Pagans offered their children to their gods, believing he was honoring God in this way. But the latter intervened on time to prevent him from doing so, and to signify to

Sites and peoples of Canaan related in the history of the patriarchs

him that He is not like the pagan "gods" who demand human sacrifices: an Angel said to him: "'Do not raise your hand against the boy, do not harm him, for now I know you fear God. You have not refused me your son, your only son.' Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram... and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son." (Genesis 22,9-13)

Later, God explained through the prophets that the only sacrifice that pleased him was repentance, justice and love. The prophet Micah exclaimed: "'With what gift shall I come into Yahweh's presence...? Must I give my first-born for what I have done wrong, the fruit of my own body for my own sin?'—What is good has been explained to you, man; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6,6-8)

With the Advent of Jesus, a new light was given to us. Not only does God not require men to sacrifice their children, but it is He, God, who offers His only begotten Son to mankind in sacrifice for their salvation: "Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life", said Jesus (John 3,16); and also: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you." (John 15,13-14) Through his intervention in human history, God changed, with wisdom and pedagogy, the mentality of man concerning sacrifice and, with the coming of Jesus, the upheaval was total. The dictator gods of mythology gave way to the one Creator who revealed Himself as good, compassionate and merciful.

3.12 Isaac's marriage (Genesis 24)

Abraham wanted a wife from "his native land and his own kinsfolk" for his son Isaac (Genesis 24,1-4). He therefore sent his servant to Syria, "Aram Naharaim", ie "Syria of the rivers" (North of the Tigris and the Euphrates), where the city of Haran is located where he came from (Genesis 24,10-15). It was from there that the servant brought back Rebekah as a wife for Isaac. She is none other than the granddaughter of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother (Genesis 11,27-29). She is therefore Isaac's cousin from his father's side. It is also from there that Rebekah will later want a wife for her son Jacob (Genesis 27,46 / 28,5). This demonstrates the **Syrian** origins of Abraham's family.

Reflection

God reassured Abraham by blessing Ishmael. He also announced to him that the latter "will be the father of 12 Princes" (Genesis 17,20) whose names are mentioned in Genesis 25,12-16. This figure is symbolic and must be compared to the 12 tribes of Israel in parallel (see further down the 12 sons of Jacob in Genesis 35,22-26). The 12 "nobles", descendants of Ishmael are precious in the eyes of God, and thus worthy of esteem. Like all men of good faith, they are entitled to the same spiritual heritage as the bona fide descendants of Isaac.

A writer favorable to Hagar and Ishmael would have written: "Sarah, after having had Isaac, abandoned Ishmael who felt the blow. She eventually moves him away, forgetting that she had ardently wished for and adopted him. Now, she ends up, out of jealousy, even refusing him the legitimate right to inherit like Isaac, his brother". Sarah's attitude "greatly distressed Abraham" (Genesis 21,9-11). Ever since, fanatics have adopted Sarah's chauvinistic mentality, instead of following Abraham's kindness and justice.

4. Lesson 4 – The Story of Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 25 to 50)

It is necessary that you read these chapters before continuing this lesson; otherwise you will

not profit much from it. Five important points are to be raised:

4.1 Isaac's two sons: Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25,19+)

Rebekah (Rivca), like Sarah her mother-in-law, was Syrian. Genesis 25,20 insists on the revelation of the "Aramaean" origins of Isaac's wife: "Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the **Aramaean** of Paddan-Aram, and sister of Laban the **Aramaean**." (Genesis 25,20).

Rebekah, like Sarah, was sterile: "Isaac prayed to Yahweh on behalf of his wife, for she was barren. Yahweh heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived." (Genesis 25,21) She was carrying twins: Esau and Jacob. The first born was considered to be the eldest and it was customary for him to be privileged and to inherit paternal dignity. According to **human** tradition, it thus falls on Esau, the eldest, to inherit the spiritual mission of Abraham and Isaac, the Messiah having to come from his line, not that of his twin brother, Jacob.

But God does not let himself be bound by human customs and considerations, familial or tribal, as is the case here. They are too often racist and dictated by unjust prejudice. He thus established his Covenant with Jacob, not with Esau, although the elder. This "Covenant" meant that the Messiah was to come from the line of Jacob.

Indeed, when Rebekah went "to consult God", He answered her: "There are two nations in your womb... and the elder shall serve the younger." (Genesis 25,23) This is a total upheaval of the mentality of the time and of ancient traditions. The reason -strictly human- for the passing of the birthright onto Jacob is that Rebekah "preferred Jacob" because he "was a quiet man, staying at home under the tents", near his mother (Genesis 25,27-28). She thus plotted to rob the birthright and give it to her favorite. By cunning, she obtained that her husband blessed Jacob instead of Esau, although "Isaac preferred Esau, for he had a taste for wild game (*cooked by Esau*); but Rebekah preferred Jacob." (Genesis 25,28) It was believed at that time that the blessing given was effective and irrevocable; it cannot pass to another, whether it is merited or not (Genesis 27,1-45). Note that "this consultation of God" was practiced by male or female seers who claimed to hold this power of "clairvoyance". Even today, many claim to hold such power. The Bible reveals that the Israelites commonly practiced this custom (see Exodus 33,7 / 1 Samuel 14,41 etc...).

The attitudes of Rebekah and Jacob in this case are not examples of high morality. The prophets ultimately condemned Jacob's ruse: Jeremy presents it as an example of deception: "Let each be on his guard against his friend, be mistrustful of your brother, for every brother is a very Jacob..." (Jeremiah 9,3-4) "Yahweh has a case against Israel, he will pay Jacob as his conduct merits... In the very womb he supplanted his brother...", Hosea also says (Hosea 12,3-4).

But the scribes, wanting to justify Jacob and his mother, presented the story of the lentil dish to the detriment of Esau. The latter returned famished and "exhausted" from work in the countryside; he told his brother who had prepared a good soup of lentils: "'Let me **eat** (*as he was so hungry*) the red soup, that red soup there (*color of the lentils*); I am exhausted'". But Jacob, famished for the birthright, seized the occasion on the spot and exploited it to steal this right from his brother: "First give me your oath", he retorted. Esau, probably not taking his brother's covetousness seriously, acquiesced. "That was all Esau cared for his birthright", the scribes cynically comment (Genesis 25,29-34).

This story however, deserves to shake us: it invites us, if we are attentive to it, to revolt before injustice. Isaac, indeed, note it well, tells his son Esau: "... you shall serve your brother. But when you **win your freedom, you shall shake** his yoke from your neck." (Genesis 27,40) We must free ourselves from the yoke of fruitless religious traditions.

Another lesson to be drawn from this story: we must prefer the spiritual over the material, not "sell our birthright", which is **our** right to Eternal life, for a temporal good. It is this teaching that Jesus gives us by refusing, at the devil's request, to transform the rocks into bread, despite his hunger, because "Men do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4,4. See also Deuteronomy 8,3) We must be hungry and thirsty for the divine directives. If there is a choice between a material interest and a spiritual one, it is the latter to choose and the first one to sacrifice, without looking back, like Lot's wife...

God promised Adam and Eve a progeny that will crush the devil's head. This Savior is the Messiah. God's Messianic plan commenced with Abraham, passed on to Isaac, and continued with Jacob.

After having started with Abraham and after having been passed on to Isaac, the progeny promised by God to Adam and Eve to crush the devil's head, their tempter, passed on to Jacob, who became the third Patriarch. The story of the lentils comes to explain why this lineage did not pass through Esau, although the elder. But this human explanation does not reveal the true intention of God.

4.2 Jacob's two wives (Genesis 28 & 29)

Esau married two Hittites, not Aramaean: this deplored his parents (Genesis 26,34-35) and was one more reason to resent him. Rebekah, who feared the same for Jacob, intervened next to her husband so that he gives Jacob this order: "You are not to choose a wife from the Canaanite women. Away now to Paddan-Aram (*in Aram, Syria*), the home of Bethuel, your mother's father, and there choose a wife for yourself from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother." (Genesis 28,1-2) Notice that Isaac invokes on Jacob and his descendants "the blessing of Abraham". In the divine intention, this blessing means that the **Messiah comes from this line of descendants**, not that of Esau. The scribes give this blessing a geographical interpretation, namely that Palestine belongs to Jacob's (*the Israelites*) descendants, not that of Esau's (*the Arabs*). This is evident from the following verse: "... so that you may **take possession of the land** in which you live now, which God gave to Abraham." (Genesis 28,3-4).

On route to Syria, Jacob had a dream: God appeared to him at the summit of a ladder which goes up from the ground to Heaven to announce to him that his Covenant with Abraham would continue with him (Genesis 28,12-16). Jesus evoked this dream of the ladder, adapting it to his person and thereby revealing that, henceforth, he is himself the holder of the Divine Covenant, the successor and heir to the true promises made by God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (John 1,51). He is this ladder which leads from earth to Heaven and permits those who believe in Him to mount toward Heaven.

Notice that the belief in the one God did not develop without difficulty. It took personal experiences and choices. Indeed, Jacob was not sufficed with his father's words. He hesitated to believe in God and his faith was conditional: "**If** God goes with me... **if** he gives me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and **if** I return home safely to my father, **then** Yahweh (*solely*) shall be my God..." (Genesis 28,20-22).

The story of Jacob's marriages begins in chapter 29,15. The frantic race between Lea and Rachel (Rahil) to have children seems odd to us. We should read these narrations whilst considering the mentality of that period: a husband's esteem was measured according to the number of children, as the offspring was considered a sign of divine blessing.

This unrestrained race for procreation between the two wives, in which the maidservants Zilpah (of Leah) and Bilhah (of Rachel) were involved, gave Jacob 12 boys and a girl. These 12 sons of Jacob are the founding ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel, the first monotheistic community

called to reveal to the world, with goodness, the one Creator. The prophets denounced the infidelity and mismanagement of this first group of believers.

Having enriched himself, Jacob wanted to be independent of Labban, his father-in-law. He therefore fled to his native country, Canaan. Note that, in the haste of the voyage, Rachel insisted on taking with her the idols of the gods whom she still worshipped despite her marriage to Jacob (Genesis 31,34). It should be noted then, that the belief in the one God grew gradually and over time in the hearts of the ancestors. We should not be surprised. Even today, 4000 years after Abraham, we find a great number of Jews, Christians, and Muslims who do not believe in God... or who believe in Him in the wrong way, in a fanatic way, with a fundamentalist, fetishist, non-renewable mentality.

4.3 Jacob's "wrestling" against God (Genesis 32,24-33)

Jacob, on his return to Canaan, had another divine apparition: "There was one that wrestled with him until daybreak". This "one" was God in human form, like the three "men" who appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18).

The "wrestling" between God and Jacob is symbolic: God wants to mold Jacob, to model him after his Holy Spirit, but man refuses to let himself be made so by his Creator. Seeing that Jacob resisted Him, God gave him the name "Israel", which means "to wrestle **against** God" (Genesis 32,29).

In analyzing this fact, one concludes that unconsciously, Jacob wanted to equal himself to God, to pose in front of him as a rival. That is why his behavior was condemned by the prophets. Indeed, Hosea says: "Yahweh has a case against Israel, He will pay Jacob as his conduct merits... In the very womb he supplanted his brother, in maturity he wrestled against God... and beat Him", concludes Hosea ironically (Hosea 12,3-4). It is by violence and personal interest, not by love and justice, that Jacob wanted to steal God's blessing, exactly as he had done by robbing the blessing destined for Esau from his father.

After this incident, God gives Jacob another name: "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel (*Isra=wrestle, and EL=God*), since you have been strong against God, you shall prevail against men. (*he 'fought' against his brother Esau, a man, and stole his birthright*)", God declared to him ironically (Genesis 32,29). This resistance applies to the scribes and Pharisees who always resist God and his prophets. The latter, before Jesus and the Apostles, did not fail to denounce the recalcitrant attitude of the religious chiefs to God (see Isaiah 1,2-3 / Micah 1,5 / Jeremiah 2,20 / Matthew 23 / 1 Thessalonians 2,14-16). We must see in Jacob's "triumph" in his fight against God, the same divine irony as that addressed to Adam after his fall (Genesis 3,22).

The Biblical scribes claim that God "blessed him (Jacob) there" (Genesis 32,30). In this "blessing" there is a contradiction with the words of the prophets cited above: it is a supplement added by the "lying pen" of the scribes (Jeremiah 8,8) to justify their own resistance to God by presenting it as acceptable, even "blessed" by God. It is why God says to the Israeli community through Isaiah: "Your first father (*Jacob-Israel*) sinned, your mediators (*the scribes and other religious chiefs who interpreted the Biblical texts*) have rebelled against me. Your princes have profaned my sanctuary. So I have handed Jacob over to the ban, and Israel to insults." (Isaiah 43,27-28) So where does this alleged blessing of Jacob come from? It comes from the interpreters and scribes, also rebels against God, like Jacob. He, because of his resistance against God, was named Israel. This name passed down to his descendants, heirs of the same resistance.

Till today, this fight against God is symbolized by the State of Israel. The Zionists pursue, by politicizing Judaism, Jacob's fight against God and men: against God by the refusal to admit

that the mission of Judaism is uniquely spiritual and universal and by their rejection of Jesus; and against men by the unjust and violent occupation of a land which does not belong to them, all while claiming to be the "chosen people".

Many **bad** believers, from all sides, deserve to be called "Israel" because, while saying to God, "Thy will be done," they stubbornly impose their own will against God and men, disregarding God and men.

4.4 The 12 sons of Jacob: The 12 tribes of Israel (Genesis 35,22-26)

Jacob had 12 sons and one daughter from his two wives and their two maidservants.

Lea had 6 sons and one daughter:

- *Ruben* (the eldest): He slept with Bilhah (maidservant of Rachel: Genesis 35,22) and, because of that, did not obtain a blessing from his father (Genesis 49,3-4).
- *Simeon and Levi*: they committed a racist and treacherous crime (Genesis 34,25-31) which drew on them the **curse of their father** (Genesis 49,5-7). Moses and Aaron his brother descend from this cursed tribe of Levi, chosen by Moses to be the only sacerdotal tribe, ie the tribe that provides priests to sacrifice animals (Numbers 3,45).
- *Judah*: from his tribe comes the Messiah (not of the tribe of the eldest, Ruben). This is why Jacob praises Judah (Genesis 49,8-12).
- *Issachar and Zebulun.*
- *Dinah*, lastly is Jacob's only daughter.

Rachel had 2 sons:

- *Joseph*: His half-brothers were jealous of him and sold him. He became very powerful in Egypt where he ended up accommodating his whole family.
- *Benjamin*: the last-born child of Jacob, the "Benjamin".

Bilhah (maidservant of Rachel) had 2 sons:

- *Dan*
- *Naphtali*

Zilpah (maidservant of Leah) had 2 sons:

- *Gad*
- *Asher*

Chapter 49 of Genesis reports the prophecies of Jacob concerning each one of his children. The most important is that of Judah because it is from him that the Messiah will emerge. He is called "The Lion of Judah" because this prophecy qualifies Judah as "the lion cub" (Genesis 49,9). The Book of Revelation attributes this Messianic title to Jesus (Revelation 5,5).

The tribe of Judah has held the messianic role in Jewish history. It gave the kings who ruled in Judaea, David and his dynasty, where the Messiah came from. Genesis 38 indicates the descendant of the Messiah, through Judah and Tamar, by an extra marital union. Matthew 1,3 designates this genealogy. It was Judah who revolted against his brothers following the sale of Joseph. He had left his family and married a Canaanite, not a Jewess. He intervened with his brothers to save Joseph's life (Genesis 37,26). This noble attitude earned him the praise of his father (Genesis 49,9) and the merit of being the ancestor of the Messiah.

According to the prophecy of Jacob concerning Judah (Genesis 49,9-12), the Messiah was to abolish the royalty in Israel, not to consolidate it as the Jews and the Apostles themselves believed (Acts 1,6). In fact, it says: "The scepter **shall not pass** from Judah, nor the mace from between his feet, **until he come to whom it belongs** (*the Messiah*), to whom the peoples shall render obedience." (Genesis 49,10) The scepter, symbol of royalty, will thus remain until the arrival of the Messiah. He must seize the crown to proclaim the universal and **spiritual** reign, according to God, not a politico-military one, according to men.

The reason for the destruction of the Israeli kingdom -we shall see that later- is that it was established by the Jews against the Will of God. But if the Messiah comes to abolish the temporal kingship of an Israeli State, it is to build his spiritual and universal Kingdom according to Jacob's prophetic words to his son Judah: "The scepter shall not pass from Judah... until **he come to whom it belongs** (*the Messiah*), to whom the **peoples** shall render obedience." (Genesis 49,10) The kingship will therefore cease in Israel, but after the arrival of the Messiah who will proclaim himself **spiritual** King of all nations. In fact, after Jesus, the political Kingdom ceased in Israel when Titus invaded Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Since then, the spiritual and universal Kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus, the "Lion of the tribe of Judah", was finally established. To him belongs the "Scepter" forever.

The tribe of Judah ("Yehudah" in Hebrew) gave its name to the Jews ("Yehudim" in Hebrew, and "Yahoud" in Arabic). The English translation of the two words ("Yehudah" becoming "Judah" and "Yehudim" becoming "Jewish") does not reveal, like in Hebrew and Arabic, this relation between the tribe of Judah and the Jews (Yehouda and Yehoudim). The words "Jew" and "Judaism" are derived from the name of this tribe which, because of its Messianic qualification, had great importance in all the community. The Jews claimed his name for themselves, becoming the **"Yehudim"**to present themselves as the people of the Messiah, issue of the tribe of "**Yehudah**", just as they had adopted the name of Israel to mean that they are Jacob's descendants, named "Israel".

The disciples of Jesus called themselves "**Christians**" because they believe that He is the "**Christ**". Thus, the Messiah, is at the centre of the two communities and their point of reference. In Him, they define themselves and find their identity. He is All-for-All in the Old and New Testaments.

So then, Judaism and Christianity speak of the Messiah: Judaism still awaiting his coming, and Christianity proclaiming this Advent in the person of Jesus. And so, a "Christian" is one who recognizes in Jesus the announced Christ. We should therefore no longer wait for another as the Jews do.

The Jewish community's mission was to spread the knowledge of God and the **future advent** of the Messiah. The Christian community, on the contrary, bears witness to the **fulfillment** of the Messianic prophecies through Jesus, presenting him as the awaited and unique Messiah, and that we must not wait for another (Matthew 11,2-3).

The 12 sons of Jacob therefore had no political mission. Their mission was uniquely spiritual and consisted of getting to know God and announcing the future advent of the Messiah in their community and the whole world. Also, the 12 tribes are not only the **spiritual** ancestors of the Jews, but of all who believe that Jesus is truly the one and only Christ of God.

It should be known that the word "Messiah" is derived from Hebrew "Meshiah", which means "Anointed", the One who receives the unction of God. The word "Christ" is derived from the Greek "Christos" which also means "The **Anointed**", the chosen one of God. It is by the unction that kings were enthroned. Now, the Messiah is the King of both worlds and his unction comes directly from God.

4.5 The 12 tribes in Egypt (Genesis 37 to 50)

With the story of Joseph, we see how the "sons of Israel" end up in Egypt at around 1700 BC. They remained there for four centuries, growing in number. The account of the Covenant "of the halves" between God and Abraham "prophesied" this event (Genesis 15,13-15). We should not ignore that this story was put down in writing at around 1000 BC. Their stay in Egypt and exit from it had thus **already** taken place. The scribes added this "prophecy" later.

This stay in Egypt strongly marked the Israelite community which, with time, had forgotten God and let themselves be contaminated to practice Egyptian idol worshipping. This exposed the Messianic plan of God to danger.

In order to pursue this plan successfully, God charged Moses to get the Israelites out of Egypt four centuries after their entry. The Book of Exodus, which we will see in the fifth lesson, reports the narrative of this exit. With Jacob, 70 Israelites had taken refuge in Egypt (Genesis 46,27); with Moses 600,000 exited 400 years later (Exodus 12,37).

We should retain the two dreams of Joseph when he was 17 years old: that of the wreathes of his brothers which bowed to his and that of the sun, of the moon and the eleven stars which did the same before him (Genesis 37,2-11). Retain the two dreams of the Pharaoh too: that of the cows and that of the ears of grain (Genesis 41,1-7). God often speaks to men in dreams and reveals Himself to them in that manner.

The Creator announced the same message under two different forms: first to Joseph, then to Pharaoh. God therefore speaks through dreams. But it is also necessary to be prudent: there are some satanic sources in our dreams. It is thus necessary to discern the source and **well-interpret** the meaning of the messages thus received, and making sure that they come from God. We must pray well to understand them, and act wisely as a consequence. God has often employed this method in the Bible, and in the Book of Revelation in particular, where the same message is announced in repeated visions, but under various forms, like the dreams of Joseph and Pharaoh. The prophet Joel informs us, on behalf of God, that He manifests himself to his elect in dreams and visions: "After that, I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old people will have dreams, and your young people see visions. . . " (Joel 3,1).

The Book of Genesis ends with the Israelites in Egypt, Jacob having been buried in Canaan (Palestine), in the current city of Hebron (in Arabic "El Khalil"), there where Abraham and Isaac are buried (Genesis 50,12-13). This place is, today, a mosque that the Jews want to retake.

Before dying, Joseph warned his brothers that "God will be sure to remember you kindly and take you back from this country to the land that he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." He demands that his bones are carried with them (Genesis 50,24-25). This is what Moses did when he left Egypt with the Israelites (Exodus 13,19).

The expression "God will visit you" is to be retained. It returns often in the Bible. God "visits" by an envoy, a prophet, to communicate a message, or by happy or unhappy events, to reward or to punish. This expression means that God is the cause of these events: "Suddenly, unexpectedly, you shall be visited by Yahweh Sabaoth with thunder, earthquake, mighty din. . . " Isaiah prophesied against Jerusalem the wicked (Isaiah 29,6 / also see Jeremiah 29,10 / Amos 3,2 / Luke 7,16 and 19,44). God visits you and solicits you through the Biblical study. . .

4.6 Questionnaire recap

1. Have you done your "de-conditioning" and "Become aware"?
2. Why do you study the Bible and not another holy book?
3. Are you sure that the biblical text that you are studying is authentic? Why?
4. Do you experience joy studying the Bible? What do you feel?
5. Explain the accounts of creation and oral traditions.
6. What does "God created man in his image" mean? Are you like this image?
7. How do you imagine the state of man was in Paradise before the fall? And after?
8. How do you understand the sin of Adam and Eve?
9. Explain Genesis 3,15. How does it relate to Abraham?
10. God accepted Abel's offering, not that of Cain. Why?
11. Who was Abel's successor?
12. What did you understand of the flood and of Noah's descendants?
13. What do you know of the epic of Gilgamesh?
14. How do you understand Genesis 6,1-4? Genesis 10? Genesis 15? Genesis 18,1-15? Genesis 32,23-33? Genesis 49,8-12?
15. What was the purpose of God's plan with Abraham?
16. Which of the two concepts is right: "**chosen** people" or "**a formed** community"? Why?
17. Sarah expelled Hagar and Ishmael. Comment.
18. Circumcision, baptism by holy water, are they divine requirements for the soul's salvation?
19. What did you understand of Melchizedek?
20. What did you understand of Sodom and Gomorrah?
21. Lot's wife was transformed into a statue of salt. Comment.
22. The 12 tribes of Israel. Explain.
23. Comment on the dreams of Joseph and of Pharaoh.
24. Who is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah"? Why this name?

25. Establish the Messianic line from Abraham to Judah.

26. Why do the Jews want to take back the Mosque of Hebron and that of Omar in Jerusalem? (The mosque of Hebron is built on the site where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were buried. The mosque of Omar, in Jerusalem, is built on the presumed site where Abraham was preparing the offering of Isaac in sacrifice. Solomon had built the 1st Temple there, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, then again by Titus in 70 AD. In the VIIth century AD, the Caliph, Omar Ibn-el-Khattab built a mosque on this same site).

5. Lesson 5 – The Book of Exodus

Before reading my explanations, it is preferable that you read the whole Book of Exodus in order to familiarize yourself with its contents. Then, come back to the following points:

5.1 The long stay of the Israelites in Egypt

The long stay of the Jews in Egypt for four centuries made them forget monotheism and worshiped Egyptian divinities. In the desert, during their return to Palestine, we see them worshiping the calf "Apis" again, one of the Egyptian gods of the time (Exodus 32). This shows to which point they had moved away from God's plan with Abraham. This plan sought to send the Messiah to the world through Abraham's descendants.

It was necessary then, that God isolates this community contaminated by idolatry by getting it out of Egypt, just as He had isolated Abraham 700 years before by getting him out of Haran toward Canaan, more in the South, to safeguard his faith, still embryonic, from the surrounding paganism (Genesis 12,1-5). You must know that the word "Israelite" refers to the Jewish religion, to the spiritual community, but "Israeli", on the contrary, refers to Jewish nationalism, the Jewish State, and means a political identity never desired by God.

The Israelite community, of Syrian origin, represented the social matrix which gave rise to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who came thirteen centuries later. This is the sole reason for its creation, and its importance.

5.2 Moses' vocation

Getting the Jews out of Egypt was not a small venture: it was first necessary to convince the Jews themselves of its moral importance. Moses was chosen by God for this end and, since his birth, he was oriented to successfully lead this vocation, having grown up in Pharaoh's palace.

Moses is from the tribe of Lévi (Exodus 2,1). His name in Hebrew means "Saved-from-water" ("Mo": water and "she": saved). Pharaoh's daughter "treated him like a son" (Exodus 2,10) and he grew up in the palace, imbued in the cult of the Pharaonic religion. It is for this reason that Jews and Muslims hold this daughter of the Pharaoh in high esteem.

When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3,1-15), he did not recognize the God of his ancestors, and did not know how to present Him to the Israelites who, also, had forgotten Him. This new divine manifestation to Moses was necessary to carry on the plan that was established with Abraham.

Believing that God had a name like the gods of mythology, Moses asked God his name. God answered that his Name is "I am the One Who Is", "The Being" par excellence, contrary to the gods of mythology, who "are not" divinities because they do not exist. God asks Moses to

Main concordance between the Bible and history

Teaching of the Old Testament	*Historic facts*	*Chronological indications*
Entrance of Jacob and Joseph (Anachronistic mention of the "Land of Ramesses"	MERUSERRE YAKOUB HER In the list of the last king of Hyksos (Avaris)	Around mid XVIIth century B.C.
Birth of Moses contemporary to the construction of Pi-Ramesses	Beginning of the construction of Pi-Ramesses under Sethi 1st	About the beginning of the XIIIth century B.C.
80 years	430 years	About 1235-1224 B.C.
Moses in the Land of Madian (death of the king of Egypt)	Death of Ramses II after reigning 67 years. Advent of Mineptah	
	Israel's stele the Vth year of Mineptah	
The descendants of Jacob-Israel enslaved in Egypt	Death of Mineptah End of the XIXth dynasty	Last quarter of the XIIIth century B.C.
EXODUS		

The XVIIth century B.C. is Jacob's and Joseph's century. The biblical mention of 430 years between the entry in Egypt and the Exodus correspond approximately to the Hyksos sovereignty and the end of XIXth dynasty.
The XIIIth century B.C. is Moses' century correspond perfectly with history.

The duration of certain kingdoms are well known, but their place in time is relatively imprecise.

Drawn from the book "Moses and Pharaoh" by Dr. M. Bucaille

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The Tetragram

make Him known to the Jews who have forgotten Him under the Name "Yahweh". This name means "I Am". In Hebrew, this name is written in 4 letters (YHWH) and was thus known as the "Tetragram" (the 4 letters). It is often inscribed above certain Jewish religious buildings (synagogues). "This is my Name for all times, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations to come" said the Creator (Exodus 3,15). One should not stop at the literal resonance of this Name, as certain Jews do, but at its deep spiritual significance: I AM, unfortunately neglected by believers.

Jesus taught us to address God as sons to their Father and to ask Him: "Father, hallowed be Thy Name" (Matthew 6,9) that is to say, purified. He was not speaking of the name Yahweh, an articulated word, but of the Being of God, which He really is. Christ's intention is thus not to "sanctify" God who is already perfect, but to purify the knowledge that we have of Him, the idea that man makes of Him. God is not like most of the religious of all walks of life present him, who have a false conception of Him and give a false image of His Person. Many refuse to believe in Him because of that and a great number of atheists reject this false image rather than God. And if they came to know God as He really is, these atheists would make better believers than the clergy who profaned the name of the Creator by doing evil in the Name of God. The prophets denounced this profanity and those who, by their injustices, carry their prejudice in the Name of God and distort his Image:

> "You will stop profaning my Holy Name with your offerings and your idols..." (Ezekiel 20,39).

> "They have profaned my Holy Name among the nations where they have gone, so that people say of them: 'These are the people of Yahweh...' But I have been concerned about my Holy Name, which the House of Israel has profaned... I mean to display the holiness of my Great Name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them." (Ezekiel 36,20-23 / Romans 2,24).

> "... they have sold the virtuous man for silver... they trample on the heads of ordinary people and push the poor out of their path, because son and father have both resorted to the same girl, profaning my Holy Name." (Amos 2,6-7).

> "... my Name is honored among the nations... But you, you profane it..." (Malachi 1,11-12)

God sanctified his Holy Name by the real image that He gave us of Himself in the Person of his Messiah who says: "And eternal life is this, to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17,3). Jesus sanctified the name of God, making Him known to us as He is: Love, Kindness and Simplicity. God is a tender Father to those who approach Him through Jesus who declared before his Apostles: "I have made your Name known to them and I will continue to make it known" (John 17,26), insofar that their souls will be purified. May the Holy Name of God be sanctified in all of us. Amen.

Still today this Holy Name is profaned everywhere and Christians have disfigured, in their turn, the names of God and of his Messiah.

Notice that Moses married a Midianite, not a Jewess. This is why the Jews do not regard his two sons as Jews (Exodus 2,16-22 and 18,6). In fact, the rabbis recognize as Jewish only those whose mothers are Jewish. This is why the Book of Numbers reports that "Miriam, and Aaron too, spoke against Moses in connection with the Cushite woman (*Midianite*) he had taken. For he had married a Cushite woman." (Numbers 12,1) Notice too, that the father-in-law of Moses is called "Reuel" (Exodus 2,18) and elsewhere "Jethro" (Exodus 3,1 / 4,18). This is due to the various oral traditions.

Moses found himself in Midian, having fled from Egypt after killing an Egyptian to defend a Jew (Exodus 2,11-15). So he knew he was a Jew himself, Pharaoh's daughter having informed him. She had discovered his Jewish identity because of his circumcision (Exodus 2,6).

Note that Moses, intimidated by his mission, and having difficulty in speech, asks God to add Aaron his brother, a better speaker (Exodus 4,10-17). Many of the prophets were hesitant in assuming the difficult mission that God entrusted to them (Jeremiah 1,6-7).

On the way back to Egypt, Moses took his wife and son with him on a donkey. During a stop, Moses had a crisis of conscience because of his son's uncircumcision. The writer, believing in the importance of circumcision, interprets this crisis as an encounter with God who wants to kill Moses because of his uncircumcised son. Zipporah, Moses' wife, who was not Jewish, was unaware of this foreign practice in the country of Midian and did not understand her husband's crisis. At the insistence of the latter, she circumcises her son herself with a sharp flint and, with an irritated gesture, "touched the genitals of Moses with the cut off foreskin of her son and said, 'Truly, you are a bridegroom of blood to me!'" (Exodus 4,24-26) We can compare this unjustifiable crisis to that which Abraham had when he wanted to offer Isaac in sacrifice to God.

If the Name of God was sanctified in them, neither Abraham would have thought of offering his son, nor Moses in circumcising his. It is important to understand God so as not to be overburdened by acts, rites and worships that He does not want.

The affair of circumcision was probably the cause of the couple's separation because after this incident, Moses is alone in Egypt, without his wife and their two sons. He meets them later, after leaving Egypt, when his father-in-law went to meet him with his two sons: "Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought Moses' wife Zipporah—after she had been dismissed. . . " (Exodus 18,1-6) Note that Moses "went out to greet his father-in-law and bowing low before him he kissed him. . . " (Exodus 18,7) It is not said in the story that Moses hurried to embrace his wife and his two sons who were however present. This neglect is meant by the Jewish narrators to depreciate the wife and the two sons, considered non-Jews.

Notice that Jethro recognizes that God "is greater than all the gods. . . and offered a holocaust and sacrifices to God" (Exodus 18,11-12). But he did not understand that He is the only God. After this sacrifice, "Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to share the meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God" (Exodus 18,12). It suffices then, to believe in God to be in his presence, in his loving company. The Jews should always act like Moses did with Jethro: to make God and his wonders known to those who do not know Him in a spirit of brotherhood and friendship.

5.3 The 10 plagues of Egypt

We must not see historical realities in these plagues. Through this fabulation, we can conceive of the power of God who triumphs over evil. Note that the Egyptian sorcerers managed to imitate some of the prodigies accomplished by Moses, but it was always the latter who prevailed in the end. God has the upper hand over the devil. It is, in fact, the snake of Moses which swallows up that of the magicians': despite that the Pharaoh's heart remained obstinate and cold, comment the scribes (Exodus 7,12-13). The magicians were able to reproduce, with their spells, the miracle of the frogs, but could not stop the plague caused by themselves and the Pharaoh had to resort to Moses who managed to put an end to it by prayer (Exodus 8,1-11). With the plague of the mosquitos, Moses filled the country with these insects and "all the dust of the ground changed into mosquitoes throughout the whole of Egypt" (picturesque manner to describe the intensity of this plague). The Egyptian sorcerers were unable to compete with the envoy of God and recognized that "the Finger of God is there", before the power that overwhelmed them (Exodus 8,12-15). Finally, when God strikes the Egyptians with an epidemic of ulcers, the magicians themselves are affected by it and could not appear before the Pharaoh (Exodus 9,8-12). Despite that, Pharaoh remained imperturbable and refused to let the Jews go, contrary to his promise. The text says: "Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (Exodus 9,12): it is an erroneous way to explain the Pharaoh's stubbornness because God does not harden anyone's heart, but in that time, believers thought that God was the instigator of all our decisions. This is wrong! God respects our freedom and that is why He judges us. Otherwise He would be unjust.

Retain from this imaginary narrative that demons have the power to do wonders on this earth to mislead men. But true believers are able to thwart satanic spells. The devil is "God's monkey", but his monkey-business always ends up being uncovered when we know how to distinguish the true light of God, and how to wait with faith and unwavering force to see the end of the power of evil.

5.4 The Passover

In Hebrew, Passover is "Pessah", and in Arabic "Fesseh". It is an annual Jewish festival celebrated in spring. It coincides sometimes with the Christian Easter.

The Jewish Passover, which means "passage", "to take the step", commemorates the exit of the Jews from Egypt after the "passage" of the angel of death who struck the first-born Egyptians, followed by the "passage" of the Jewish community through the Red Sea, fleeing Pharaoh's army.

The Torah demands the Jews to offer an annual meal in celebration to commemorate this feast of the passage from the land of slavery to the "promised land". This meal consists of a lamb marinated with bitter herbs. It is the Passover meal which the Jews call the "Seder": "... You shall eat it hastily: it is a Passover (*passage*) in Yahweh's honor... This day is to be a day of remembrance for you..." (Exodus 12,11-14). The Jews commemorate this Passover every year with a family Seder. They share the Passover lamb and wine with blessing formulas.

Jesus was recognized as the new Passover Lamb by John the Baptist: "Here is the lamb of God", he says (John 1,36). We must therefore forget the lamb of the Passover of Egypt for another "Lamb", and a new Easter. Jesus is the Messiah sent by God to deliver us from spiritual death and make us "pass" to Eternal Life. He is the Passover for all men who believe in him and who remain faithful to him. It is why, on the eve of being delivered to the cross, and by eating the Seder with his disciples, He offered himself, not the lamb, as the efficient food for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life: "Take it and eat, this is my body (*my flesh or my meat,*

Moses and Pharaoh

not that of the traditional lamb)... Drink from this all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the Covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26,26-28): "There is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world", John the Baptist also adds (John 1,29). Jesus also said: "I am the living bread which has come down from Heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world..." (John 6,51-58) The Christian Seder, or the "the Lord's Supper" (1 Corinthians 11,20) makes us pass from this perishable world to the Next, and this already from down here... Our Vehicle is the Living Christ in the Eucharist. It is to help us sublimate our life that Jesus asks us to repeat this act by saying: "Do this as a memorial of me." (Luke 22,19)

Notice that the Jews, at the time of their exit from Egypt, "stripped" the Egyptians of their jewels (Exodus 12,35) ... These stolen jewels served for the construction of the golden Calf adored by them (Exodus 32,1-6). This dispossession of the property of others arises often in the Bible (Numbers 33,50-56).

5.5 The Jewish priesthood

Before Moses, the notion of a priesthood was unknown in the Jewish community. God had never spoken about it to Abraham. For centuries after him, the first monotheistic community had no priests, the faithful themselves offered their sacrifices. The priesthood was instituted after the stay of the Israelites in Egypt and was inspired and copied from Egyptian mythology. We must not forget that Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace, imbued in Egyptian worship from which he had known the priests closely. He wanted to institute a Jewish priesthood similar to the Egyptian's. The latter consisted of offering to the gods and idols animals in sacrifice. Only priests were eligible for this worship after a strict formation. This inspired Moses, but instead of presenting the sacrifices to idols, he made it an obligation to offer them to God.

From the onset, there was no sacerdotal institution, or even sacrifice, since Abraham addressed himself to God simply, without recurring to a special worship (Genesis 18,22-33).

When the Jewish priesthood was instituted, "all the first-born among the Israelites" were to be consecrated as priests (Exodus 13,1-2). Following this, Moses consecrated the Levites, exclusively, to the service of worship "in the place of all the first-born ones of the children of Israel". The first-born of the other tribes were "repurchased" by their parents; the money of this "ransom was given to Aaron and his sons, at Yahweh's bidding, as Yahweh (*?!*) had ordered Moses (*!*)" (Numbers 3,44-51). We must not forget that Moses and Aaron are from the tribe of Levi, a tribe privileged by them, not by God. It was to it that all that money returned... on the pretext of a divine order. I do not think that God has anything to do with this worship and this priesthood copied exactly on Egyptian mythology. For God had announced the advent of the only priesthood which He approved, namely that of the Messiah, Jesus, and according to the order of Melchizedek, not of Levi (Psalms 110 (109),4). See on this subject what Paul said in his letter to the Hebrews (Hebrews 5,1 to 7,19).

The priesthood according to Jesus takes full flight in the apocalyptic era. With the revelation of the message of the Book of Revelation, Jesus institutes a new priesthood in favor of all who believe in its content: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it, because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought men for God of every race... and made them a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world" (Revelation 5,9-10). It is therefore by the opening of the Book of Revelation that Jesus makes his new priests free from

the sacerdotal conceptions of the past.

5.6 The Hymn of Moses (Exodus 15)

After the crossing of the Red Sea, the Jews "sang this song in Yahweh's honor", a song of joy and gratitude because "horse and rider (of the Egyptian army) He has thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15,1-21). It is the hymn of Moses which is well-known in the Jewish community. It is sung whilst dancing on the occasions of Israeli victories, as Moses' sister Miriam once did in bygone days (Exodus 15,20-21).

Chapter 15 of the Book of Revelation mentions the "hymn of Moses" as well as the "hymn of the Lamb". This last hymn will be launched by the disciples of Jesus, those of the end of times, after their triumph over the Beast, the enemy of Christ, the Antichrist. This victory corresponds to the crossing of the Red Sea, being a glorious crossing over the difficulties caused by the enemies of Jesus. They will initiate, henceforth, their hymn of triumph, the canticle of the Lamb. This is why John saw "a glass lake (*a spiritual sea and no longer the Red Sea*) suffused with fire (*the fire of trials*), and standing by the lake of glass, those who had fought against the Beast and won... they were singing the hymn of Moses... and of the Lamb" (Revelation 15,2-3).

5.7 The Manna (Exodus 16)

The Israelis were famished in the desert. God miraculously gave them manna to eat, recommending that they suffice themselves with it every day and not to reserve some aside for the next day. This is a lesson: we must fully confide in God, being satisfied with our daily bread without worrying about tomorrow, as Jesus taught (Matthew 6,11 / 6,25-34).

The manna episode was brought up again by Jesus in the Gospel, where he presents himself as the heavenly manna, the true bread of heaven which nourishes the soul: "It was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven... I am the bread of life from heaven..." (John 6,32-51)

A new manna is reserved for the apocalyptic times (Revelation 2,17). It is a "hidden", mystical manna from which the apocalyptic disciples of the end of times will be nourished: the Eucharist in the family (Revelation 3,20 / 12,6 / 12,14).

5.8 The Law of Moses (Exodus 20-31)

The law of Moses (Torah) is divided into two parts:

1. the 10 Commandments (or the Decalogue)

2. the law of the works or practices of worship (circumcision, clean and unclean foods, etc...)

5.8.1 The Decalogue

Most of these commandments already existed and appeared in the law of king Hammurabi (You will not kill, not steal, etc...) What is new, are the first 3 commandments concerning the one God: "You shall have no other gods to rival Me, etc..." The Decalogue will always be valid and Jesus summarized it in the word "love", because the one who loves does not kill, does not steal and does not insult. Meditate well on the words of Christ in Matthew 22,36-40, and of Paul in Romans 13,8-10: "... all the other commandments are summed up in the single phrase: You must love your neighbor as yourself. Love can cause no harm to your neighbor". Likewise, St Augustine had said: "Love and do what you want", knowing well that the person who really loves does not commit offences. A loving mother is not recommended not to harm her children... It goes without saying.

5.8.2 The law of "works and practices"

The mosaic law prescribes practices of worship such as circumcision, the Sabbath, clean and unclean foods, sacrifices, etc... It is a law which is not only outdated, but which was never been inspired by the Creator, as the prophet Jeremiah already revealed: "For when I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, **I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about holocaust and sacrifice**" (Jeremiah 7,22).

All these practices were invented by priests and scribes for their material advantage. Scribes and priests have added, along the centuries, more than 600 practices to be followed under the penalty of sin. Apart from circumcision, etc... switching on the lights on Saturdays, doing your hair each Friday after sunset, walking more than a kilometer on Saturdays, touching a woman on her period or an object she had already touched, etc... all that is considered unclean and necessitates a purification that the priest must operate and which brings in money... naturally. Again, it was Jeremiah who denounced "the lying pen of the scribes" (Jeremiah 8,8).

Isaiah also declared that the worship practiced by the Jews was futile because it was of human inspiration, not divine: "Because this people approaches me only in words... while their hearts are far from Me, and my religion, as far as they are concerned, is nothing but **human commandment**, a lesson memorized" (Isaiah 29,13). Jesus, building on the words of this great prophet condemns the tradition practiced by the Pharisees and the scribes and calls them hypocrites: "Hypocrites! It was you Isaiah meant when he so rightly prophesied: This people honors me only with lip service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless; the doctrines they teach are only human regulations." (Matthew 15,7-9) These vain precepts are none other than those of the Torah, the Mosaic law. This useless and heavy worship is counterfeit to the Word of God. Isaiah explains this subject by saying: "The word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little, so that when they walk they may fall over backward and be broken, snared and made captive." (Isaiah 28,13) Jesus denounced the scribes and the Pharisees because "they tie up heavy burdens (*the precepts of the Torah*) and lay them on people's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they!" (Matthew 23,4).

The prophet Hosea did not hesitate to reveal what God had told him on his refusal of animal sacrifices, and on the futility of the Mosaic cult: "... since what I want is love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not holocausts" (Hosea 6,4-6). The prophet Micah also declared: "With what gift shall I come into Yahweh's presence... with holocausts, with calves one year old? ... What is good has been explained to you, man; **only this**, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6,6-8).

St Paul also denounced this law of rites and worship, and declared that it was a "curse" from which Jesus saved us (Galatians 3,13): he said it was useless for salvation and that one is saved

Ark of the Covenant

Seven-branched candelabrum

not by practicing the precepts of this law, but through faith in Jesus (Romans 3,28). All the efforts of Jesus and the Apostles are aimed at the liberation of believers from the practice of this law of superstition.

5.9 The Ark of the Covenant and the Candelabrum (Exodus 25)

In the desert, Moses had a tent built like a sanctuary for prayer. Remember above all, the Ark of the Covenant and the Candelabrum with 7 branches. The first was a portable case which contained the two stones of the 10 Commandments, the second is a chandelier with seven branches, symbol of the divine light. The figure seven is to be retained because it symbolizes plenitude, therefore full clarity by the divine light.

The Ark of the Covenant played a great role in Jewish history. It was lost after the destruction of the Temple, as well as the candelabrum. The Ark is currently and actively sought by Jewish archaeologists. However, Jeremiah predicted that in the Messianic times "no one will ever say again: Where is the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh? There will be no thought of it, no memory of it, no regret for it, no making of another." (Jeremiah 3,16) The disappearance of this Ark is a sign that the Messianic time is well-accomplished with Jesus. It was, indeed, after him, in the year 70 AD that the Romans destroyed the Temple and the Ark disappeared.

5.10 The golden calf (Exodus 32)

The Jews, impatient in the desert which they crossed into in suffering and deprivation, rejected the only God for whom they had abandoned comfort in Egypt. Discouraged and revolted, they made for themselves a visible god-idol, a golden calf that evokes the god Apis (worshiped in Egypt in the form of a calf). Instead of moving them away from it, Aaron consented to it, he the priest. This provoked the anger of Moses who, in his fury, broke the 2 tablets of the 10 commandments.

In our spiritual itinerary, we too have to go through ups and downs. Let us be wary of fatigue and weariness in our spiritual desert, as others do to the point of forming a false image of God for themselves, an image that suits them and can satisfy their materialistic inclinations, which distances them from God. Patience makes us more mature and purifies us.

5.11 Questionnaire

1. What have you understood from the name of God Yahweh?
2. What is the difference between the miracles of Moses and those of the Egyptian magicians?
3. What is Passover?

Sinai Peninsula and the main sites mentioned in Book of Exodus

4. What is constant in the Law of Moses?
5. The Ark of the Covenant and the Candelabrum.
6. What do you think of the animal sacrifices to offer?
7. What do you think of the sacerdotal clothing prescribed by "God" (Exodus 28)?
8. What do you think of the rites of consecration of the priests (Exodus 29)?

Reflection

The Exodus says that the Jews in Egypt at the time of Moses became "numerous and extremely powerful and that eventually the whole land was full of them" (Exodus 1,7). It was to Joseph, their ancestor, that they owed this power, having himself been very highly placed and "powerful to the extreme". He had designated his brothers, as well as other Jews, to high positions in the State upon their entry into Egypt. Over time they became numerous and powerful and wanted to rule the whole country, hence Pharaoh's reaction.

6. Lesson 6 – Leviticus – Numbers – Deuteronomy

With this lesson we will terminate the last three books of the Torah, or Pentateuch, also called the "Law" by the Jews. The Book of Exodus reports the narrative of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt. These final three books of the Law end just before their entry into Palestine with the death of Moses.

6.1 Leviticus

This book is indigestible and obsolete. However, it is necessary to know it to acquire a solid biblical formation, but without stopping at the foreign rites prescribed therein. They are all well outdated today. Read this book without stopping on it much, then come back to the reading of the course.

Leviticus was written by the scribes and Levite priests, from whom its name is derived. They interrupt the narration of events of the Exodus by presenting a collection of rites prescribed by the priests and in their interests. To give weight to these rites, the priests attributed them to God. It was He who would have asked Moses and Aaron to apply these sacrificial rituals (Leviticus 1-7), the ceremonial investiture of priests and the material profits accruing to them (Leviticus 8-10), the rules related to clean and unclean, etc...

To grasp the meaning of Leviticus, we must keep in mind that it was the priests who wrote in order to safeguard their material interests, and their spiritual and psychological hegemony over the community. This attitude is noticed today with all the clergy who monopolize, in the name of God, the spiritual "economy".

Chapters 1-7 flaunts over the variety of produce offered "to God", ie to the priest. We distinguish them below:

The animal sacrifices which are offered, be it in **holocaust** (the victim is completely consumed by fire, nothing left to the priest), be it **for sin** (the priests take parts of the victim for themselves), or in **praise** or **communion** to fulfill a vow (the flesh of the victim is taken by the sacrificer priest of course, and the fat is burnt for God...).

The oblation consists of offering a handful of produce from the soil to God, but "the remainder is to revert to Aaron and his sons, a most **holy portion** of the burnt offerings of Yahweh" (Leviticus 2,1-3). We distinguish among the offerings the "holy portions", and the "very holy portions". The latter purify all those who touch them (Exodus 29,37).

I have already signaled that the prophet Jeremiah had denounced these fraudulent practices as not having been prescribed by God, but by the scribes (Jeremiah 7,22 / 8,22). Other prophets also informed of their pointlessness (Hosea 6,6 / Amos 5,21-24). Psalm 51,16-17 adds: "Sacrifice gives You no pleasure... My sacrifice is this broken spirit (*by repentance*), You will not scorn this crushed and broken heart." And Jesus also reminds us that for God, "Mercy is what pleases Me, not sacrifice (*of animals*)" (Matthew 12,7).

Chapters 8-10 speak of the rites of investiture of the priests. These ceremonials, old and ridiculous, are inspired by paganism (especially Egyptian), and are impregnated with superstitious gestures. They have nothing of divinity. The attire of a priest is internal and, in the apocalyptic era, we are all called to be priests through faith and compassion... without theatrical rites of investiture (Revelation 1,6 / 5,9-10).

Chapters 11-27 expose in meticulous detail, the various recommendations for worship. Among others, there are, in the eyes of scribes and Levite priests, what is clean or unclean, and warnings against the violation of the Sabbath (Leviticus 19,2 / 19,30 / 26,2). This was already prescribed in Exodus 20,8-11 / 35,1-3. Believers were overloaded with the amount of precepts

falsely attributed to God. All these laws have nothing sanctifying or salutary about them. Well to the contrary, as the prophets had revealed initially and Jesus and his Apostles after, they are a dangerous obstacle for spiritual evolution. Those who practice them stumble over: "Precepts over precepts, rules over rules, so that when they walk they may fall over backward and be broken, snared and made captive" under the yoke of such laws, as Isaiah expressed (Isaiah 28,13). Jesus also warned against the scribes and clergy who "tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders. . . " (Matthew 23,4) Jesus also taught that nothing of what one eats makes him unclean; and this shocked the Jews (Matthew 15,10-12).

The warning against the violation of the Sabbath is solemnly repeated in the books of the Law. In case of its infringement, the punishment is death by stoning (Exodus 35,1-3). The Book of Numbers reports the case of a man who dared to collect wood on a Saturday. He was simply stoned (Numbers 15,32-36). The Gospel reveals that the Jews were furious against the Apostles who plucked ears of corn on a Saturday (Matthew 12,1-8). Jesus was also persecuted because He performed miracles on the Sabbath (John 5,16-18). For fanatics, this represented work, therefore the penalty was death. They were vexed even more against Jesus in hearing Him say that He was "Master of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12,8) and that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2,27).

Moses could not give the right image of God. By the murders he committed in the name of Yahweh, he disfigured the true Face of the Creator. Following that, the scribes and priests tarnish the Divine Visage even more. They did not understand His Spirit.

To know God is **to understand** God. Only Jesus revealed to us the true Face of the Father. Through Him only, we are able to penetrate the Divine Spirit, totally opposed to the spirit of the Law (Torah).

God is the Father of all races. He opens His arms to all men of pure heart, not only to the Israelites. It is why John writes: "though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known." (John 1,17-18) So Moses neither saw nor understood God. Otherwise, he would not have ordered assassinations in His Name. The Law that he prescribed was not inspired by God.

Was it Moses who, in the Name of the Holy One, prescribed all this Law or was it the scribes and priests? Moses certainly did part; the rest having been added by the scribes and Levite priests. And both parts are huge, terribly grave. The consequences have been grave along the centuries. Up to our days. . .

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles describes the bitter feuds waged by the Apostles to show the Law's conceit. Paul, in his letters to the Romans and Galatians, explains that salvation is obtained by faith in Jesus, the Law being no more than the letter that brings death, ineffective for Eternal Life (Read Romans 3,28-30 / Galatians 3,10-24 / Ephesians 2,14-16 / Hebrews 10,10).

The Book of Leviticus contains some lessons of present valor which are part of the gold buried in the books of the Old Testament.

6.1.1 Spiritism

This harmful practice is a human attempt to contact the Afterlife by different material means. It was condemned: "You must not practice divination or magic" (Leviticus 19,26) . . . "If a man has recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians, to prostitute himself by following them, I shall set my face against that man and outlaw him from his people" (Leviticus 20,6) . . . "Any man or woman who is a necromancer or magician must be put to death. . . " (Leviticus

20,27) This demonstrates that spiritism was practiced for a long period, as testified further down in the Bible, in the story of king Saul with the woman necromancer who conjured up Samuel for him (1 Samuel 28).

Widespread throughout the world still today, spiritism misleads many. The explicit biblical condemnation of this practice will always remain valid, because when we conjure good spirits (angels, saints), it is actually evil spirits which present themselves, spirits or souls attached to the earth. God does not intervene because the adepts who indulge in it are, in most cases, neither thirsty for the spiritual, nor have the deep desire to seek the Divine Truth in order to submit to it. They seek answers of a temporal, affectionate, or economic nature. Or still, they pose questions of curiosity about their entourage. It is the reason for which God is disinterested and allows evil spirits to intervene in these sessions, spirits which, according to St Peter, "are prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." (1 Peter 5,8)

On the contrary, it so happens that God Himself takes the initiative to contact the people of His choice, whom He sees thirsty for Light and Truth. He manifests Himself to these hearts who sincerely desire to know Him, willing to renounce everything to follow Him. In these cases, the result is always beneficial because the intervention comes from God, not from man and for strictly spiritual reasons, not material. This celestial contact is directed either by God Himself, or through one of His envoys (angels or saints).

God or His envoys appear in dreams, in visions (Joel 3,1-2), or even in a state of total awakening: apparitions of the risen Christ to his Apostles (Luke 24) and of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes, La Salette, and Fatima.

The Bible is rich in divine interventions, in dreams, in visions, and in apparitions. The celestial message can be communicated in a symbolic style, or in a clear way.

In dreams (during sleep): the dreams of Joseph (Genesis 37,5+), of the cupbearer and the baker (Genesis 40,5+), of Pharaoh (Genesis 41,1+), of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2,1+), of Daniel (Daniel 7,1+), of Joseph, Mary's husband (Matthew 1,20 / 2,13-22), of Pilate's wife (Matthew 27,19).

In visions (during sleep or in a state of semi-consciousness): Abraham (Genesis 15,1), Samuel (1 Samuel 3), the centurion and Peter (Acts 10), John with Revelation, Isaiah's visions (Isaiah 6), etc...

In apparitions (in the state of awakening): Abraham (Genesis 18), Zechariah (Luke 1,11), the Virgin Mary (Luke 1,26), the Apostles (Luke 24 / John 20 / John 21 / Acts 1,3-9), Paul (Acts 9), etc...

In addition, the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in La Salette, Lourdes and Fatima, etc... are biblical signs of the end of times announced by Jesus: "There will be great signs from heaven" (Luke 21,11), "a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman..." (Revelation 12,1+).

A meditation inspired by the Book of Job: To rectify man, "God speaks first in one way, and then in another... by dreams and visions that come in the night... to turn him away from evil-doing, and make an end of his pride; to save his soul from the pit..." (Job 33,14-18) These are the reasons for which God contacts men.

Likewise, Jesus promised to show Himself to those who love him: "Anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and **show myself to him**... If anyone loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him." (John 14,21-23)

If God then, wants to show Himself to us, why not put ourselves in the disposition that He demands? Why do some people insist on calling spirits when the Holy Spirit asks us to call Him? Why go to uncertain servants when the Master calls us?

If the invocation of spirits is condemned, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is recommended. It is necessary to contact God for supernatural reasons. This divino-human bond is an intrinsic necessity of human nature, a thirst that some have choked, replacing it with spiritism which is only a dangerous "phony" of reality, a "counterfeit currency", which sensible souls recognize and would not exchange with their heavenly treasure, that is the manifestation of God and His Messiah, Jesus, in us.

We can contact our pious deceased through contemplation and prayer. We can have recourse to them to gain support in the daily spiritual struggle. The souls of the saints and the spirits of the angels burn with the desire to contact us to support us spiritually. Saint Therese of Lisieux said: "I will spend my time in Heaven doing good on earth". So we must also be docile and receptive to heavenly solicitations. It is the opposite of spiritism. Let us believe in the power of intercession of the heavenly souls and their complicity.

6.1.2 Homosexuality

It is explicitly condemned. The following shows that this sexual deviation is from the days of antiquity as can be seen in the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18,20 / 19,25).

"You must not lie with a man as with a woman. This is a hateful thing." (Leviticus 18,22).

"The man who lies with a man in the same way as with a woman: they have done a hateful thing together. . . " (Leviticus 20,13).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul comes back to this condemnation, applying it as well to sexual relations between women: "That is why God left them to their filthy enjoyments and the practices with which they dishonor their own bodies. . . and why their women have turned from natural intercourse to unnatural practices and why their menfolk have given up natural intercourse to be consumed with passion for each other. . . " (Romans 1,24-32)

In the twenty-first century of ours, movements in support of homosexuality have arisen, demanding, in the name of liberty (?), that this practice be admitted as natural and normal, a practice which nature loathes and rejects as contrary to its vital and evolutionary impulse towards sublimation. With Paul we recall that these "degrading passions are **unnatural** practices" (Romans 1,26). We cannot consider natural what is against nature, because with Isaiah, we proclaim: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness. . . " (Isaiah 5,20).

In the name of the Creator, in the name of real and responsible liberty, in the name of nature and its grandeur, we blame those who support an alleged natural, even moral right to homosexuality. Some so-called "religious" Christians have gone so far as to "marry" homosexuals, forgetting that the Bible denounces and condemns these practices and those who "do it; and what is worse, encourage others to do the same." (Romans 1,32)

6.1.3 Incest

This sexual deviation, in all its forms, is known since times of antiquity. The "Oedipus complex" is not prerogative of modern times as Leviticus testifies: "You will not have intercourse with your father or your mother. She is your mother you will not have intercourse with her" (Leviticus 18,7).

Paternal incest is not explicitly mentioned. But this moral decay, so often present in families with the psychological destruction that it involves, is indirectly and implicitly denounced since it is commanded: "None of you will approach a woman who is closely related to him, to have intercourse with her. I am Yahweh" (Leviticus 18,6). If it is necessary to move away from the

"close relatives", fortiori it is necessary to move away from one's own daughter, especially since it is still clarified that "you will not uncover the nakedness of your son's or your daughter's daughter; for their nakedness is your own." (Leviticus 18,10)

Fraternal incest, another insidious practice which is secretly amidst millions of victims, is condemned: "You will not have intercourse with your sister, whether she is your father's or your mother's daughter (*half-sister*)" (Leviticus 18,9). Similar deviations have all been condemned by Leviticus, because of their practice within the Israelite community, as the narrative of Amnon and his half-sister Tamar testifies (2 Samuel 13), as well as that of Reuben's with his father Jacob's concubine (Genesis 35,22).

Fraternal incest extends to the brother's wife: "You will not have intercourse with your brother's wife; it is your brother's sexual prerogative" (Leviticus 18,16). Strongly supported by this highly moral principle, John the Baptist condemned king Herod (Matthew 14,3-4).

6.1.4 Human sacrifice

This pagan worship was largely practiced within the Israelite community, even though monotheistic: "Yes, the sons of Judah have done what displeases me—it is Yahweh who speaks... they have built the high place of Topheth in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, to burn their sons and daughters (*to Baal*); a thing I never commanded, a thing that never entered my thoughts." (Jeremiah 7,30-31 / 19,5 / 32,34).

Human sacrifices are explicitly mentioned in 1 Kings 16,34: "It was in his time that Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho; he laid its foundations at the price of Abiram (*sacrificing him*), his first-born; its gates he erected at the price of his youngest son Segub". King Ahaz himself made his son "pass through fire" to ward off fate (2 Kings 16,3).

It is in such an atmosphere of paganism that Levite priests prescribed in Leviticus: "You must not hand over any of your children to have them passed (*through fire*) to Molech..." (Leviticus 18,21), "Any son of Israel or any stranger living in Israel (*the Palestinians were regarded as foreigners*) must die if he hands over any of his children to Molech..." (Leviticus 20,1-5).

We note with regret that the Israelites allowed themselves to be contaminated by pagan customs instead of enlightening others by faith in the one God.

6.1.5 Impediments to the Jewish Priesthood

The physical defects were and are still an impediment to the Levite priesthood: "None of your descendants, in any generation, must come forward to offer the food of his God if he has any infirmity... such as blindness or lameness, if he is disfigured or deformed, if he has an injured foot or arm, etc... he must not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has an infirmity, and must not profane my holy things..." (Leviticus 21,16-24).

Mosaic law confuses between bodily infirmity and moral defilement. The disabled do not soil objects of worship. The unclean man is the sinner. But if the sinner repents, he is purified by divine grace. Grace is more powerful than the defilement and, according to the words of Paul: "however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater" (Romans 5,20).

Physical impediments to the Levite priesthood were adopted by the Christian churches. They refuse to ordain priests who are physically disabled, yet healthy in spirit. Furthermore, they deny priests the right of marriage. In doing so, they consider matrimonial union as a defilement. Now, marriage is a sacrament which purifies the soul.

The impediment to the marriage of priests falls under a divine condemnation revealed by St Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. The female sex is still, in itself, an obstacle to the Levite priesthood.

The clergymen are attached to these human precepts, but hesitate not, alas, to ordain priests of distorted psychologies, morally disabled and amputees of love, without heart or compassion for his fellow man. The words of Jesus once addressed to the Pharisees are applicable today to the Christian clergy of all denominations, whose cults are just as vain as those of their Levite predecessors (see Matthew 15,1-20).

The Apocalyptic priesthood has fortunately escaped all these Judeo-Christian considerations. Christ, **alive among us** (Immanuel), has chosen us himself as the premise of His new priestly-people. All those who "open the door to share a meal with Him" (Revelation 3,20) belong to this sacerdotal people. The physically disabled can belong to it, if they want, thus forming the living Apocalyptic Temple, invisible to men. This Holy Temple is devoid of infirmity and spiritual stain as "nothing unclean may come into it: none who does what is loathsome or false, but only those who are listed in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21,27). Therein are inscribed those who have recognized the Apocalyptic Beast and fought it (Revelation 13,18 / 13,8 / 20,12).

In the parable of the wedding feast, Jesus says to His servants: "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the **crossroads** in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." (Matthew 22,7-10) In these end times, the servants of Jesus (who we are) realized -with bitterness and sadness- how unworthy the alleged ecclesiastical priests are. Pioneers of the Apocalyptic Covenant, we were picked up at these **crossroads**. We were at the crossroads that lead to supernatural life, in search of a way out. The Hand of God takes us there, for a new birth. Pioneers of a new journey, we have started to build the "new Heaven and the new Earth" seen by Peter (2 Peter 3,13) and John (Revelation 21,1). With us, Jesus carries "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" according to the world (Luke 14,21) to confuse those who reject these "disabled persons" from their ineffective human priesthood for the salvation of the soul. And as a sign of our new departure towards the construction of the new holy society on earth, women are, with the "disabled", part of the Priesthood of Jesus, aware that "there can be neither male nor female in the Kingdom of God" (Galatians 3,28).

According to the Mosaic law, Jesus, not from the tribe of Levi, is not considered a priest (Hebrews 8,4). On the contrary, according to the Divine Spirit, He is "the High Priest" of the New Covenant (Hebrews 4,14 to 5,10 / 9,11 etc...) Likewise, you men and women Apostles and priests of the Apocalyptic Covenant are not recognized as priests of God, neither by the synagogue, nor the Church. But according to the Divine Spirit, you are indeed the "line of kings, priests" founded by Jesus "to serve His God and Father", who is also our Father (Revelation 1,5-6).

The Apocalyptic Priesthood knows only one obstacle: the defilement of the soul by bad faith (Revelation 21,27). But bodily infirmity is not an impediment.

Happy and blessed are those who take part in the first resurrection! They will be "priests of God and of Christ" (Revelation 20,6). The logical conclusion of our faith is that we are these priests. Our faith in the apocalyptic message is the witness and the guarantee of our participation in the First Resurrection and, consequently, to the priesthood of God and of His Christ, Jesus. A witness and a guarantee of this is still found in these words of Paul: "You have been buried with him, when you were baptized; and by baptism, too, you have been **raised up** (*First Resurrection*) with him through your **belief** in the power of God who raised him from the **dead**. You were dead, because you were sinners and had not been circumcised: he has brought you to life with him, he has forgiven us all our sins..." (Colossians 2,12-13). "I tell you most solemnly, the hour will come—indeed it is here already—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live." (John 5,25) We have heard this divine voice a first time in the Gospels, to reveal to us the face of Christ, and a second time in the

Book of Revelation to reveal the face of the Antichrist. And we believed in both voices! And this faith transformed us, all at once, from dead to living priests, like Lazarus who came out of his tomb to the voice of the Son of Man (John 11). The life-giving divine lightning has fallen on us to resurrect us and, in a flash of light, we have come back to life: "because the coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing far into the West" (Matthew 24,27), this flash "which strikes in the **East** and flashes far into the West" is launched by "the Angel rising where the sun rises (from the East)" (Revelation 7,2).

We are priests, priests to prepare this return of Jesus by announcing it... to ourselves first and by welcoming this great "Revenant" in us, so that He launches us from the crossroads, from the crossroads where we are, towards where He destines for us "to pull out the chestnuts from the fire", saving what can still be saved of this miserable humanity.

"Be like men waiting for their Master to return from the wedding feast, **ready** to open the door **as soon as** he comes and knocks. Happy those servants whom the Master finds awake when he comes. I tell you solemnly, he will put on an apron, sit them down at **table** and wait on them." (Luke 12,36-37) I confirm these words of Christ in saying: "Happy are those who opened to Him the door with eagerness, love and simplicity, without encumbering themselves with rites in these Apocalyptic times of the twentieth century. He put us all **at his Table**, to share his meal, side by side with him" (Revelation 3,20). The Book of Revelation thus confirms what the Gospels had already announced. Everything revolves around the apocalyptic priesthood, whose spiritual level cannot be compared to the Levitical and ecclesiastical priesthoods... both so far from the hearts of true believers who sup in intimacy, without theatrical worship, with the Bridegroom.

Priests we are, but our priesthood is hidden from the world because, "the life you have is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3,3), and with Christ in us. Because "the Morning Star" has **already** risen, radiant, in our hearts, warmed by his holy luster which, like "a flash", has brought back our wounded souls to life (1 Peter 1,19 / Revelation 2,28 and 22,16).

6.1.6 Justice

The Book of Leviticus did not neglect the principles of social justice. However, it is a relative justice and aims in privileging Jews at the expense of others, placing them above other nations. Divine Justice, on the contrary, places all men, all nations, all races at the same level.

It is true that it is said: "You must not exploit or rob your neighbor. You must not keep back the laborer's wage until next morning." (Leviticus 19,13) Who is considered the neighbor here? The question lies there.

According to Leviticus, the Jew must hold special favor towards his fellow Jew, like him. Other inhabitants of the country (the Palestinians) were considered "strangers" or citizens of second class, as is the case still today in Israel: "You must not slander your **own** people, and you must not jeopardize your neighbor's (*Jewish*) life. I am Yahweh. You must not bear hatred for your brother (*Jewish*)... You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of **your people**. You must love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19,16-18) This "neighbor" is the Jew; the non-Jews (Palestinians and "goyim") are considered strangers.

There exists however, one verse in favor of the stranger: "If a stranger lives with you in your land, do not molest him. You must count him as one of your own countrymen and love him as yourself..." (Leviticus 19,33-34) It must be stressed that the foreigner in question is none other than the original inhabitants of the country, expropriated by the Jewish colonists.

The Jewish prophets rose against the chauvinism of their co-religious peers. They denounced the unjustified vexations against the stranger, proclaiming that true justice is "not to exploit

the **stranger**, the orphan, the widow. . . " (Jeremiah 22,3) Ezekiel also says: "The people of the country have taken to extortion and banditry. . . and ill-treated the settler for no reason." (Ezekiel 22,29) This still applies in modern Israel, which deprives Palestinians of their elementary rights.

Jesus rose too against Israeli injustice: "You have learned how it was said: You must love your (*Jewish*) neighbor and hate your enemy (*any non-Jew; a precept mentioned in the talmudic tradition, not in the Bible*). But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (*today they are called 'terrorists': love them because they are in the right, not* ***you!***) . . . For if **you** love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers (*Jews*), are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not?" (Matthew 5, 43-47) Christ was addressing his words to all the extremist masses, and not to His disciples: "But I say this **to you who are listening**: Love your enemies. . . etc." (Luke 6,27) Now, those who were listening to Him were nationalists eager to proclaim Him the political king of Israel (see John 6,15). They did not understand His "pacifism" regarding strangers, the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine.

Jesus taught of Justice in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). It invites us to overcome the discriminatory conception of the scribes: "If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5,20) Jesus indissolubly binds justice and love for thy neighbor (Luke 10,27); he does not give as an example of the neighbor a Levite, a priest, or a Jew, but a Samaritan, considered enemies by Jews (Luke 10,29-37). He knew well that "Jews do not associate with Samaritans" (John 4,9). With this parable, he confounds chauvinism and tries to redress what the scribes and Pharisees, in the name of the Mosaic Law, made tortuous: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them." (Matthew 5,17) This accomplishment occurs by the opening of all hearts of good faith, be they strangers to "my" people; and by the rejection of all men of bad faith, be they of my people.

6.1.7 To be your God

After four centuries in Egypt, the Israelites forgot the One who revealed himself to Abraham. Surrounded by Pharaonic idols and cults, they turned to idolatry. God's Messianic plan was thus in danger. God then led the Hebrews out of Egypt in order to bring them back to Him: "I who brought you out of the land of Egypt **to be your God**." (Leviticus 22,33 / 25,38).

The Hebrews selfishly interpreted the expression "**your God**", seeing it as an exclusivity to God. They believed themselves privileged, adulated, and the only people chosen by Him. Jealous of this possession, they wanted God for themselves alone. He must not also be the God of other peoples. Now, divine intention was to tear the Jews away from the idols in order to continue His Messianic plan.

They had received knowledge of the one God. Their mission was to make Him known to other peoples, revealing to them the divine plan of sending the Messiah. And yet, being out of Egypt, they believed they were the only ones called by God. The Messiah came to rectify this deviation, teaching that many will come to God from the four quarters of the earth, but that the Jews, because of their fanaticism, will be rejected by the One who made them leave Egypt: "And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the subjects of the kingdom (*of Israel*) will be turned out into the dark. . . " (Matthew 8,11-12) The Christ revealed this upsetting fact to His disciples, asking them to proclaim it in their turn. It is why Peter, after the resurrection of Christ, proclaimed before the Jews: ". . . God, who can read everyone's

heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us. God made no distinction between them and us. . . " (Acts 15,7-9) "Is God the God of Jews alone and not of the pagans too? Of the pagans too, most certainly" Paul also writes (Romans 3,29).

God allowed the Jews out of Egypt not for the glory of Israel, but in order to be able to send the Messiah, who will make Him known to the whole world. The prophet Ezekiel exclaimed: "The Lord Yahweh says this: I am not doing this for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy Name, which you have profaned. . . " (Ezekiel 36,22) Likewise, God proclaimed through Isaiah: "Listen to this, House of Jacob, you who bear the name Israel. . . and invoke the God of Israel, though not in good faith or uprightness. . . for I knew how treacherous you were, and that you have deserved the name of rebel from your birth. **For the sake of my Name** I deferred my anger, for **the sake of my honor** I curbed it; I did not destroy you. . . **For My sake and My sake only** have I acted—is my Name to be profaned? Never **will I yield my glory to another**." (Isaiah 48,1-11).

If the Jews had remained in Egypt, they would have continued to practice Egyptian worship and the forgetfulness of God would have been total. God's universal plan, initiated with Abraham, could not have been accomplished to reach us. The Messiah could not have been sent except through a community knowledgeable of God and His Messianic plan. Without this community, the prophecies concerning the Messiah could never have been revealed since there would have been no prophets to whom God could entrust them. A base was needed, however imperfect, to welcome the Messiah. God was watching over His plan in leading the Jewish community out of Egypt. His plan was materialized in the Messiah, not in an Israeli people or State.

The Messiah already came 2000 years ago. He addressed Himself and still does to the whole world today. "Jesus stood there and cried out: 'If any man (*Jew or other*) is thirsty, let him come and drink. . . ' He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive. . . " (John 7,37-39) All those who are searching, who find themselves at the spiritual "crossroads" discover him and receive this Divine Spirit. On receiving it, they come back to life and become sons of God (John 1,12). This is the First Resurrection (John 5,25 / Revelation 20,6), the return of the soul to Life. It is a marvelous experience that only those who enjoy it experience. We owe our faith in God and Christ to the exit of the Jews from Egypt in the 13th century BC. God in the end brought them out to be the God of all believers, to be **our** God and **our** Father.

We must be well aware of the intimate link between the "Exit" from Egypt and us. The Exodus with Moses is not a simple passage from one country to another, but the symbol of the transfer from one **state of mind** to another, an exit from ignorance to the knowledge of God. This knowledge gives life back to our souls by the rediscovery of eternal life: "And Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God. . . " (John 17,3)

Jesus chose the feast of the Jewish Passover to institute the Eucharist, which celebrates the "Exit" from Egypt (Matthew 26,17). This Bread of Eternal Life snatches away our souls from death: "Anyone who does eat my Flesh and drink my Blood has eternal life (*in Him*) . . . lives in Me and I live in him. . . will live forever", says Jesus (John 6,51-58).

Without the exit from Egypt, God's plan would have failed: we would not have had the Messiah, the Bible, the Gospels, or the Book of Revelation. We would not have known the first resurrection, which is the Paradise found on earth. This is the real Promised Land and not geographic Palestine, as those who have their hearts attached to matter and the earth believe.

With Abraham, this was the first step towards the first resurrection. The following step was the exit from Egypt. Then there was the call made by Jesus, inviting believers from all over the world to participate. With the Book of Revelation, this promise becomes a living reality, a royal priesthood. We owe our apocalyptic priesthood to the divine initiative of extracting the

Jews out of Egypt, thereby also saving us, by the same fate, from spiritual ignorance and the death of the soul. How to thank Him? By Jesus!

Without this exit from Egypt, what would become of us? Worshipers or priests of the gods Ra, Baal, Jupiter, Zeus, Diane or Astarte... !

Reflection

Do you think that we are saved through faith in Jesus or by the practicing of the Mosaic Law (circumcision, Sabbath, clean and unclean, etc...)?

Do you think that the sacrifice of animals and their offering in holocausts can reconcile the sinner with God?

According to the answers to these questions, one is a follower or an enemy of Jesus.

6.2 The Book of Numbers

This book begins with a census of the Israelites in order to define their "number ", hence its name. It is important not to dwell on these figures. At first, only Levites were not listed to be registered (Numbers 1,48), to be enrolled in the service of the "Dwelling of Testimony". This Dwelling is the Tent of Meeting where sacrifices were offered **in testimony** to the one God. Aaron and his sons, and none other, "are to carry out their priestly duty. But any layman who comes near is to be put to death" (Numbers 3,10); saying that Yahweh said so, to safeguard the rights of the priests...

This book must be skimmed through quickly and then return to the Biblical Course where the most important points to remember are noted down and explained.

The narrative of the march of the Jews in the desert reported here was put down in writing about three centuries later. As already explained, the scribe-priests added whatever evidence to show the indisputable roles of worship and of the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants. The community spent forty years in the desert, sufficient time to organize a cult around the Dwelling of the Testimony, considered as a Temple. In its interior was found the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. It signified the Presence of God, hence its importance (Numbers 10,33-35). It opened the people's march as in some modern religious processions preceded by religious symbols.

The Levites had a servitor role in worship, but the priesthood was reserved to Aaron and his sons. This is often repeated in the Torah and in Numbers emphatically. Numbers 3,1-4 designates Aaron and his sons as **unique priests** in all the Levite tribe, even in all the community. The rest of the tribe of Levi has save one task to carry out in worship, that of serving Aaron and his sons: "Muster the tribe of Levi and put it at the disposal of Aaron the priest: they are to be at his service etc..." (Numbers 3,6+) In exchange, "To the sons of Levi I give as their inheritance all the tithes collected in Israel, in return for their services..." (Numbers 18,21) This is quite a plum sum. However, the tithe of this tithe should return to Yahweh (Numbers 18,26), ie to fill the pockets of the priest Aaron since, as the scribes specify, what is offered to God returns to the priest: "Thus you too will set aside a portion for Yahweh, of all the tithes you receive from the sons of Israel. You will give what you have set aside for Yahweh to Aaron the priest", requiring moreover that "From the best of all these things **you will set aside the sacred portion**." (Numbers 18,28-29) The first fruits of the harvest represent the best part.

The scribes wrote these texts ten centuries after Aaron; they were themselves priests, descendants of Aaron. Wanting to safeguard their privileges, they hastened to include verses in their favor, attributing them to God: "Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, 'Speak to the sons of Israel

and say to them: When you have entered the land to which I am bringing you, **you must set aside a portion** for Yahweh (*ie for the priests*) when you eat the bread of this country. You must set one loaf as the **first fruits** of your meal... You are to set aside for Yahweh a portion of the best of your meal. **This applies to your descendants**." (Numbers 15,17-21). In doing so, the scribe-priests perpetuated their "divine rights" over the community's descendants.

Do not believe that God is asking to found a priesthood to exploit the best of the good of others; we can still see there "the lying pen of the scribes" (Jeremiah 8,8). Some clergy, so-called Christians, fell into the same economic abyss. In the Book of Revelation, God invites His people to take "free" the flood of graces which He pours onto those who believe (Revelation 21,6 / 22,17). "You received without charge, give without charge", still recommends Jesus (Matthew 10,8 / Luke 9,2).

6.2.1 The killing of Aaron's two sons

The Book of Numbers laconically reports the death, in Sinai, of Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's sons, the two eldest. The death of these two brothers is attributed to Yahweh. In reality, it was a death sentence: "Nadab and Abihu died in Yahweh's presence, in the wilderness of Sinai, when they offered fire that was unlawful." (Numbers 3,4) Leviticus is more explicit: "Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took his censer... and presented unlawful fire before Yahweh... Then from Yahweh's presence a flame leaped out and consumed them, and they perished in the presence of Yahweh." (Leviticus 10,1-2).

These two men, Levites and priests, were found dead on the same day of their sacerdotal investiture (Numbers 8,13). The fire that devoured them was none other than the bludgeon arm of Moses and his gang. What was their crime? They wanted to offer Yahweh, in their burning censer of incense, a fire considered irregular, as it was not prescribed by Moses. Did they want to cense in Aaron's place? The fact remains, they aroused the murderous rage of their uncle Moses, who decreed their death sentence by "order of Yahweh", according to his custom. He was also irritated, afterwards, against their two other surviving brothers over a dispute of food: "Why did you not eat this victim in the holy place? ... Since its blood was not taken inside the sanctuary, you should have eaten its flesh there, **as I ordered you**." Moses did not calm down until after Aaron's explanatory and fearful intervention (Leviticus 10,16-20).

The death of his two sons left Aaron terrified before Moses. Because in front of the explanations given by his brother, "Aaron remained dumb", paralyzed by fear before this unexpected violence. The shock of the surprise execution of his two priest sons on the same day of the joyous ceremony immobilized Aaron and his two other sons. Moses, seeing the anguish taking hold of his brother and his two nephews, reassures them: "Do not disorder your hair nor tear your garments; you are not going to die (*like the two others*) ... Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, lest you die" (Leviticus 10,6-7). It was that outside the tent there was a popular uprising led by Moses against all those who did not yield to the rigorous requirements of worship as he demanded. Aaron and his two surviving sons were at the risk of being lynched.

If a flame had devoured Nadab and Abihu, it would have reduced their sacerdotal tunics to ashes. And yet, "they came and carried them away, still in their tunics, out of the camp, as Moses had ordered." (Leviticus 10,5) In reality, the fatal flame can only be the blazing and armed rage of Moses. Believing himself entrusted by Yahweh to organize a cult, he does not procrastinate, he imposes a "regulation" by the force of the sword. Let us not forget that Moses was a violent man, capable of killing. Hadn't he already killed an Egyptian before fleeing from Egypt? (Exodus 2,11-15) Did he not personally order the Israelite chiefs: "'Every one of you must put to death those of his people who have committed themselves to the Baal of Peor...'

And the plague that had struck the sons of Israel was arrested. In the plague twenty-four thousand of them had died." (Numbers 25,1-9) Nowadays, politicians are condemned in the name of human rights for lesser crimes! Furthermore, the expression "a flame leaps out to devour..." is clarified in Numbers 21,28: "For a fire came out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon, it devoured Ar of Moab". This "fire" is none other than the battle in which Sihon, the Moabite king perishes (Numbers 21,21-30).

However, the scribes present Moses as "the most humble of men, the humblest man on earth." (Numbers 12,3) This humility is all relative to the violence of his admirers. If so is the judicial case of "the most humble of men", what would their verdict of the more violent be? And what would the degree of kindness and humility of Jesus of Nazareth be? He was right to say of John the Baptist: "Of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he is." (Matthew 11,11) The violence of Moses places him far behind John.

6.2.2 Revolt of Miriam and Aaron against Moses

"Miriam, and Aaron too, spoke against Moses in connection with the Cushite woman he had had taken... They said, 'Has Yahweh spoken to Moses only? Has he not spoken to us too?! ..." (Numbers 12,1-3) The irritation of Miriam and Aaron against their brother can only be explained by the latter's marriage to a non-Jew. There is also on their part a claim to be God's interlocutors. And this claim is legitimate. We must understand that Moses appropriated to himself the exclusive right to speak to God and to hear Him. From this standpoint, it was necessary to accomplish all that Moses requested and as he demanded. Otherwise it was the killing that was decreed on behalf of God. Thus, in the name of Yahweh, a regime of terror was installed. It is why, overcome with fear, Aaron did not know how to evade himself from Moses and his two remaining sons, and beg for his mercy (Numbers 12,4-15).

6.2.3 The Rebellion of Korah

The petulance of Moses is still remarked in the revolt of the Levite clan of Korah. The excessive material privileges granted by Moses (not by God) to his brother Aaron and to his nephews created much discontent, who saw not a divine will, but human profit. The Levites themselves felt frustrated because they had to give to Aaron and his sons "the best portion" of the tithe they levied. Yet, it was also the other tribes who felt the effect of this abusive exploitation negatively, carried out under the guise of God. Hence Korah's revolt, the Levite of noble birth who joined two princes of the house of Ruben, Eliab and Abiram and many others. Outraged by the devouring appetite of the priests, they "rebelled against Moses, together with two hundred and fifty of the sons of Israel, **leaders** of the community... (*who thus represented the whole community*). They then joined forces against Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You take too much on yourselves! The whole community and all its members are consecrated, and Yahweh lives among them. Why set yourselves higher than the community of Yahweh?" (Numbers 16,1-3). They were right!

Faced with this revolt, Moses chose to dialogue separately with Korah first, then with Dathan and Abiram. They refused with contempt to appear before Moses, which provoked his "rage" (Numbers 16,12-15). Moses summoned Korah to be satisfied with the privileges of the Levites, reproaching him for wanting to be "in the office of priesthood as well!" (Numbers 16,8-10)

The scribes claimed that the ground miraculously split open to swallow up the rebels, and that "a fire came down from Yahweh and consumed the two hundred and fifty men carrying incense" who accompanied them (Numbers 16,28-35). This "fire" is the same which already assassinated Aaron's two sons: they were killed by Moses and his men.

Why do the scribes report similar narratives? It is because, writing them three centuries later, and being themselves priests, descendants of Aaron, jealously held on to their prerogatives. They reported these events as "a reminder to the sons of Israel that no **layman, no one outside Aaron's line**, may come near Yahweh with incense to burn, under pain of suffering the lot of Korah and his followers, according to the order given by Yahweh through Moses." (Numbers 17,5).

I do not believe in the historical reality of this narrative. I do not believe that the ground split open to swallow up Korah and "his band", of which I belong to in spirit. Because I believe, like Korah, that "the priests have taken too much on themselves, that the whole community of God is consecrated", and that Our Heavenly Father is among us, that we live the Immanuel, and that we practice the apocalyptic priesthood desired by God and His Messiah, Jesus.

The truth is that Moses and his armed gang killed Korah and his followers. The "ground which opened" to swallow the latter and the "flame" which devoured the two sons of Aaron were but the bludgeon swords of the mafia of Moses. This is brought up again in the reaction of the community against Moses and Aaron after this butchery: "On the following day, the entire community of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying, '**You have brought death** to the people of Yahweh. . . " (Numbers 17,6).

One must be mentally stupid to believe indiscriminately in everything that the scribe-priests recount in the historical books of the Old Testament. The prophets indict this mental deficiency by saying on behalf of God: "Israel knows nothing, my people understands nothing. . . etc. . . " (Isaiah 1,3) And Jeremiah: "This is because my people are stupid, they do not know me, they are slow-witted children, they have no understanding: they are clever enough at doing wrong, but do not know how to do right." (Jeremiah 4,22)

These grave faults on behalf of the Jewish "priests" deformed the Face of God, making him unrecognizable by men. Knowledge of His true holy character would have been impossible without Jesus. If the Jews, as the prophets revealed, were incapable of knowing God, Jesus, on the contrary, was well aware of really knowing Him: "Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me", he said, adding: "I have made your Name known to them and will reveal it again. . . " (John 17,25-26) It was Jesus who revealed the true Face of God, His true "Name".

If we have indeed understood this essential point of spiritual life, the primordial concern would be to pray, as Jesus taught us, so that in us "the name of God is sanctified", ie that we know God and make Him known as He truly is, not as some present Him. Because eternal life is to know God: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17,3). It is the reason why the first prayer taught by Jesus was as follows: "Father. . . Hallow be thy Name". Our mission is to sanctify this holy, this wonderful Name of Our Father, Creator.

6.2.4 Some other highlights

Gift of the Spirit (Numbers 11) Seeing the dismay of the Israelis in the desert, Moses was discouraged. He found his mission too weighty. He spoke to God: "Why do you treat your servant so badly? Why have I not found favor with you, so that you load on me the weight of all this nation?" (Numbers 11,10-11) The Lord asks him to choose 70 among the elders of Israel and some scribes to whom He will give His Spirit, to help him in his task. After having assembled them, "the Spirit came on them, they prophesied, but not again." (Numbers 11,24-25) Why didn't they prophesy again? Probably because Moses decided after this, to be the only one to prophesy, ie to govern alone in the name of God. To prophesy means to speak

in the name of God, to be his spokesman, to reveal the divine opinion on the events that occur. This cannot be done without direct assistance from God. It is the reason for which God gives His Spirit to the ones He chooses for a mission.

Note that two men, Eldad and Medad, prophesied independently of the 70 united together around Moses. Joshua, the servant of Moses, wanted to prevent them, but Moses stopped him saying: "If only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets, and Yahweh gave his spirit to them all!" (Numbers 11,26-29) This did not prevent Moses from exhibiting his anger against Aaron and Korah for saying that God spoke to them. Joshua's attitude is similar to that of John's in the Gospel: "John said to him, 'Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him.' But Jesus said, 'You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us.'" (Mark 9,38-40) These cases of the gift of the Spirit outside a traditional setting illustrate the words of Jesus to Nicodemus: "The wind blows wherever it pleases; you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit." (John 3,8)

The Spirit of God often spoke to Moses. This is undeniable! But it is also true that Moses often made personal decisions believing them to be inspired by God. Also, we should discern, in the books of the Old Testament, between what is inspired by God and what comes from Moses; we must have recourse to the lights that Jesus gives us in the Gospels.

Joshua The first mention of Joshua is found in Exodus 17,9: "Moses said to Joshua, 'pick out men for yourself, and tomorrow morning march out to engage Amalek'". He was the only one to mount up with Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24,13). He served him faithfully, being attached to the cult and the Tent (Exodus 33,11). The Book of Numbers mentions him for the first time when he wanted to prevent the two men, Eldad and Medad from prophesying (Numbers 11,26-29). This fact reveals his great jealousy for Moses. He belonged to the twelve men sent by Moses to explore the Country of Canaan: He is that "Hoshea, son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim" (Numbers 13,8), whose name Moses changed to Joshua (Numbers 13,16). Moses designated him as his successor (Numbers 27,15-23). The Book of Joshua, the first book after the Pentateuch, bears his name and reports how he introduced the Israelites to Canaan.

Reconnaissance mission in Canaan Moses sent twelve spies to Canaan, one from each tribe to explore the terrain and to probe the population so to invade the country. Joshua was one of them. They left from Kadesh, a name to remember. On return from their expedition after forty days, the spies reported that the country of Canaan was civilized and fortified: "It does indeed flow with milk and honey; this is its produce." (Numbers 13,27) They had brought back with them samples of grapes, pomegranates and figs. The grapes were so big that "two men had to carry them away on a pole. . . " (Numbers 13,23) There was a major inconvenience: "At the same time, its inhabitants are a powerful people; the towns are fortified and very big. . . " (Numbers 13,28) This had frightened the ten spies, who advised to give up the invasion: "We are not able to march against these people; they are stronger than we are. . . Every man we saw there were of enormous size. . . We felt like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." (Numbers 13,31-33) Only Joshua and Caleb had opinions to the contrary.

The people rallied behind the opinion of the majority of the spies (Numbers 14,1-4) and prepared, despite the encouragements of Joshua and Caleb, to stone Moses and his clan: "The whole community was talking of stoning them" (Numbers 14,10). On the contrary, it was Moses who ended up putting them to death. "The men whom Moses had sent to reconnoiter the land, who on their return had incited the whole community of Israel to grumble against Yahweh by

disparaging it, these men who had disparaged the land were all struck dead before Yahweh... only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh remained alive." (Numbers 14,36-38)

So Palestine has never been deserted as some claim. For millennia, it has never ceased to be civilized and planted with all kinds of fruit trees. To claim to transform the "Palestinian desert" into an "Israeli garden" is a lie which appeals only to the ignorant.

Faced with the power of the Canaanites, only Joshua and Caleb wanted to expedite an entry into the country. Later, the Israelites decided to enter it anyway; it was too late, God no longer being with them: "The Amalekite and the Canaanite who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them, and harried them all the way to Hormah." (Numbers 14,45) The moral of this story: never hesitate to act when it is God's time, and always abstain from taking any action, however good it may seem, when it is accomplished without God. It is why Moses advised of giving up the project (Numbers 14,41-42). According to the scribes, they were defeated because "neither the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh nor Moses left the camp." (Numbers 14,44)

Unable to enter through Kadesh, through the most direct route, the Israelites had to go around the territory of Edom. The King of Edom, fearing to let such a great number pass, refused them passage (Numbers 20,14-21). They thus gave up this shortcut and went down towards the south, then turned up north towards Moab, an immense, difficult and dangerous trajectory which took 38 years to cross. Many did not enter Palestine, even Moses and Aaron did not see it (Numbers 14,29-38).

Various prescriptions of worship The story of the stay in Kadesh is interrupted by a series of prescriptions of worship described in chapters 15-19. I point out the most important:

The Sabbath

Any work is forbidden on the Sabbath. A man collecting wood on the Sabbath was regarded as a violation of the "divine" law of the Sabbath. The man was put to death "as Yahweh had ordered Moses" (Numbers 15,36). Such a severe attitude does not correspond to the Spirit of God. Compare that with the attitude of Jesus in front of the Pharisees who criticized the Apostles for having picked out ears of corn on a Saturday (Matthew 12,1-8).

The tassels

Moses claims that God requires "the sons of Israel to put tassels on the hems of their garments, and to put a violet cord on this tassel at the hem." (Numbers 15,37) This **ridiculous** "religious" memorabilia have been followed by Christians, especially in the Catholic Church (cardinals and bishops). Jesus condemns these dress customs (Matthew 23,5) and insists on faith and simplicity, not on garments.

The red heifer

According to a disposition of the Law prescribed by Yahweh, the ashes of a red heifer, mixed with water by the priests, is capable of purification (Numbers 19,1-10). The ashes "must be kept for ritual usage of the community of the sons of Israel for making **lustral water**; it is a sacrifice for sin. (Numbers 19,9) Once again, a pagan rite which passes, with its superstitions, in Jewish worship. The moral purification with water is a practice known in religions of antiquity. It corresponds to "holy water" for Christians, ablutions for Muslims, the River Ganges for Hindus etc...

It is clear that this "purification" is illusory, being material and defiled itself by sorcery and pagan superstition. Think of the religious importance given to the "white" cow in India (the color of the cow differs, but not the spirit of the cult). The difference is that the scribes attribute

this worship to... Yahweh! The real reason is that it suits the priests well because a hefty sum is paid to be purified by a "red" cow, not always easy to find. Some time ago, some Israelis joyfully announced that the Messianic time is here, because they found a red heifer in Spain which, finally, corresponds to the requirements of the Torah... !

To know **spiritual** purification through repentance, a new evolutionary step was needed. It was Jesus who, at the price of His sacrifice, taught us to purify ourselves by the sacrifice of our bad inclinations and ask him for forgiveness, not by an illusory external worship. It is God who forgives and purifies the repented soul.

The water that gushed from the rock

The community, running out of water and food, once again, revolted against Moses. They regretted to have left Egypt for a deserted place (Numbers 20,1-5). God thus says to Moses: "'Take the Branch (*that of Aaron, supposed to have blossomed to the detriment of that of Korah during the latter's revolt against Moses: Numbers 17,21-26*), and **call the community together**, you and your brother Aaron. Then, in full view of them, order this rock to give water...' Then Moses and Aaron called the assembly together in front of the rock... And Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the branch; water gushed in abundance, and the community drank and their cattle too" (Numbers 20,6-11). The location of this **assembly** is disputed, as we will see further on: was this around a rock or a well?

After this miracle, God was irritated with Moses and Aaron: "Because you did not believe that I could proclaim my holiness in the eyes of the sons of Israel (*to manifest my Omnipotence*), you shall not lead this assembly into the land I am giving them." (Numbers 20,11-12) Indeed, it was Joshua who lead them into Palestine (Numbers 27,12-22). What was the fault of Moses and Aaron? Why this divine wrath against them? Such a reaction by God, after such a miracle, cannot be conceived. Moses struck the rock twice. Should he have struck it **only once**, with confidence, not a second time after having been hesitant. He, to whom God speaks, shouldn't he have acted with conviction and force knowing God "is capable of sanctifying himself" in front of all?

The answer lies in the place where the gathering was to be held to drink water: was it really around a rock as the scribes claim in Numbers 20,1-13 to make believe in the miracle? This place is contradicted by Numbers 21,16-18, which reveals that the gathering took place around a well: "and from there they went on to Beer (*name of a place which means well*) ... It was of **the well here** that Yahweh had said to Moses, 'Call the people together and I will give them water.' Then it was that Israel sang this song: 'For the well! Sing out for the well, that was sunk by the princes..." (Numbers 21,16-18) In Hebrew, as in Arabic, the word "beer" means "well". This place thus draws its name from the well that was there.

So, to drink, "the assembly" took place, not around a rock, but quite simply around a well. Moreover, by drinking the water from the well, Moses did not respect his commitment "not to drink the water of the wells" in regions that the community would cross (Numbers 20,17 / 21,22).

The reason for God's anger against Moses and Aaron was rather because of their extreme violence and the institution of an uncompromising form of worship, modeled on paganism, never prescribed by God. And all this, in his Name!

The death of Aaron (Numbers 20,14-21)

We have seen that the Edomites prevented the Israelites from crossing their territory. They thus had to take the long and painful road southward. Aaron died on route to "Hor". His son Eleazar succeeded him as high priest.

The bronze snake (Numbers 21,4-9)

The bronze snake

Fabricated at God's request, this bronze snake was hung **horizontally** on a **vertical** pole, thus forming a cross. Those who were bitten by snakes in the desert, but who looked at this bronze snake with faith, were physically healed, forgiven for having rebelled against God.

This cross prefigures another more important one, whose power of healing is of the spiritual non-corporal order, eternal, non-temporal. The cross formed by the bronze snake on the vertical pole announces the crucifixion of Christ and the healing of those who believe in Him. Jesus brings back this narrative, attributing life-giving valor to His crucifixion, but this time on the level of the soul. The bronze snake as a cross symbolized His passion: "As Moses lifted up the (*bronze*) serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man (*Christ*) be lifted up (*on the cross*) so that everyone who believes may have **eternal** life in him", said Jesus (John 3,14).

This bronze snake was venerated for a long time by the Jews, to the point that they worshiped it. This is why, 600 years later, king Hezekiah destroys it (2 Kings 18,4).

The rite of "Urim and Tummim" (Numbers 27,21: see also Exodus 28,30)

Urim and Tummim were two types of stone or dices which the high priest carried with him to consult God on an affair; the priest threw the Urim and Tummim and, according to the position after their fall or the inscriptions which they carried, the high priest interpreted "yes" or "no" as a divine answer to the question posed. It is a bad system to consult God and that often has disastrous results.

Yahweh's food destined to the priests

Chapter 28 repeats some prescriptions of the Mosaic law. Regarding sacrifices, "God" says to the people: "Take care to bring at the appointed time my offering, **my sustenance** in the form of burnt offering. . . " (Numbers 28,1-2) All this food "offered to Yahweh" came laid on the table of the priests and the Levites who wrote these texts (read 1 Samuel 2,12-17). So it was convenient for the priests, scribes and Levites to have the greatest number of sacrifices offered to. . . Yahweh. . . a food they consumed themselves. . . in the name of Yahweh!

6.2.5 Balaam and his prophecies on the Messiah (Numbers 22-24)

The most important theme in Numbers is that of the prophecies of Balaam, a non-Jewish soothsayer, concerning the Messiah.

To enter Palestine, the Israelis had to pass by the country of Moab (currently Jordan). Balak, the Moabite king, wanted to prevent them by force. He called Balaam, a wizard of the region. He asked him to cast a bad fate on the Israelis, to curse them so that he could overcome them easily: "The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian set out (*towards Balaam*) taking fees for the divination with them (*for the curse against the Jews*)" (Numbers 22,7).

God prevented Balaam from cursing them: "There is no omen against Jacob, no divination against Israel." (Numbers 23,23) Why? Because Balaam the magician says "A **hero** arises from their stock, he reigns over countless peoples... (Numbers 24,7) ... I see him—but not in the present, I behold him—but not close at hand: a **Star** from Jacob takes the leadership, a scepter arises from Israel." (Numbers 24,17).

Therefore, the only reason why these people were protected by God was that the Messiah will come from them. He is this "Hero" who comes from their lineage and this "Star" that Balaam sees later, "not close at hand". Indeed, it was but 13 centuries later that Jesus came. He is "the Star of the morning" as the Book of Revelation calls Him (Revelation 2,28 / 22,16). It is clear here that the only vocation of the Israelites is the coming of the Messiah. Today, after the Advent of this Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, any Israelis who reject Him can no longer claim any divine blessing any more than any person who turns his back on this Star-Hero.

Balaam is a figure to be retained because, unable to curse the Jews, pushed them to debauchery with the prostitutes of Moab to arouse the divine wrath against them (Numbers 25,1-3). Notice that the Moabites and Midians are both accused by the Jews (Numbers 25,6-16), but it is Balaam who is held to be the main culprit in this affair of Shittim, and the reason why the Israelites later killed him (Numbers 31,8). The Book of Revelation also mentions Balaam and compares the wicked of the end of times to this "Balaam, who taught Balak to set a trap for the Israelites so that they committed adultery", and deserve the divine wrath (Revelation 2,14). These wicked people are the subjects of the Beast who corrupt the disciples of Christ to distance them from God as did Balaam (read the book "Protocols of the Elders of Zion").

6.2.6 Borders of Israel

The Book of Numbers ends with the Israelis at the doors of Palestine to the East of Jordan on Mount Nébo, which faced the Palestinian town of Jericho (Ariha). Moses died there (Deuteronomy 34,1-5).

According to the scribes, the borders given to the Jews, always by God, start from Sinai to the town of Hamat in the North of Syria (34,8) and terminates in the East with the River Jordan and the Dead Sea (34,12).

These borders are fanciful and depend, not on God, but on the varying ambitions of the Israeli scribes who, according to their more or less voracious appetites, sometimes place the borders from the Sinai to the Jordan, as it is the case here, and sometimes from the Nile to the Euphrates, as is indicated in Joshua 1,3-4. If it had been God who had allotted the Israeli borders, they would not have varied from one scribe to another, they would have been fixed, well defined and above all, permanent historically.

Modern Israelis are not very satisfied with the country that "God" has given them, described by Moses as being the country where "milk and honey flow" (Exodus 3,8 / Numbers 13,27). Once before already, in the desert, the Jews regretted "the fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onion and garlic" that they ate for "free" in Egypt (Numbers 11,5-6). In 1977, the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meïr said: "Israel will never forgive Moses his short-sightedness: he led the Jews out of Egypt and struck the rock to quench their thirst: but he made them walk for 40 years in the desert to establish them in the only region deprived of oil".

6.3 Deuteronomy

6.3.1 Meaning of the word: Deuteronomy

This word comes from the Greek "deftero", which means "second" or "a second time", and "noma" which means "law". So Deuteronomy means "Second Law" or "the Law a second time". This book is thus named because it is a recapitulation of the four books of the Law that precede it. It is a collection, a summary or a synthesis of the Torah.

6.3.2 When and by whom was it written?

Deuteronomy was written eight centuries BC, approximately 200 years after the four books that precede it, and at least 400 years after the entry of the Israelites into Palestine. It was written by a group of scribes and priests to assemble, in a single volume, the essential teachings of Moses. They added to it what they wanted him to prescribe in their favor. To give more weight to the precepts therein, the authors make Moses himself speak. The successive speeches form his moral testament. Apart from the laws and ordinances, Deuteronomy contains accounts of the principal events that took place in the desert.

The drafting of the book was made after the institution of the Israeli Kingdom. Its goal is to avoid in the future, the faults already committed in the past: "When you reach the land given that Yahweh your God gives you, and take possession of it and live there, if you say to yourself, 'I will appoint a king over me like all the surrounding nations'... Nor must he (*this king*) increase the number of his wives (*like David and Solomon had already done*) ... Nor must he increase his silver and gold excessively. When he is seated on his royal throne he must write a copy of this Law (*Deuteronomy*) on a scroll for his own use at the dictation of the levitical priests... he must read it every day of his life..." (Deuteronomy 17,14-20). Note the importance of the priests in the biblical drafting. This text is to be compared to that of 1 Samuel 8,5-19 where the Jews, when there was still no kingdom in the 11th century BC, asked Samuel for a king: "Give us a king to judge us like the other nations". Elsewhere, in 1 Kings 10,14-18 and 1 Kings 11,1-8, we find mentioned the gold, the horses and the numerous women of Solomon. Deuteronomy's aim is to avoid the recurrence of similar abuses in the future. An entire volume was written to remind everyone, the kings above all, of their duties towards God: "Understand this today, therefore, and take it to heart: Yahweh is God indeed, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other. Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today..." (Deuteronomy 4,39-40)

Deuteronomy was neglected for a long time after its drafting. It was found hidden and neglected in the Temple, under king Josiah in 622 BC. It is "the Book of the Law found in the Temple of Yahweh" (2 Kings 22,8) and the "Book of Moses", which Nehemiah 13,1-3 refers to.

To give more weight to their words, the Levite scribes endeavored -evidently- to give the impression that Moses himself had written and entrusted it to the Levites: "When Moses had finished writing in a book the words of this Law **to the very end**, he gave this command to the Levites... 'Take this Book of the Law... etc...'" (Deuteronomy 31,24-26).

The Deuteronomy text demonstrates that its author was not Moses until the end. He cannot be the author of the final chapter dealing with his death and burial (Deuteronomy 34). He would not have written: "Here are the words that Moses addressed..." (Deuteronomy 1,1), but: "Here are the words which I addressed...", nor "Moses then set aside three towns in the east" (Deuteronomy 4,41), but "I then set aside three towns..." Everything indicates that the priests and scribes worked to draft Deuteronomy under the monarchical regime in Israel, before the Babylonian invasion in 586 BC. In his introduction to Deuteronomy, Andre Chouraqui,

author of the French Bible that bears his name, recognizes that "there are indications that this book does not show the work of the great Legislator (*Moses*)".

We must, at this stage, read the whole Book of Deuteronomy, then return to the explanation of the important points in the following Biblical Course.

6.3.3 Dispossession

The duty of dispossessing nations often comes up in Deuteronomy. The Israelites were led by Moses, in the name of God, to drive out the occupants of Canaan and to seize their property: "**driving out** in front of you nations greater and more powerful than yourself, and brought you into their land to give it you for your heritage" (Deuteronomy 4,38).

"Listen, Israel; today you are about to cross the Jordan, to go and **dispossess** nations greater and stronger than yourself" (Deuteronomy 9,1).

"When Yahweh has brought you into the land which he swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would give you, with great and prosperous cities not of your building, houses full of good things not furnished by you, wells you did not dig, vineyards and olives you did not plant, when you have eaten these and had your fill, then take care you don't forget Yahweh. . . " (Deuteronomy 6,10-12).

We are impressed by the number of times the command to dispossess and ransack other nations is repeated. . . in the name of God! In one verse, this duty of dispossession is repeated twice: "When Yahweh your God has annihilated in front of you the nations that you **are to dispossess**, and when you **have dispossessed** them and made your home in **their** country. . . " (Deuteronomy 12,29).

But to dispossess was not enough: "When you advance to the attack on any town, first offer it terms of peace (*!!*). If it accepts these and opens its gates to you, all the people to be found in it shall do forced labor for you and be subject to you (*!!*). But if it refuses peace and offers resistance, you must lay siege to it. Yahweh your God shall deliver it into your power and you are to put all its menfolk to the sword. But the women, the children, the livestock and all that the town contains, all its spoil, you may take for yourselves as booty. You will devour the spoil of your enemies. . . But as regards the towns of those peoples whom Yahweh your God gives you as your own inheritance, you must not spare the life of any living thing" (Deuteronomy 20,10-16). Dispossession, vandalism and crimes in the name of God. The list of texts would be very long to report. This is what profanes the Holy Name of God.

However, the Ten Commandments contain three clear precepts: "You shall not kill. . . You shall not steal. . . You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his." (Exodus 20,13-17) To sidestep these commandments, scribes and priests subtly interpret the meaning of the word "neighbor". For the Jew, the neighbor is the Jew. These commandments are only valid with regard to himself. The goyim are enemies who are even recommended to rob or even kill. That did not stop Moses from ordering the death of his own nephews and a great number of Jews. The Samaritans themselves were considered enemies. The Pharisees, to insult Jesus, treated him as a Samaritan: "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and possessed by a devil?" (John 8,48) Jesus corrected the interpretation of these commandments by designating a Samaritan, the traditional enemy of the Jews, as an example of loving thy neighbor (Luke 10,29-37). He even went further by praising the Roman Centurion, a Pagan, and blamed the Jews: "When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you solemnly, nowhere in Israel have I found faith like this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of Heaven; but the subjects of the kingdom (*of Israel, the Zionist Jews*)

will be turned out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." (Matthew 8,10-13) This is why Jesus invites the Jews to love **their enemies** and to stop reserving their greetings to **their brothers**: "Love your enemies... For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit?" (Matthew 5,44-46).

This insistence on dispossession and murder undoubtedly sheds light on the source of such commandments: "The devil is your father, and you prefer to do what your father wants. He was a **murderer** from the start...", Jesus hurled at his negators (John 8,44). It was these orders given by Moses that drew the divine anger against him. Having led the Israelites out of Egypt, he wanted to possess the nations from the Sinai to Lebanon and beyond. He confessed in front of the community "to have pleaded then with Yahweh. My Lord Yahweh... may I not go across and see this prosperous land beyond the Jordan, this prosperous country of hills, and Lebanon? But, because of you", he reproached the people, "Yahweh was angry with me and would take no notice of me: 'Enough!' he said, 'Speak to me no more of this!" (Deuteronomy 3,23-26) The shear anger of God was not due to the people as Moses thought. It aimed to limit the appetite of possession of the latter (Deuteronomy 4,21).

In assessing the behavior of Moses, must we take into account certain extenuating circumstances: the mentality and customs of the time, the difficulty of the mission, the hardness of the people... ?

6.3.4 The editions

Moses confessed that God added nothing to the words of the Ten Commandments: "These are the words Yahweh spoke to you when you were all assembled on the mountain... **He added nothing**, but wrote them on two tablets of stone which he gave to me." (Deuteronomy 5,22) Moses also prescribed: "You must add nothing to what I command you, and take nothing from it" (Deuteronomy 4,2). And yet, ritual and cult editions at a large scale were added in favor of the material well-being of priests. Where did they come from? From "the lying pen" of the scribes (Jeremiah 8,8). We are able today to detect these impurities and exorcise the Torah through the teachings of Jesus.

6.3.5 The "small remainder"

In Deuteronomy 4,25-31, Moses prophesied the spiritual treason of the Israelites: "Only a small number of you will remain" (Deuteronomy 4,27). For all times, it is only a "small number", a "little rest" that remains faithful to God and his Messiah, who succeed in the test of faith. Indeed, it was to save a tiny minority of the Israelite community who recognized Jesus as the coming Messiah, and a tiny minority who recognize the Antichrist today: "Someone said to him: 'Sir, will there be only a few saved?' He said to them, '... many will try to enter and will not succeed.'" (Luke 13,23-24) Jesus also said with regards to this subject: "Then they will hand you over to be tortured and put to death... And many will fall away; men will betray one another... love in most men will grow cold; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24,9-13) He still asked: "But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?" (Luke 18,8) He will find it only in the hearts of a very small remainder who will set the world ablaze.

6.3.6 The "nation" of Israel

Deuteronomy 4,34 presents Israel as a **nation** chosen by God: "Has any god ventured to take to himself one **nation** from the midst of another... all this that Yahweh your God did **for you** before your eyes in Egypt?" There are two errors in this declaration: it is false to claim that

God chose a nation; the divine choice was fixed on a man, Abraham. It is still false to say to the Jews: "... all this that Yahweh your God did **for you**". We have seen that God acted to accomplish His Messianic plan in favor of **all men**, not exclusively for the glory of the Jewish community.

6.3.7 Circumcision of the heart

We find in Deuteronomy an evolution in the comprehension of circumcision according to the spirit, not according to the letter. For the first time, it is a question of circumcision **of the heart** in Deuteronomy 10,16: "Circumcise your heart then and be obstinate no longer". The prophet Jeremiah comes back to this spiritual circumcision a few centuries later: "Circumcise yourselves for Yahweh, off with the foreskin of your hearts" (Jeremiah 4,4).

In spite of that, some still insist on the physical circumcision of the foreskin. This practice was a cause of great dissension among the first Apostles of Jesus: "Then some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved." (Acts 15,1) True circumcision is that of the heart, as Paul reports: "The real Jew is the one who is inwardly a Jew, and real circumcision is in the heart—something not of the letter but of the spirit." (Romans 2,29)

6.3.8 Choice between benediction and malediction

Blessings are granted to the Israelis if they are faithful, and maledictions if unfaithful: "Today, look, I am offering you a blessing and a curse..." (Deuteronomy 11,26-30). The blessing was placed on Mount Garizim, in Samaria, and the malediction was placed on Mount Ebal facing it (Deuteronomy 11,29). Mount Garizim, being the place of blessings, was chosen as a sanctuary and a place of worship by the Samaritans. It still remains there today. As for the Jews, they practiced their worship in the Temple of Jerusalem (read the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan in John 4,20-24).

6.3.9 Moses announces the Messiah

The most important subject in this book is Moses' announcement of the Messiah-Prophet: "Yahweh your God will raise up a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; to him you must listen". Moses added: "... and Yahweh said to me: All they have spoken is well said. I will raise up **a prophet** like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. The man who does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name shall be answerable to me for it." (Deuteronomy 18,15-19).

We must remember this important Messianic prophecy to which Jesus refers: "since it was I that he (Moses) was writing about" (John 5,46). Likewise, the Apostles referred to this verse: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, the one about whom the prophets wrote..." (John 1,45). When the Pharisees asked John the baptist if he was "the Prophet", they were referring to the prophecy of Moses (John 1,45).

Remember that the announced prophet is "similar" to Moses, as great as him. When Jesus came, He turned out to be even greater than Moses as Paul reveals: "He (*Jesus*) has been found to deserve a **greater** glory than Moses. It is the difference between the honor given to the man that built the house and to the house itself." (Hebrews 3,3).

The Messiah announced by Moses comes for the salvation of all who believe in Him, Jews or non-Jews, and for the condemnation of all who refuse Him (Deuteronomy 18,19). Jesus

proclaimed: "No one who believes in him will be condemned, but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the Name of God's only Son." (John 3,18)

"See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster" God says in Deuteronomy 30,15. Life is on the Messiah's side, Jesus. Death is on the side of the Zionist State opposed to the Spirit of God and His Messiah. "No one can be the slave of two masters" (Matthew 6,24).

6.3.10 Abraham the Syrian

The scribes introduced Abraham as a Hebrew: "A survivor came to tell Abraham **the Hebrew**..." (Genesis 14,13). Their intention is to make believe that the Hebrew "race" pre-existed the election of Abraham, who was himself a member. Thus, by choosing Abraham, all the Hebrews are chosen in him. This is their logic, not that of God, not ours.

That is why Moses asked his community: "In the sight of Yahweh your God, you must make this pronouncement: 'My father was a wandering **Aramaean**. He went down into Egypt..." (Deuteronomy 26,5) Moses therefore reminded the Jews that their father Abraham was of Syrian origin, not Hebraic. During Abraham's time there were no Hebrews. This development by Moses confuses and denounces Zionist racism.

6.3.11 Conditional divine promise

The loyalty of the Israelites to God is the primordial and indispensable condition to own the Promised Land: "... but only if you follow his ways... but only if you keep all his commandments..." (Deuteronomy 26,17-18) Now, this condition was not observed: "This people will start playing the harlot, following the alien gods... They will desert me and break this covenant of mine that I have made with them", Yahweh declared to Moses (Deuteronomy 31,16).

Moses cautioned against unfaithfulness: "For not obeying the voice of Yahweh your God... You will be torn from the land which you are entering to make your own." (Deuteronomy 28,63-68) Jeremiah in turn denounced the Israelite infidelity and the rupturing of the Covenant with God: "**They broke** that covenant of mine", says the Lord (Jeremiah 31,32).

Only a "handful" will remain faithful (Deuteronomy 28,62) to pursue God's plan by welcoming the Messiah, the initiator of the **New Covenant** foretold by the prophets: "I will make a **New Covenant** with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors... **They broke** that covenant of mine" (Jeremiah 31,31-32). Through His Martyrdom Jesus instituted this New Eternal Covenant (Matthew 26,28).

The rupture of the first Covenant takes away from Israelis of the 20th century any pretext for the possession of Palestine in the name of God. Their unfaithfulness towards the Creator, by their rejection of Jesus, will once again cuts them out from the land. If they are there today, it is not because of a divine intervention. The Book of Revelation reveals to us that they are drawn there from "the four quarters of the earth (*by Satan*)" (Revelation 20,7-9). They are drawn there with the illusion of being the chosen people returning from the four quarters of the earth to the Promised Land. Israel thus became, as Paul reveals, this "power to delude them and make them believe what is untrue", but "the Lord will kill him with the breath of his mouth and will annihilate him with his glorious appearance at his Coming" (2 Thessalonians 2,8-12).

6.3.12 Death of Moses

The death of Moses and Aaron outside Palestine is the punishment announced by God (Numbers 20,12). The death of the great legislator outside "the Promised Land" means that the practice of the Mosaic Law is incapable of ushering into the Kingdom of God, since its founder himself could not enter the Promised Land, symbol of Heaven.

Reflection

The Bible is a gold mine. Like all gold mines, it contains impurities mixed with the Treasure it contains. You have to be able to detect them and separate them from the essential.

The impurities are the precepts and abominable cults attributed to God. Those who prescribed them profaned "the Holy Name". These repugnant actions are mentioned in abundance and only in the Old Testament. They were denounced by the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles.

In the Old Testament, gold is the Revelation of the one God, the fall of man and its cause, the divine determination to save humanity, the call of Abraham, the formation of the first monotheistic community, the announcement of the Messiah's advent by the prophets, etc...

In the New Testament, everything is gold. The moment has come to purify the biblical gold in the crucible of the apocalyptic message where Christ says: "I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in the fire to make you really rich..." (Revelation 3,18) To purify gold, we must recognize it and separate it from impurities. It takes divine grace and biblical experience.

6.4 Questionnaire

1. Draw a map of the region including Egypt, Sinai, the Dead Sea, Jordan, Lake Tiberias, then trace the route of the Israelis in the desert of Sinai. Locate Midian, Kadesh, Edom, Hor, Shittim, Moab, Nebo, Jericho, Mount Garizim.
2. In Deuteronomy 33,8-11 Moses blesses the tribe of Levi. How do you understand this blessing in comparing it with the curse that Jacob proclaimed on Levi (Genesis 49,5-7)?
3. Why was Balaam killed by the Israelites (Numbers 31,1-12) and what does he symbolize?
4. What happened at Kadesh (Numbers 13)?
5. What happened at Shittim (Numbers 25,1)?
6. Moses and Aaron did not deserve to enter Palestine? What was their fault?
7. What are Urim and Tummim?
8. Do you think that God literally inspired all the points of the Mosaic law? How do you understand the verses of Jeremiah 7,22 and 8,8?
9. Was Abraham a Hebrew?
10. God wanted to form a nation with Abraham or to pass on a universal message?
11. Circumcision of the foreskin or of the heart? Baptism of the body by water or of the soul by biblical knowledge and faith? Are circumcision and Baptism sanctifying, or nothing but symbols to get past?
12. What is the Promised Land? Who was it promised to?
13. The Covenant between God and the Israelite community is still valid? Why?

7. Lesson 7 – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel 1 & 2

Understanding the 5 Books of the Torah, in the critical thinking that we have followed, forms a solid and realistic basis to tackle the remainder of the Books of the Old Testament. Read attentively the Books of Joshua and Judges, then return to the clarifications below:

7.1 The Book of Joshua

This book reports the narrative of the entry of the Israelites into Palestine, with Joshua at their head, around 1200 BC. The departure took place from Shittim (Joshua 3,1). The borders of the country for occupation were quickly defined: from the desert (Sinai, with the Nile as Western limit) to the Euphrates (Joshua 1,4), Lebanon being entirely invaded. The door of the Israeli Knesset is marked: "Your domain, Israel, extends from the Nile to the Euphrates". This is why the Israeli flag bears, on a white background, the six-pointed star (of David) between two blue bands which represent the Nile and the Euphrates. See in lesson 6 of this Biblical Course at the end of the Book of Numbers: Borders of Israel.

The Ark crosses the Jordan River as a sign of God's presence with the Israelite community (transformed into an invading army).

Circumcision was neglected: on order of Joshua, it was revived "again... with knives of flint" (Joshua 5,2-9).

The takeover of Jericho: not to understand this fact literally. Notice that the city was taken the 7th day, after the 7th turn, the number 7 being that of plenitude (6,14-16). "The ram's horn sounds" (Joshua 6,4-5 / 6,16) is a ritual custom practiced still today by the Jews at the Wailing Wall. Joshua curses Jericho, he who rebuilds it, he says, will have to offer his sons in sacrifice to the idols (Joshua 6,26-27). The First Book of Kings, written later with the Book of Joshua, reports that Hiel of Béthel rebuilt this city by offering his two sons in sacrifice (1 Kings 16,34). This "prophecy" is among all those which are reported subsequently with the intention of granting them historical veracity.

The trumpet (Jos 6,16) acquired a **prophetic** and spiritual meaning after its use in the liturgical worship (like the bells). It announces that God is going to speak or act, and that the people must therefore all listen carefully: "All you who inhabit the world... when the ram's horn is sounded, you will hear! For this is what Yahweh has told me..." (Isaiah 18,3-4) In the end times, Jesus sends his disciples with a "sounding trumpet", as a final warning (Matthew 24,31). This trumpet is symbolic: it announces the opening of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 8,2 / 10,2) and invites those with ears to listen to what the Spirit has to reveal to them again (Revelation 3,22).

The role of the priests, highlighted by the priest-scribes who wrote this text later, is made indispensable in the takeover of the city. The collapse of the walls of Jericho is a fable without historical basis and is part of the multiple "Jewish fables" against which Paul warned us (Titus 1,13-14). Note also that the recommendation made to the community, that no one, upon entering the city, should "be covetous and take... all the silver and all the gold, all the things made of bronze and things of iron are consecrated to Yahweh and must be put into his treasury", ie in the pious pocket of the priests (Joshua 6,17-19). The scribes were delighted in writing that the combatants "enforced the ban (*law of total extermination*) on everything in the town: men and women, young and old, even the oxen and sheep and donkeys, massacring them all." (Joshua 6,21) This evokes the massacres of Deir Yassine, Kfar Kassem, etc... in Palestine, due to the establishment of the State of Israel (1948), as well as that of Sabra-Chatila, Cana, etc... in Lebanon, as a result of the Zionist expansionist plan.

An animal horn used as a trumpet (The ram horns are more modest).

The sun standing still over Gibeon (Joshua 10,12) is also a myth to be understood poetically, not in reality, since the moon also "stood still" by Joshua.

Distribution of the conquered land: a region was designated to each tribe, except for Levi because "Yahweh, God of Israel, was his heritage" (Joshua 13,14). This non-geographical share of the Levites shows that the "Promised Land" is a **spiritual reality**, non-geographical, just as Jesus and his Apostles well explained later (Luke 17,21 / Hebrews 13,14). It was by drawing lots that the country was divided among the tribes (Joshua 14,2).

The Sanctuary of Shiloh: the first center of worship was set up in Shiloh, in the northern part of the country (Joshua 18,1). It became the site of pilgrimage (1 Samuel 1,3). The Ark was found there before being transferred to the Temple of Jerusalem later on.

Joshua dies (Joshua 24,29) without appointing a successor. This posed a difficulty in managing the community. A series of "Judges" decided the military and political fate of the Israelites. The Book of Judges is about them, and comes after the Book of Joshua.

The bones of Joseph, who died in Egypt, were transferred and buried in Shechem (Nablus: where the well of Jacob is located). His tomb still lies there today (Joshua 24,32).

Note: The Israelites chose to enter Palestine by the sword and blood. They could have however settled there peacefully, making good neighbors with the inhabitants who were there already. Doing that, they would have spread out the knowledge of God, day-by-day, with friendly deeds, as God wanted.

7.2 The Book of Judges

After Joshua, the Jews succumbed to idolatry, "they deserted Yahweh to serve Baal and Astartes... But they would not listen to their judges. They prostituted themselves to other gods..." (Judges 2,13-17) Note that those who "plundered" the Israelites were only taking back their possessions despoiled by the Israelites.

Thus, Israelite history is a fabric of treason to God and aggression against men. We are astonished at the words that the scribes ascribed to Balaam, who refused to curse the Jews: "I have seen no evil in Jacob" (Numbers 23,21), because this evil was denounced by Moses

Main sites in relation with the narration of the conquest of Canaan

at the adoration of the golden calf and by so many other infidelities. The only good from this community was the Messiah, Jesus. Everything that happened to the sons of Jacob is interpreted by the Jewish scribes and priests in their favor. For example: God allows non-Jewish nations survive "**only** in the interest of generations of the sons of Israel, to teach them the art of war. . . " (Judges 3,1-2) A strange warlike mentality which sees in God a warrior exterminating all non-Jews. We must read such verses with a critical and objective spirit to discern what is of God, and what is a result of the racist mentality of the scribes. The preservation of non-Jews among the Jews should have been understood differently: God, Father of all peoples, places the Israelites among the nations (not the nations among the Jews) so that they remain among them **peacefully**, not aggressively, revealing to them, with wisdom, the existence of God. Now, on the contrary, they allowed themselves to be drawn into idolatry after having known the One Creator (Judges 3,4-6).

After Joshua, a dozen judges came to succession over a period of a hundred years. The judge ("Suffet" in Hebrew) should not be understood in the sense of one who renders justice in a court between individuals. He is the one who guides and advises the community after having, in most cases, consulted God (Judges 4,4-6). He judges what is best to do. The judge is a prophet, he helps the people govern themselves, settles when a decision has to be made, to lead into battle: *Ehud* judges in fighting against Moab and kills their king, Eglon; *Deborah* judges in fighting the Canaanites and kills Sisera, their chief; *Gideon* judges in carrying out wars against Midian. Deborah is the only woman among the judges, a sort of Joan of Arc. The judges are therefore trusted people who stand up for the Israelites. The most known -without being the most important- is Samson.

7.2.1 Gideon

A fact to be noted: for the first time, with Gideon, the Israelites tried to establish a kingdom, to become a nation and, the Israelites -a community whose mission is spiritual- transformed into the Israelis, a political entity. They thus asked Gideon to be their king and initiate a royal dynasty, and his son to succeed him. But he refused, understanding that the only King is God, and that the Israelites' mission is not political: "'It is not I who shall rule you, nor my son; Yahweh must be your Lord.' But Gideon went on. . . 'Let every man of you give me one of the rings out of his spoils.'" (Judges 8,22-24) His son Abimelech desired the throne after him and tried to establish a kingdom which lasted only for 3 years. He had all his 70 brothers killed in order to reign, but was himself overthrown by the notables of Shechem, who had helped him massacre his brothers (Judges 9). A hundred years later, a second attempt takes place with Samuel and will result in the establishment of an Israeli kingdom with Saul as the first king (1 Samuel 8). That was the Hebrews' original sin, as we will see in the First Book of Samuel (1 Samuel 12,19).

7.2.2 Jephthah

Judge Jephthah, son of a prostitute (Judges 11,1), fought the Ammonites and "made a vow to Yahweh, 'If you deliver the Ammonites into my hands, the first person to meet me from the door of my house when I return in triumph from fighting the Ammonites shall belong to Yahweh, and I will offer him up as a holocaust.'" (Judges 11,30-31) It was his own daughter that he had to sacrifice (Judges 11,34-40). These human sacrifices were a pagan custom prohibited by God, but, nevertheless, practiced by the Israelites who were condemned by God (Jeremiah 7,30-31). Moses had prescribed the sacrifice of animals, not because God wanted them, but

with the aim of preventing the Jews from offering them to idols and avoid human sacrifices. But it served for nothing: the Israelis committed abominations, one after the other.

7.2.3 Samson

The story of Samson is full of exaggerations that should not be taken literally. His fights against the lion (Judges 14,6), then against the Palestinians with "a jaw of a donkey" are obvious fables (Judges 15,9-17) which aim at giving this image of the invincible Hebrew, a kind "of Hercules" of that time. A mature mind does not believe it.

7.2.4 The crime of the Danites

Remember the bloody story of the Danites (chapters 17 & 18). This crime was committed after consultation with God! The Danites asked the priest: "'Then consult God and find out for us whether the journey we are making will be successful.' The priest replied, 'Go in peace; the journey you are making is under the eye of Yahweh.'" (Judges 18,5-6) Notice that the "god" invoked by the Levite priest was none other than a statue. Consulted by the teraphim (Urim and Purim), this "god" blessed the criminal expedition of the Danites! It was the creation of Micah who, mad with rage against the Danites who had stolen it, screams at them: "You have taken **away the god I have made for myself**...!" (Judges 18,24) This fabricated god by Micah permitted the Danites to execute "a defenseless people... a peaceful and trusting people" (Judges 18,10 / 18,27-28). It is by such practices of sorcery that God was consulted by the priests and soiled the Holy Name of the Creator.

So many people make up a god in their image instead of transforming themselves to the image of the one true God, this image that so many people lose through their fault.

Another repugnant crime was committed by the Benjamites at Gibeah (chapters 19-20). It had disastrous consequences to the whole community and developed in an incomprehensible manner (Judges 19,1 / 21,25). The prophet Hosea does not forget this unimaginable crime (Hosea 9,9 / 10,9).

Remarks:

Wanting to justify the establishment of an Israeli kingdom, the scribes explained the social disorders in their community by the fact that, "in those days, there was no king in Israel" (Judges 18,1 / 19,1). They end the Book of Judges by insisting on this fact: "In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did as he pleased." (Judges 21,25) Now, the establishment of a kingdom does not resolve the problems; the social condition did not improve, the kingdom ends up divided into two: one in the North and another in the South. The kings were often inept of governing and the prophets did not fail to condemn them and to denounce the fact of having instituted a kingship in Israel (Hosea 8,4).

These macabre Biblical narratives reported in the Old Testament invite us to meditate: "God writes straight on curved lines", a contemporary philosopher once said. He succeeded, despite the inaptitude of the Israelites, to achieve his Messianic plan. The Messiah was to come from the Jews (John 4,2), "like a root in arid ground" (Isaiah 53,2). This arid ground is the Israelite environment from which Jesus emerged, and it is He, says Saint Paul, this Messiah who removes the Mosaic veil which prevented the believers from perceiving the Divine Light: "indeed, to this very day, that same veil is still there when the old covenant is being read, a veil never

lifted, since Christ alone can remove it. Yes, even today, whenever Moses is read, the veil is over their minds. It will not be removed until they turn to the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3,14-16)

7.3 The Book of Ruth

Read this edifying historical book with interest, noting that Ruth is a Moabite, not an Israelite. The importance of this story that took place during the time of the Judges is that Ruth -non-Jewish- is one of the Messiah's ancestors, since she is the grandmother of king David from which the Messiah descends. In fact, she gave birth to "Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth 4,17 / see Matthew 1,3-5 and Luke 3,31-32).

This fact contradicts the Jewish principle: "Only the children of a Jewess are Jewish". David and the Messiah himself have as an ancestor a non-Jewess: Ruth.

We would have appreciated if the historical books of the Bible were all written in the same spirit as that of Ruth, where no violence or racism are found. Naomi, the Jewish mother-in-law, is admirable regarding her love and tenderness for Ruth, a non-Jewess. It was she, Naomi, who pushed Ruth into the arms of Boaz of matrimony. The harmonious relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is exemplary. It is the ideal behavior that God requested from all the Israelites. Naomi deserves to be the Messiah's ancestor; it is this open and affectionate spirit that Jesus came to give to the world. This is the Holy Spirit, in total opposition to the chauvinistic spirit found in several parts of the Torah.

7.4 The First Book of Samuel

The two books of Samuel and the two Books of Kings form a historical ensemble of approximately 550 years, extending from the year 1100 BC to the year 580 BC. These four books recount the story of the establishment of the kingdom, of its division into two, and the fall of the two kingdoms, a fall which led to the deportation of the Israelis to Babylon.

NB: Some Bibles call the two Books of Samuel "First and Second Books of Kings", and those of Kings "Third and Fourth Books of Kings", without mentioning Samuel as a title. This is due to the fact that all four books speak of the Israeli kings.

Read the First Book of Samuel before carrying on with the explanations below.

7.4.1 The sanctuary of Shiloh

The Ark was found in Shiloh. The Palestinians destroyed it and took the Ark (1 Samuel 4,11). The scribes claim that the Palestinians were afraid of it (1 Samuel 4,7). But David was also afraid of it after (2 Samuel 6,9-10). These facts reveal the ancient superstitious conception of anything related to divinity. God was terrible, and all that pertained to Him was untouchable and to be feared.

7.4.2 The Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2,1-10)

Filled with joy, Hannah improvises a poem to God who liberated her from the "shame" of sterility. She was able to lift her head high in front of Peninnah, her husband's other wife, who, because of her abundant fertility, despised Hannah. She finds herself avenged by giving birth to Samuel, a son of moral ethics and a grand destiny: "My Heart exults in Yahweh... The bow the mighty is broken... the barren woman bears sevenfold (*Samuel, great in the eyes of God, worth 7 children*), but the mother of many (*Peninnah*) is desolate." (1 Samuel 2,1-5)

The Virgin Mary, pregnant with the Messiah, was inspired by this hymn: "My soul exults the Lord…" (Luke 1,44-55) We notice in Hannah's song a historical error: "… he endows **his King** with power" (1 Samuel 2,10). There was not yet a king in Israel. This shows that the scribes belatedly added royalist and nationalist nuances to the hymn.

7.4.3 Establishment of the kingdom

The most important point in the First Book of Samuel is the institution of a kingship with Saul as its first king (1030-1010 BC). "It displeased Samuel", says the text, and also displeased God who considered Himself "rejected" by the Israelites "from no longer ruling over them" (1 Samuel 8,6-7). One of the factors that nourished the desire of creating a kingdom was the immorality of the sons of Samuel (1 Samuel 8,5), and the sons of Eli the priest (1 Samuel 2,12-25).

This transformation of the Israelite community into an Israeli nation was denounced by the prophets: "They have set up kings, but not with my consent, and appointed princes, but without my knowledge", says God to the prophet Hosea (Hosea 8,4), then He declares with anger to the people: "**In my anger** I gave you a king and in my wrath I **take him away**." (Hosea 13,11) Indeed, the monarchy ceased in Israel after the Assyrian-Babylonian, then Roman invasions, as we shall see further on.

After having demanded a king, Samuel asked the people to "consider then and see what a very wicked thing you have done in the sight of Yahweh by asking to have a king." Recognizing their fault, the Israelis say to Samuel: "for we have added to all our sins this evil of asking to have a king" (1 Samuel 12,17-19) … but without renouncing their king.

It is with the aim of war and violence, not of peace, that the Israelites demanded a king: "No! We want a king, so that we in our turn can be like the other nations; our king shall rule us and be our leader and **fight our battles**." (1 Samuel 8,19-20) Gideon had understood that the only King was God (Judges 8,23). Jesus too, refused to establish an Israeli kingdom (John 6,15) and declared that his Kingdom is not of this political world (John 18,36). "Yahweh your God is your King", Samuel still insisted (1 Samuel 12,12).

7.4.4 Rupture between Samuel and Saul

Saul took the initiative of offering the sacrifice in Samuel's place at Gilgal. He appropriated to himself, in doing so, a religious right that did not belong to him and replaced Samuel who, in his turn removed him at once. "Your sovereignty will not last; Yahweh has searched out a man for himself after his own heart (*David*) and designated him leader of his people…" (1 Samuel 13,8-15).

7.4.5 David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17-18)

The young David killed a Palestinian giant, Goliath of Gath (1 Samuel 17,1-51). This earned him a solid friendship (that of Jonathan, son of Saul) and a fierce animosity (that of Saul): "Jonathan's soul became closely bound to David's and Jonathan came to love him as his own soul." (1 Samuel 18,1). On the contrary, Saul was filled with jealousy: "They have given David the tens of thousands, but me only the thousands; he has all but the kingship now. And Saul turned jealous eye on David from that day forward." On the following day, he tried to kill him twice, but David escaped (1 Samuel 18,6-11).

WWhat is the historical authenticity of this narration? Was it really David who killed Goliath? We read however in 2 Samuel 21,19 that it was a certain Elhanan who had defeated him: "Again war with the Philistines (*Palestinians*) broke out at Gob, and Elhanan son of Jair

from Bethlehem killed Goliath of Gath. . . " So David's prowess would be mere tales aimed at portraying the king of Israel as a hero. Because it is the same Goliath of Gath, "the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam" (2 Samuel 21,19 / 1 Samuel 17,7).

Jonathan's love for David endured until his death, as well as Saul's hatred who, all throughout his life, sought to kill David. Several of the Psalms of David were hymns of confidence in God and of recognition for having saved him from Saul's hands (Psalms 18 / 52 / 54 / 57 / 59 / 63).

7.4.6 David's refuge to Achish

The scribes relate at two different occasions, David's escape from Saul and his refuge to Achish, the Palestinian king of Gath, in the Goliath region. In the first account (1 Samuel 21,11-15), the king receives David: "But the servants of Achish said, 'Is not this David, the king of the country? Was it not of him that they sang in the dance: "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?"' David pondered on these words and became very frightened of Achish and played the madman to pretend that he was demented. . . David left from there and took refuge in the Cave of Adullam". Note that he was joined by "all those in distress, all those in debt. . . gathered around him and he became their leader." David then found refuge with the king of Moab to whom he entrusted his father and mother (1 Samuel 21,11 – 22,4).

According to the second account (1 Samuel 27,1 – 29,11), David sought refuge with Achish who received him and granted him the town of Ziklag where he remained for one year and four months. And the scribes conclude: ". . . for this reason Ziklag **has been the property** of the kings of Judah to the present day." (1 Samuel 27,6) It was therefore enough for a Jew to live in a place for Israel to seize it definitively: "Every place you tread with the soles of your feet I shall give you as I declared to Moses that I would", remind us the scribes. . . on behalf of God! (Joshua 1,3)

The kind accommodation of the two kings to David shows that the Israelites could have lived in Palestine in peace!

7.4.7 Spiritism (1 Samuel 28,3-25)

Saul conjured up Samuel who showed up, only to reprimand him by announcing his death and that of his sons. Spiritism, the conjuring up of spirits, is possible, but was condemned by God (Leviticus 19,31 / Deuteronomy 18,10-11). Evil spirits present themselves most of the time to mislead those who adhere to them. In spite of that, necromancy (or spiritism) was practiced by the Israelites, kings included (2 Kings 21,6). Unfortunately, it is still used today all over the world.

The First Book of Samuel, after having introduced Saul, ends with his death.

7.5 The Second Book of Samuel

This book presents David's reign and ends slightly before his death. Read it entirely then return to the points noted below.

7.5.1 King David

After Saul's death, David was chosen by "the house of Judah to be **their** king" (2 Samuel 2,7). The House of Judah, formed by members of the tribe bearing the same name, occupied the southern part of Palestine, from Jerusalem in the North until Hebron (El Khalil) in the South,

where the tombs of the Patriarchs are found. But the tribes of the North, called "Israel", refused David and chose one of their own, Ishbaal, son of Saul, as king of Israel (2 Samuel 2,8-10). The name Ishbaal means "Man of Baal" (Ish = man in Hebrew). This name, given by Saul to his son, reveals his attachment to idolatry.

This tension between "Judah" and "Israel" lasted until the downfall of both kingdoms. The hatred between the two kings prompted David to reign from Hebron in the South, far from his enemies (2 Samuel 2,11). "So the war dragged on between the House of Saul and the House of David, but David grew steadily stronger, and the House of Saul ever weaker." (2 Samuel 3,1) We found an example of "very fierce" battles between the two kingdoms in 2 Samuel 2,8-32.

Over a woman, Abner, the military chief of Israel, broke up with Ishbaal, his king. He imposed David as king over the whole people, from North to South of the territory (2 Samuel 3,6-21). After the assassination of Abner and Ishbaal, "All the tribes of Israel then came to David at Hebron. 'Look', they said, '... you shall be the leader...' and they anointed David king of Israel" (2 Samuel 5,1-3), after having been recognized king of Judah.

A strange verse reveals that "David's sons were priests" (2 Samuel 8,18). And yet, the priesthood, according to the law of Moses, was reserved to the Levite descendants of Aaron (Numbers 17,5 / 18,7). David, of the tribe of Judah, did not have a right to it. In becoming priests, the sons of David, deserved death: "... any layman who comes near is to be put to death." (Numbers 3,10) Saul provoked Samuel's anger for having dared to offer a sacrifice (1 Samuel 13,7-15). Korah and his party were exterminated for having claimed the priesthood, though they were Levites themselves (Numbers 17,5). The sons of David thus usurped a function that was reserved to the Levites, arousing without a doubt their anger, especially that two Levite priests, Zadok and Abiathar, already presided over the sacerdotal functions (2 Samuel 8,17). This fact, in bypassing the restrictive legal concept of the Mosaic priesthood, prepares for the universal priesthood established by Jesus (see Matthew 12,1-8 / 1 Corinthians 3,16-17 / Revelation 1,6 / 5,9-10 / 20,6).

7.5.2 David occupies Jerusalem

In the year 1000 BC, David seized Jerusalem and called it the "City of David" (2 Samuel 5,6-9). Jerusalem became the capital and the king's place of residence after Hebron. "David was thirty years old when he became king (*Jesus' age when he began his mission Luke 3,23*), and he reigned for forty years: seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem" (2 Samuel 5,4-5). He constructed a palace out of Cedar Wood (2 Samuel 5,11). The city thus became the Kingdom's Capital.

7.5.3 The Ark

The Ark was carried to Jerusalem which, after being the capital, will become the religious center and place of pilgrimage. After building a palace, David wished to build a temple to house the Ark. This was the occasion given to the prophet Nathan to proclaim the important Messianic prophecy of 2 Samuel 7,1-17. Read it one more time before continuing the course.

7.5.4 Nathan's Messianic Prophecy (2 Samuel 7,1-17)

This prophecy is the most important point of the book. David had informed the prophet Nathan of his intention to build a temple to house the Ark. Nathan spontaneously approved of it, "But that very night the word of Yahweh came to Nathan: 'Go and tell my servant David, 'thus Yahweh speaks: Are you the man to build me a house to dwell in? I never stayed in a

house... And when your days are ended... I will preserve the offspring of your body after you and make his sovereignty secure. It is he who shall build a house for my name, and I will make his royal throne secure forever. I will be a father to him and he a son to me...'" Thus God refuses and rejects the idea of the temple that David proposed to build and announces that one of his descendants will build the Temple according to God.

Explanation of the prophecy:

The Temple

God does not want David to build him a house of stone and concrete: "I have never stayed in a house", says God (2 Samuel 7,6). It's rather "Yahweh who will make you a House." (2 Samuel 7,11) Because, for God, the Temple, his Dwelling, is not a material building: God lives in **the heart** of the true believer. "If anyone loves me", said Jesus, "my Father will love him and we shall come to him, and make our home **with him** *in him*" (John 14,23). Paul also tells us: "Didn't you realize that **you are** God's temple?" (1 Corinthians 3,16), and Peter: "that you may be living stones making a **spiritual** house." (1 Peter 2,5) This is why, in the Book of Revelation, John does not see a Temple (Church, Mosque or Pagoda...) in the "Heavenly Jerusalem", which represents the believers of the end of times, "since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (*the Messiah, Jesus*) were themselves the Temple" (Revelation 21,22). Those who build material buildings for God have understood nothing of Nathan's prophecy, nor of Jesus' teachings and of His Apostles.

The Messiah

A descendant of David now known as the "Son of David" will build this Temple wanted by God. This descendant is the Messiah and this Temple is spiritual, not material. The Jews misinterpreted this prophecy believing that Solomon, son and successor of David to the throne, had the mission of building a material temple in Jerusalem. Divine intervention thus gives us some light, not only on the true meaning of the temple, but also on the Messiah, who came 1000 years after the proclamation of Nathan's beautiful prophecy.

The Messiah is "the lineage", the offspring, from David's "womb" (2 Samuel 7,12). It was from this prophecy that the Messiah was known as "Son of David", "Son of Jesse" (Jesse is David's father). He is also "Son of God" since God says: "I will be **a father** to him and he **a son** to me". The Jews believed it was about Solomon, David's son and successor (see 1 Chronicles 22,1-19 and especially verses 8-10). This is why Solomon wanted, at all costs, to build a temple made of cedar and gold in which he placed the Ark of the Covenant. But the prophecy went further than the immediate son of David. It indicated Jesus, who came 1000 years later. He spoke of the **destruction** of the material temple built by Solomon and his successors, presenting his "**Body**", ie his Person, as the permanent Temple for believers (John 2,19-22 / Revelation 21,22).

So Nathan's prophecy aimed well into the future and higher in spirit than human vision: it was neither about Solomon nor of a material building. This was only understood after the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy, ten centuries later, when the Angel Gabriel appeared to the tender Virgin of Nazareth to tell her: "You are to conceive and bear a son... He will be great and will be called **Son of the Most High**. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David" (Luke 1,26-37). Read this text carefully and compare it with Nathan's prophecy.

Why is Jesus "the Son of the Most High", "His Only Son" as John says (John 3,16)?

The answer is found in the dialogue between Mary and the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1,34-35):

Mary: "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?"

Gabriel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you... **And so** the child will be called **Son of God**".

Jesus shed new light on his filiation. He is much more than "Son of David", his genealogy cannot refer to a man, however great he may be, because he comes from up on high, directly from God alone of whom He is the incarnate. Discussing with the Pharisees, "Jesus put to them this question, 'What is your opinion about the Christ? Whose son is he?' 'David's, they told him. 'Then how is it', he said, 'that David, moved by the Spirit, calls him **Lord**, where he says: The Lord (*God*) said to my Lord (*the Messiah*): Sit at my right hand... (Psalm 110,1)?' 'If David can call him Lord, then how can he be his son?' Not one could think of anything to say in reply..." (Matthew 22,42-45) Jesus' divine nature overshadows his human lineage. No one could imagine this origin. It goes back to Eternity, not time. The prophet Micah, eight centuries before Jesus, speaking under inspiration, revealed his divine origin by saying: "His origins go back to the distant past, to the days **of Eternity**" (Micah 5,1).

Jesus is therefore the Son of God because no man can claim, in justice and in truth, to be his physical father. It was through God's direct intervention that Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb. That is why God alone is his Father: "... the Power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God... for nothing is impossible to God." (Luke 1,35-37)

Like most Messianic prophecies, that of Nathan was understood only after its accomplishment. So keep in mind as a principle, that a prophecy is only understood when it takes place in time. Those who do not understand the prophecies are those who refuse to interpret them according to God, wanting them to be fulfilled according to them. Also, the fault of the Jews is to have refused Jesus because He did not match their nationalist and military aspirations. "My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not my ways!", said the Lord to them (Isaiah 55,8-9).

From Nathan's wonderful prophecy, let us remember that no one should build a material house for God. It is God who builds an Eternal Abode for all believers (2 Samuel 7,11), a spiritual Temple to gather His elect in Perpetual Happiness. Jesus already built this Eternal Temple: Himself... with his own.

7.5.5 David's grave sin

Chapters 11 and 12 recount David's double crime: adultery with Bathsheba, coupled with the premeditated and odious assassination of her husband Uriah the Hittite. David is reprimanded by Nathan and repents. Psalm 51 (50) was composed by him to ask forgiveness from God: "Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness, in your great tenderness... purify me from my sin..."

7.5.6 Amnon and Tamar

Amnon is David's eldest son. He fell in love with his niece Tamar, daughter of Absalom, David's third son (2 Samuel 3,2-3). By trickery, he raped her, then humiliated her by throwing her out. His brother Absalom had him assassinated, then runs away from David (2 Samuel 13 & 14).

7.5.7 Absalom usurps the kingdom of David

Chapters 15 to 19,5 tell us about Absalom's plots to dethrone his father. He seized the throne

momentarily and abused David's concubines.

7.5.8 Strong tensions between Israel and Judah

The sharp tensions between the North (Israel) and the South (Judah) appeared when David returned to the throne. The two regions disputed over the king (2 Samuel 19,41-20,2). The revolt of Sheba, a Benjamite (from the North), prepared for the scission between the two parts of the kingdom which took place forty years later (towards 931 BC). The cry of insubordination to David launched by Sheba will then be taken up by the rebels of Israel against Judah: "What share have we in David? ... To your tents Israel! Henceforth look after your own house, David!" (1 Kings 12,16)

The Israelite establishment of a kingdom resolved nothing, even exasperating the situation between them and poisoned their relations with neighboring peoples. The kings committed serious errors, abuses even. Samuel's warnings against them were justified by their behavior which, as revealed in the Books of Kings, will go from bad to worse. The words Samuel spoke to the community in 1 Samuel 8,10-18 came true: "When that day comes, you will cry out on account of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but on that day God will not answer you!"

7.5.9 The census

David's census of the people is considered as an impiety, because it meant putting his confidence in himself rather than in God, able, Him, to increase the population by taking care of its well-being. The mentality of the time brought any initiative back to God. So it was He who stirred David up against the Israelites and urged him to count them. But the First Book of Chronicles, written five centuries later, rectifies by specifying: "**Satan** rose against Israel and incited David to take a census of the Israelites." (1 Chronicles 21,1) So was it God or Satan who inspired David? Or was it just a desire from David who hoped to see the number of combatants in Judah greater than that of Israel, his adversary? Because this count disappointed the king: "David's heart misgave him for having taken a census of the people." (2 Samuel 24,10) Why? It was that the number of Israel's combatants exceeded that of Judah at David's service: 800,000 versus 500,000 according to 2 Samuel 24,29, yet 1,100,000 versus 470,000 only according to 1 Chronicles 21,5 which also adds: "Joab had found the king's command so distasteful that he had taken no census of Levi or of Benjamin." (1 Chronicles 21,6) Enough to make the king's heart tremble in the face of an evident surplus of enemies... not to mention the warlike tribes of Levi and Benjamin... not listed in the census!

Which of the two censuses are we to believe? Where is the historical truth? Did God inspire these two different texts? Yet another example that requires critical thinking and discernment. This text, written after David's disappointment, interprets the census as a curse.

This episode enables us to better understand why all the decisions that Moses and others made were considered, often wrongly, to come from God. It took time, and especially the Light of Jesus Christ, to distinguish what in the Scriptures was truly inspired by God. We can understand why Jesus said to those who rejected him: "You are from your father, the devil, and you prefer to do what your father wants" (John 8,44). The refusal to recognize Jesus as

Altar

the Messiah is never inspired by God, but by the devil (meditate 1 Corinthians 12,3).

8. Lesson 8 – 1 & 2 Kings – 1 & 2 Chronicles – Ezra – Nehemiah – Tobit – Judith – Esther – 1 & 2 Maccabees

8.1 The First Book of Kings

Read this book entirely then the points I refer you to:

King Solomon: David chose Solomon as successor before his death, thus putting an end to the intrigues concerning succession to the throne. The kingship returned to Adonias, the eldest (1 Kings 2,15-22).

Joab takes refuge at the Temple and seizes the horns of the altar; he was nevertheless killed on Solomon's orders for taking sides with Adonias (1 Kings 2,28-34). The corners of the altar of sacrifice were in the form of horns to allow the blood of sacrificed animals to shed (Exodus 27,2). Those who took refuge at the Temple and seized the horns of the altar, could not be captured and killed on the spot (attitude of Adonias 1 Kings 1,50-53). This custom was practiced for a long period among Christians, especially in Europe, where criminals sometimes, took refuge in churches without the risk of being caught by the police for as long as they remained there.

Construction of the Temple: 480 years after the exit of Egypt (about 960 BC), Solomon built the Temple out of Cedar and gold and transferred the Ark (1 Kings 6 to 8) into it. This Temple of Solomon is known as the "First Temple" of Jerusalem. It was destroyed about 400 years after by Nebuchadnezzar (in 586 BC). The "Second Temple" will be built in 515 BC.

The two columns of the Temple: at the entrance of the Temple, Solomon erected two columns: "Yakin" ("absolute knowledge", like in Arabic "yaqin" which also means knowledge with certitude), and "Boaz" ("Strength"; perhaps similar to Arabic "foulaz" which means "steel") (1 Kings 7,21). I emphasize this fact because it is important in the "mysticism" of some esoteric sects such as Freemasonry, and the Rosicrucians, which is a cult for "Gnosis", which means "Knowledge", the name of one of the 2 columns, symbol of the Temple that the Jews want to build in Jerusalem.

Solomon temple

The Queen of Sheba (Ethiopia: 1 Kings 10,1-13): the visit of this queen is important because Jesus refers to her later when speaking to the Jews who refused to believe in Him: "The Queen of the South (*a non-Jew*)" is the Queen of Ethiopia, South of Palestine, in Africa. She, a non-Jew, "on Judgment Day will rise up with this generation (*Jewish*) and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth **to hear** the wisdom of Solomon, and there is something (*among you*) greater than Solomon here (and you refuse to listen to Him)" (Matthew 12,42).

666 talents of gold: (1 Kings 10,14): "The weight of gold coming to Solomon in one year was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold". This number thus represents Solomon's empire in all its power and all its splendor. Modern Jews dream of establishing such a kingdom; Solomon is their example and the ideal Zionist Messiah whom they expect to enlarge their borders from the Nile to the Euphrates. This Zionist danger is a menace to the whole of humanity. It is why it was prophesied by John's Revelation under the symbol of the "Beast" whose number **666**, which is the "number of a **man**", refers to the weight of the gold that king Solomon received annually into his coffers (Revelation 13,18).

Disloyalty of Solomon: Solomon loved God... but "many foreign women" too, 1000 all in all... who "sway his heart to their own gods... He did what was displeasing to Yahweh... Yahweh was angry with Solomon... therefore said to him: '... I will tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants... I will leave your son one tribe (*Judah*) ..." (1 Kings 11,1-13) It is the schism which was announced between Israel and Judah.

Jeroboam, a northerner at the service of Solomon, revolted (because of the taxes demanded by Solomon from the northerners: 1 Kings 12,4). The prophet Ahijah announced to Jeroboam that he will be king over 10 tribes, but that God, as He Himself announced to Solomon, will leave one tribe to David's dynasty, "so that my servant David", says God, "may always have a lamp in my presence in Jerusalem" (1 Kings 11,29-36). This "Lamp" served for the coming of the Messiah from the line of David. This is why the kingdom of Judaea will be governed by a stable dynasty until the Babylonian invasion, while the northern kingdom will be marked by revolts, one king dethroning another by assassination, without a permanent dynasty.

The schism: (1 Kings 12) The separation between the two parties is the sign of failure for the attempt of establishing an Israeli kingdom. It took place around 930 BC, only 100 years after it had commenced with Saul.

Roboam, son of Solomon, was crowned king at Sichem, in the North. Then, the northern tribes said to him: "Your father gave us a heavy burden to bear; lighten your father's harsh tyranny now, and the weight of the burden he laid on us, and we will serve you." (1 Kings 12,1-4) Roboam answered foolishly: "My father made you bear a heavy burden, but I will make it heavier still." (1 Kings 12,14) This was not "an intervention of Yahweh" as explain the scribes, but rather a "non intervention", an abandonment, God having abandoned Roboam to his madness since He did not desire royalty (1 Kings 12,15). The Israeli reaction was immediate: it was the schism: "What share have we in David? etc. . . " (1 Kings 12,16) "And Israel has been separated from the House of David **until the present day**." (1 Kings 12,19) This text was therefore written by the scribes **after** the division.

The Northern tribes took the name of Israel because, being more numerous, they represented the Patriarch Jacob, father of the 12 tribes, named "Israel" by God (Genesis 32,29). Judah kept its name because the Messiah emanates from it. The founders of the current State of Israel, created in 1948, hesitated between the names of Israel and that of Judah. They ended up opting for "Israel", biblically better known.

The schism had a political aspect, and the other, religious:

The political schism resulted in that the Israelis chose Jeroboam as king of the North, whereas the Judaeans kept Roboam as king of the South. The religious schism was the consequence of the political split: "Jeroboam thought to himself, '. . . If this people continues to go up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem (*in the South*) to offer sacrifices, the people's heart will turn back again to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will put me to death.' So the king thought this over and then made two golden calves and told the people, 'You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, Israel: these brought you up out of the land of Egypt¡ . . . He set up the temple of the high places and appointed priests from ordinary families, who were not of the sons of Levi. . . and he went up to the altar. . . sacrificing to the calves he had made. . . " (1 Kings 12,26-33) Jeroboam thus became the example of impiety. He reigned from 931-910 BC.

The result of a king's request to Samuel (1 Samuel 8) was that there were two kingdoms and two sanctuaries. One after the other they were destroyed, kingdoms and sanctuaries: those of the North in 721 BC, 210 years after Jeroboam, and those of the South in 586 BC, 140 years later. The kingdom of the South, the longer-lasting, only endured around 450 years.

Both the kings of the North and of the South were infidels, each worse than the other, doing "what is displeasing to Yahweh" according to the biblical expression (1 Kings 16,30).

8.1.1 The Prophet Elijah

The worst of Israel's kings, in the North, was Ahab. He married a Sidonian, Jezebel, and worshipped her god, an idol (1 Kings 16,29-33). The prophet Elijah all of a sudden appears to prophecy against him. Elijah himself is from the north, from Tishbe. Note that Elijah prophesied a drought as punishment: "Neither dew nor rain" (1 Kings 17,1). This lasted three years and six months: one year, two years and a half year (1 Kings 18,1 / also see James 5,17). This period is often represented by the expression "a time, two times and half a time". It became symbolic and, to punish the wicked at the end of times, the two apocalyptic witnesses could too, but in another way, do as Elijah and "lock up (*symbolically*) the sky so that it does not rain as long as they are prophesying" (Revelation 11,6). Therefore, the spirit of Elijah manifests itself in the end of times. . . but few understand.

Notice that God appeared to Elijah with gentleness, in "the sound of a gentle breeze", "neither in the hurricane, nor in the earthquake" (1 Kings 19,9-12).

Principal sites of the monarchic period

Elijah had to flee to Sarepta, in Lebanon (currently Sarafand) to a non-Jew (1 Kings 17,7-24). Jesus presents this fact as an example to follow: one does not have to be a Jew to please God and to protect his prophets. "When they (*the Jews*) heard this everyone in the synagogue was enraged" against Jesus (Luke 4,25-30). Elijah chose Elisha as a successor (1 Kings 19,19-21).

The vineyard of Naboth (1 Kings 21,1-29) Keep this story in mind. It demonstrates the cruelty of Ahab and Jezebel and concretizes the warnings of Samuel, formerly, against the kings (1 Samuel 8,10-20). The misfortune announced by God on the house of Ahab will be realized later in the massacre of the whole family (2 Kings 9,6-10).

The prophet Micaiah This prophet's story is worthy of interest. We distinguish here between false prophets and a real prophet: 400 "prophets" -all false- agree to announce the triumph to the two Jewish kings. Only one, Micaiah, contradicts them all. The true prophet is always alone against everyone. Admire the **ironic** attitude of Micaiah: "March and conquer. Yahweh will. . . ", when he knew well that the king will fall (1 Kings 22,15). The king understood the irony: "'How often must I put you on oath to tell me nothing but the truth in the Name of Yahweh¿ Then Micaiah spoke: 'I have seen all Israel scattered on the mountains like sheep without a shepherd. . . " (1 Kings 22,17). People want to know the truth, but if it is not convenient to them, they refuse it at their own expense. . .

Formerly, there were Jewish institutes in Palestine to become a prophet, like Christian seminaries to become a priest. But real prophets are in no need for these schools and are chosen by God outside these human institutions, as is the case with all Biblical prophets.

Compare the arrogance of the false prophet Sedecias who dared to strike Micaiah, with the resigned attitude of the latter. We recognize false prophets by their arrogance, "every tree can be told by its own fruit" says Jesus (Luke 6,43-45). Micaiah's attitude (1 Kings 22,24-25) is comparable to that of Jesus in face of the high priest's servant who had slapped him (John 18,22-23).

A true prophet has no need to consult God through Urim and Tummim as the Levite priests did. This custom, fortunately, no longer officially exists. Only unbalanced persons practice it. When God chooses a prophet, He manifests Himself to him. To consult the Lord, we do not need to flip a coin heads or tails (Urim-Tummim), to receive His good council. God always responds to true believers who know how to grasp His language in their hearts (read Matthew 7,7-11 / 1 John 3,21-22). Also, compare the attitude of false prophets who, to consult God, "go into an ecstasy" (types of incantations and euphoric gestures which make them delirious: see 1 Samuel 10,5), with the sobriety of Micaiah, who did not need to make a scene to contact God and reveal that the Syrians would triumph over the Jews.

This Micaiah, from the North, is not to be confused with Micah, whose book is among the Books of the Prophets, a Judaean from the south, and lived 150 years later.

From 1 Kings, two historical points are to be retained:

1. The construction (useless) of the first Temple by Solomon,
2. The schism due to the tension between the Jews. This signifies the failure of the Israeli kingship as predicted by God and his prophets.

8.2 The Second Book of Kings

This book is important from a historical point of view; it recounts the central event which marked the history of the Israeli "nation": the deportation to Assyria and Babylon. It is the realization of the threat of Moses who warned the Jews that, in case of infidelity, they "will be torn from the land which they are entering to make their own." (Deuteronomy 28,62-63) The prophets you will encounter in the Books of the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc...) also predicted this event as punishment.

Read this book carefully, without tiring yourself in remembering the names of all the kings you will encounter. Then read my explanations.

8.2.1 Elijah is taken up to Heaven

Elijah is the second biblical character who evades physical death. The first was Enoch (Genesis 5,24). Therefore, we will not find Elijah's tomb on earth (2 Kings 2,11-18).

Elisha succeeds Elijah spiritually. Note with what force and what contempt he addresses the king of the North, as well as his desire to consult God on the soft sounds of the lyre (2 Kings 3,14-15): No Urim-Tummim, no delirium. Music uplifts the soul when it is harmonious. The satanic plan employed by the agents of the "Beast of Revelation" in these end times aims to draw believers away from God through hyper, raucous music, whose rowdy rhythms literally destroy the human soul. David too, praised God to the sound of music; all his psalms are chanted hymns.

Elishah did miracles like Elijah: the miraculous production of oil (2 Kings 4,1-7), the resurrection of a dead child (2 Kings 4,33-37): notice the number 7, symbol of perfection. The cure of the Syrian officer (2 Kings 5,14) is reported by Jesus to confound the racist Jews (Luke 4,27). Also remark the number 7 (2 Kings 5,10). This washing in the River Jordan symbolizes baptism.

I point out to you a fact of bilocation: Elishah, from afar, is nevertheless present: he saw his servant, Gehazi, swindling Naaman's money (2 Kings 5,20-27).

One last important point to know about Elijah to understand what Jesus said about him. God had said through the prophet Malachi: "Know that I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before my day comes, that great and terrible day. He shall turn the hearts of fathers toward their children and the hearts of children toward their fathers..." (Malachi 3,23-24) Henceforth, the Jews expected to see Elijah to come in person **before** the Messiah appeared. And yet, the Apostles saw Elijah appear with Moses **after** the coming of Jesus and were astonished. Jesus explained to them that this prophecy was about John the Baptist (Matthew 17,1-13). In fact, when Gabriel announced to Zechariah about John's birth, he says to him, "With **the spirit and power of Elijah**, he (*John*) will go before him (*Jesus*) to turn the hearts of fathers toward their children... preparing for the Lord a people fit for him." (Luke 1,17) So it was not about Elijah the person, since this envoy precedes the Messiah with "the spirit" of Elijah, this same spirit which formerly "had rested on Elishah" (2 Kings 2,15). Elijah appeared during the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17) to reveal to us that Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled with John the Baptist (see Matthew 11,10). Compare Elijah's force against Ahab and Jezebel with that of John the Baptist against Herod and Herodia (Matthew 14,3-4). It is the same spirit that spoke with force and prophesied with courage against the great and powerful unjust of this world. This spirit of witnessing against the wicked reappears in John's Book of Revelation, prescribed for the Pagans at the end of times (Revelation 10,11).

Chronology of the biblical Kings (2 Kings 14 to 25)

JUDAH		ISRAEL		PROPHETS		HISTORICAL EVENTS			ASSYRIA
Uzziah	781	Jéroboam II	784						
				Amos(750)				745	
		Zechariah	743	Hosea(743)					
	738	Menahem	738	Isaiah(740)	740	Tiglath-Pileser invades Israel			Tiglath-Pileser (Pul)
Jotham	733	Pekahiah	737	Micah(740)					
Ahaz		Pekah	732		735	Coalition between Razon(Syria) & Pekah against Ahaz who seeks Pul's help		726	Shalmaneser
		Hoshea							
		Royalty is no longer	721		721	Sargon II takes over Samaria		722	Sargon II
	716					**DEPORTATION OF THE NORTH**			
Hezekiah								705	Sennacherib
	687								
Manasseh								681	Esarhaddon
	647			Zephaniah				668	Assurbarnipal
Amon	640			(640-609)					
Josiah				Jeremiah (637-587)	622	Discovery of the book of the Law (2K 23,25)	625	**BABYLONE**	
					612	Fall of Nineveh		Nebupolassar	621
	609	Jehoahaz		Nahum(612)	609	Battle of Meggido(Necho beats Josiah)			
Jehoiakim				Habakkuk (605-595)	605	Carchemish (Nabucha. Beats Necho)	605		606 *End of the assyrian empire*
	598	Jehoiachin			598	Jehoiachin deported to Babylon			
Zedekiah				Ezekiel(597)		1rst DEPORTATION with Ezekiel		Nebuchadnezzar	
	587	Gedaliah		Obadiah(587)	587	**DEPORTATION OF THE SOUTH**			
Royalty is no longer						Destruction of the Temple			
				Daniel					**PERSE**
				Isaiah(ch40-55)		**EXILE TO BABYLONE**		*End of the babylonian empire*	555 Cyrus
					538	Cyrus' edict			
						Return of the jews to Palestine			529
			520	Haggai					522
				Zechariah (520-518)	515	Reconstruction of the Temple			Darius
				Isaiah (ch.56-66)					485
				Malachi(445)	445	Nehemiah rebuilds the walls of Jerusalem			
					398	Ezra			
				Joel(350)					*End of the persian empire*
				Jonah(336)			333	**GREECE** Alexander	

Chronology of the Biblical Kings (2 Kings 14 to 25).

With Elijah and Elishah, we are in around 850 BC. We will move on to chapter 17 of 2 Kings, making a leap of 120 years to see the two deportations: first, that of the North (Israel), then that of the South (Judaea).

8.2.2 The Deportation of the North (2 Kings 17-19)

In 721 BC (date to remember), Hoshea, "the king of Assyria invaded the whole country (*Israel*) and, coming to Samaria, laid siege to it... Hoshea captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria... This happened because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh... made idols of cast metal for themselves, the two calves... They made their sons and daughters pass through fire (*holocaust to the idols*) ..." (2 Kings 17,5-17).

Not only were the Israelites deported, but in their place Hoshea "brought people from Babylon... and settled them in the towns of Samaria" (2 Kings 17,24). This foreign presence became the cause of accrued dissension between the Jews of Judaea and Samaritans, who the Judaeans, secularly, despised and did not consider as Jews: "What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?", the Samaritan woman replies to Jesus eight centuries after this deportation. The Gospel explains that "Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans." (John 4,7-9)

The prophet Isaiah (a Judaean) is a contemporary of this deportation. Sennacherib, the son and the successor of Hoshea, "attacked the fortified towns of **Judah** and captured them." (2 Kings 18,13) Even Jerusalem was threatened (2 Kings 18,17) and Hezekiah, the king of Judaea, asked for Egypt's aid (2 Kings 18,21-24). In front of the persistent threats, Hezekiah had recourse to the advice of the prophet Isaiah who reassured him (2 Kings 19,1-7) by his prophecy against Sennacherib, the scornful (2 Kings 19,20-31). He declared that he "will not enter Jerusalem" (2 Kings 19,32-34). However, it would be Babylon -150 years later- that will invade Judaea, as Isaiah had prophesied to Hezekiah (2 Kings 20,12-19). This is the first mention of the Babylonian empire that succeeded the Assyrian empire after having destroyed it in the battle of Carchemish (mentioned in 2 Chronicles 35,20).

This prophet Isaiah is the one whose book is found among the Books of the Prophets. In his book we find the words of malediction he had pronounced against the Judaeans, but which the scribes of 2 Kings would not report, sufficing themselves with what flatters the Judaeans: "A sinful nation, a people weighed down with guilt, a breed of wrongdoers, perverted sons... Your land is desolate, your towns burned down, your fields—strangers lay them waste before your eyes..." (Isaiah 1,4-7) This is the Babylonian invasion already predicted by Isaiah to Hezekiah (2 Kings 20,12-19).

All the prophets mentioned in the part of the Books of the Prophets of the Bible exist from this period until approximately 350 years later, passing by the invasion of the South (Judaea) by the Babylonians, whose contemporary will be the prophet Jeremiah who prophesied it.

8.2.3 The Deportation of the South (2 Kings 24,10-25,21)

King Josiah made religious reforms to avoid the punishment. He made reparations to the Temple and removed the statues of Baal (2 Kings 22,3-7). Note that within the Temple there was the "sacred pole (*phallus*)", as well as the sacred prostitutes (2 Kings 23,4-7). Idolatry and the sacrifice of children were also practiced (2 Kings 23,8-14). Josiah's religious reforms extended until the Temple of Samaria, the old kingdom of the North (2 Kings 23,15).

Despite all Josiah's reforms, he was defeated and killed by the army of Pharaoh Neko in Megiddo (609 BC). The prophets Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk were contemporaries of this period.

Main sites of Judaea under the late monarchy.
The broken line indicates the kingdom fief borders toward the end of VIIth century AD, in the time of king Josiah.

In order to understand their books, you must place them in their time and understand the circumstances in which they prophesied.

The battle of Megiddo (2 Kings 23,29-30), so briefly reported by the scribes (obviously embarrassed by the defeat of this king, pious as he was), must be retained and well understood. War broke out between the weaker Assyria and the powerful Babylon which attacked it. Egypt wanted to help the Assyrians. Josiah tried to prevent the Pharaoh from going to the aid of the Assyrians. He desired their defeat because they were occupying the North of the country (Samaria) and presented a danger to the Judaeans. He did not think that the Babylonians were to be feared. He was mistaken. Josiah and the Israelis believed they could overcome Pharaoh's army, God being with them because of the religious reforms. But this was not the case. The defeat of Megiddo demoralized the Judaeans and Jeremiah composed a lamentation on this subject. This battle is better described in 2 Chronicles 35,25. Weakened, Judaea became an easy prey for the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar.

In 586 BC, the Babylonians entered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple (the 1st Temple built by Solomon). The most important Judaeans were deported in their turn (2 Kings 25,11-12) ... with the 2 columns of the Temple (2 Kings 25,16) 135 years after the Israeli deportation, as Isaiah predicted (2 Kings 20,16-18 / Isaiah 5,13 and 39,1-8).

Jeremiah prophesied that this exile was to last 70 years: this famous prophecy is to be kept in mind (2 Chronicles 36,21 / Jeremiah 25,11). Note that the deportation took place in two stages: a first deportation in 598 BC (2 Kings 24,10-16), followed by a second, eleven years later (2 Kings 25,1-21). The Temple was destroyed during the second deportation (587 – 586 BC).

8.3 The Books of Chronicles

These two books were written after the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile which lasted 70 years. Back in Palestine, the scribes wrote a summary of all the history which preceded this return from Adam until the edict of Cyrus, the king of Persia, who toppled the Babylonian empire. Cyrus allowed the exiled to return to their countries. These exiled were not only Jews, but also other peoples of the regions vanquished by Nabuchadnezzar. Each group could return to its land of origin and rebuild its temple. This historical summary is found in the two Books of "Chronicles", a word which means "historical sequence of events".

Therefore, you will find in 1 & 2 Chronicles the essentials of what was recounted. Read them quickly until chapter 33 of the second book. The 3 final chapters (2 Chronicles 34 / 35 / 36) deserve to be read attentively. Keep in mind what follows:

8.3.1 The prophetess Hulda

She announces the destruction of Judah despite Josiah's reforms. But because this king was pious, he will die. So, "your eyes will not see all the disasters that I mean to bring on this place and on those who live in it" (2 Chronicles 34,22-28 / 2 Kings 22,14-20).

8.3.2 Megiddo and Carchemish

2 Chronicles 35,19-25 recounts these battles in more detail than 2 Kings 23,29-30, which only speaks of Megiddo, very briefly, saying nothing of Carchemish, probably because this battle had not yet taken place (it occurred in 605 BC, 4 years after Megiddo), or because the writer had not seized its importance for the Jews.

The 4 battles to remember

On the contrary, the writer (or writers) of Chronicles had the time to reflect up till the return from exile, and to establish the link between the events that had occurred.

This is why the battle of Carchemish is mentioned in 2 Chronicles. It is important because it puts an end to the Assyrian empire and consecrates the Babylonian empire by the triumph of Nabuchadnezzar over Neko in 605 BC. It was the Assyrians' last chance; they lost it in spite of the assistance they received from Pharaoh Neko's Egyptian army.

For a better understanding, I must speak to you of another battle that preceded Carchemish, that of Nineveh in 612 BC. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria on the east bank of the Tigris river. It was invaded and destroyed by the Babylonian king Nabopolassar, father of Nabuchadnezzar in 612 BC. The Assyrian king Assourbanipal was dead, leaving his country weakened. The Assyrians thus had recourse to Egypt to liberate their land and retake Nineveh. They organized with Neko in Carchemish, but were definitively defeated in 605 BC, 7 years after the fall of Nineveh.

The prophet Nahum is a contemporary of these events and announced the fall of Nineveh. His book is devoted to this Assyrian defeat whom he did not like for having invaded Samaria and threatened Judaea: "From you (*Nineveh*) has sprung one who plots evil against Yahweh" (Nahum 1,11). He announces, "Woe to the city soaked in blood (*Nineveh*), full of lies, stuffed with booty, whose plunderings know no end!" (Nahum 3,1) ... "A destroyer (*Nabuchadnezzar*) advances against you." (Nahum 2,2).

The Jews hoped for much good for them after the fall of Nineveh. It was, on the contrary, the tragedy of Megiddo. The prophet Habakkuk aspired to see the deliverance of Judaea and rejoiced at the idea of seeing the fall of the Assyrians under the "blows" of the Chaldaeans (Babylonians): "... For I am doing something in your own days that you would not believe... For now I am stirring up the Chaldaeans, that fierce and fiery people who march miles across country to seize the homes of others (*the Assyrians*)" (Habakkuk 1,5-6). Habakkuk did not suspect that the Chaldaeans would later seize Judea too and destroy the Temple of Jerusalem. The prophet Zephaniah too, rejoiced at Nineveh's destruction and announced that God "will raise his hand against the north and bring Assyria down in ruins; He will make Nineveh a waste, dry as the desert..." (Zephaniah 2,13) This is what happened in 612 BC.

It is necessary to retain these 4 battles in order to understand the prophets later on:

1. **612: Nineveh:** First defeat of the Assyrians. Neko then decided to help them.

2. **609: Megiddo:** Josiah tries to stop Neko, but was vanquished and killed.
3. **605: Carchemish:** Defeat of the Assyrians and Neko. End of the Assyrian empire.
4. **586: Jerusalem:** The Babylonians invade Jerusalem and destroy the Temple.

The 70 years of exile announced by Jeremiah: Retain this prophecy (2 Chronicles 36,21) which will be useful to understand the prophecies of Daniel (Daniel 9,1-2 and 9,24).

The edict of Cyrus (2 Chronicles 36,22-23) is to be retained. It is with this edict that the Book of Ezra commences (Ezra 1,1-4). This book, with that of Nehemiah and Chronicles, was written after the return from exile to recount the history of the return of the Jews from Babylon, of the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra), and the wall that surrounded the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah).

8.4 The Book of Ezra

This book relates the stages and difficulties of the rebuilding of the Temple "on its old site, despite their fear of the surrounding peoples (*Palestinians and Samaritans*)" (Ezra 3,3). Read it and return to my explanations.

The edict of Cyrus, king of Persia (Iran), inaugurates the book (Ezra 1,1-4). This edict can be compared to the Balfour declaration, the British Foreign Minister who, in 1917, promised a homeland to the Jews in Palestine, without however, allowing the rebuilding of the Temple for the 3rd time (the 3rd Temple). The second Temple was rebuilt towards 515 BC with Ezra, and was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 2,2) were on the list of Zionists who returned from exile, some preferring to remain in Babylon. Zerubbabel is the son of Shealtiel, of the royal family, and heir to David's throne, hence his importance. Matthew mentions him in his Gospel as an ancestor of the Messiah (Matthew 1,12). Jeshua was a priest. Both encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple. This is why these two persons are important and have spiritual **symbolic** valor, being two witnesses of the rebuilding of the Temple.

The Samaritans wanted to contribute to the Temple's restoration, but, being from the North, were considered "enemies of Judah and Benjamin", the two tribes of the South (Ezra 4,1-3). Therefore, their assistance was rejected.

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah, whose writings are part of the Books of the Prophets, are from that period (Ezra 5,1). They pushed for the reconstruction of the Temple. You can already read the small book of Haggai. It is only two chapters. You will therefore be in the mood to understand it. Read chapter 4 of Zechariah too; he recounts his vision of the two olive-trees, identifying them with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the builders of the Temple. But John's Revelation takes up this vision to reveal that these two olive-trees are the two witnesses of Revelation whose mission is to build the **Spiritual** Temple at the end of times (Revelation 11,3-4). The material Temple, we know, never interested the Lord.

The second Temple, more modest than the first which was made of Cedar and gold, disappointed "many priests... who were then old and had seen with their own eyes (*the luxury of*) the earlier Temple (*of Solomon destroyed by Nabuchadnezzar*) ... wept aloud". But the new generation "raised their voices in shouts of joy" at the sight of this sanctuary (Ezra 3,12). It was completed in 515 BC.

This second Temple, neglected along the centuries and desecrated (see 1 Maccabees 1,41-47) was enlarged and embellished by king Herod. It took 46 years of work for this. It is this Temple that Jesus knew and whose destruction He prophesied (John 2,13-21 / Matthew 24,1-2)

Ezra's Racism:: Note the zionist mentality in Ezra 9,12. Ezra requires the Jews "not be concerned for their (*the Palestinians*) peace or their prosperity. . . "; compare with the lesson that Jesus gave to the Jews: "Love your enemies (*non-Jews still considered enemies by the Jews*) . . . Treat others as you would like people treat you. . . " (Luke 6,27-35).

The saved "Remnant": ((Ezra 9,8) This topic of a "small remnant" of Jews saved after the fall of the Israeli kingdom is common in biblical language and prophetic. God strikes the whole people, but a remnant survives to continue the spiritual mission of the Israelites (Isaiah 4,3 / 10,20-22 / Romans 9,27). The purpose of this remnant, their sacred mission, is to welcome the Messiah at the time of his Advent. It is a small number indeed, a small remnant who followed and supported Jesus. The majority has persecuted Him.

8.5 The Book of Nehemiah

Nehemiah is a notable of the Jewish families who had not returned from exile. He was in Susa (in the South of Iran) and had his access to the king, being in charge of the royal wines (Nehemiah 2,1). The story takes place in 445 BC, more than sixty years after the return from exile and the edict of Cyrus. The second Temple was already built, but the lamentable situation of the Jews in Palestine and the state of the wall of Jerusalem "in ruin and its gates burnt down" (*after the passage of Nabuchadnezzar*), saddened Nehemiah who wanted to help "the remnant rescued from captivity" (Nehemiah 1,1-4) and rebuild the Wall (Nehemiah 2,7-8).

This book recounts the history of the return of Nehemiah to Palestine, with the support of the Persian king, with the aim of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Read it.

8.6 Books of Toby, Judith and Esther

These books inform us about some narrations of the exiled. They are easy to read. Toby and Judith are not found in the Hebrew Bible.

8.7 First and Second Books of Maccabees

The Books of Maccabees report a part of the history of the two empires that followed the Persian Empire, namely the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire.

You have gotten to know the history of the Israelite community under the three empires: Assyrian (deportation of the North), Babylonian (deportation of the South) and Persian (return from exile). The last news given to us by the Book of Nehemiah on the rebuilding of the ancient walls of Jerusalem was around 445-450 BC. The Books of Maccabee give us information on the events that took place in Palestine and in the region of the Middle East from the year 175 BC until 135 BC, so a period of about 40 years. The Bible leaves us with no news of what occurred between 450 and 175 BC, a period of 275 years.

These two books are not found in the Hebrew Bible. They speak of the same events, 2 Maccabees is almost a repetition of 1 Maccabees, and brings back the story of the resistance of the Jews to the Greek empire, under the leadership of the family of Judah Maccabee, hence the name of the two books. The main Greek king was Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name you must remember.

Read the two Books of Maccabees followed by my explanations.

8.7.1 1 Maccabees

Alexander the Great: The book starts in mentioning Alexander the Great, son of Philip who "defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, whom he succeeded as ruler" (1 Maccabees 1,1). This victory of Alexander in the battle of Abeles (Iraq) in 331 BC, put an end to the Persian-Medes empire which had lasted approximately 200 years. The Greek Empire commenced with Alexander.

Antiochus Epiphanes: he comes from the successors of Alexander, "a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes... he became king in the year 137 of the kingdom of the Greeks", which corresponds to the year 175 BC (1 Maccabees 1,10). He wanted to spread Greek culture among the Jews, "and a number of the people eagerly approached the king, who authorized them to practice the pagan observances. So they built a gymnasium... disguised their circumcision, etc..." (1 Maccabees 1,13-15) A great number of Jews adopted the Greek way of life (1 Maccabees 1,43-52).

"The Abomination of desolation": Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple and placed in it the statue of Zeus, "the Abomination of desolation" (1 Maccabees 1,54). Daniel the prophet foresaw this "Abomination" about 400 years before, prophesying that "on the wing of the Temple will be the disastrous Abomination" (Daniel 9,27 / Matthew 24,15). At the time of the Maccabees, the Jews believed that this Abomination was the idol of Zeus in the Temple. But Jesus, speaking of the end of times, brings back this prophecy of Daniel to say that it was not fulfilled under Antiochus Epiphanes, but be fulfilled at the end of times, when the subjects of the Antichrist will occupy Jerusalem and mislead many disciples of Jesus (Matthew 24,15). Towards the end of Antiochus Epiphanes' life, the Jews destroyed this "Abomination" (1 Maccabees 6,6-7).

King Alexander Balas, a Pagan, installed Jonathan as high priest of the Jews. This latter accepted! Now, he should have refused to be installed by a Pagan who knows not God. This is how religious worship was practiced... (1 Maccabees 10,15-21)

Alliance of the Jews with the Romans (1 Maccabees 8,1-31 / 12,1-23 / 14,16-24 / 15,15-21). It is the beginning of the Roman Empire that will grow. It is the custom of the Zionists to ally themselves with a powerful nation to establish themselves in Palestine as a nation. In the 20th century, they allied first with England, then with the United States of America for the same purpose.

8.7.2 2 Maccabees

2 Maccabees is not the continuation of the first. It talks of the same events contained in the first, but stops at the defeat of Nikanor. This represents about fifteen years of history, the contents of chapters 1 to 7 of the first book. No mention at all is made of the Romans.

Remember the five empires that followed:

1. Assyrian,
2. Babylonian,
3. Persia – Medes,
4. Greek,
5. Roman.

The 5 empires

In knowing them, you will better understand the prophecies, like for example, that of Daniel announced to Nabuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king, that the Messiah will appear in the third empire after his (Daniel 2,36-45). He was talking of the Roman Empire, under which Jesus effectively was born.

8.8 Recommendation

We recommend the book "THE BIBLE UNEARTHED": the recent archaeological revelations by 2 Israeli archaeologists: Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, 2001. Originally published by "The Free Press", A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. (New York, USA).

These two archaeologists demonstrate scientifically, the non-historical basis of the alleged

grandeur of the Israeli and Judaean kingdoms, as well as the Temple of Jerusalem.

9. Lesson 9 – The 7 Books of Wisdom

9.1 The Book of Job

First read my explanations, then the book.

Formerly, and up to this day still some believers, believe that wealth, good health and children are due to God's blessing, and that the contrary is a result of a curse from God on the sinner. Any misfortune was interpreted as divine punishment.

Now, Job is a righteous man and a good believer, rich, healthy, wealthy, and blessed with an abundant progeny. He is then exposed to an avalanche of misfortunes: in one go he loses his possessions and his children, but without revolting against God: "'Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I shall return. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh!' In all this misfortune Job committed no sin nor offered any insult to God" (Job 1,20-22).

These misfortunes are not due, as it was thought, to the sins of Job, but to the devil who wanted to strike him down, in order to push him to distance himself from God and curse Him. This is the great lesson from this book: God can permit the devil to put a righteous and faithful person to the test to confound demons who have not been able to persevere in the selfless love of God. It is like a man sure of the love and fidelity of his wife, who allows a schemer to court her to confuse him with her evident faithfulness to her husband.

In fact, the Bible says that the devil asks God's authorization to test Job: "'I warrant you, he will curse you to your face!' 'Very well!' Yahweh said to Satan, 'all he has is in your power. But keep your hands off his person.'" (Job 1,11-12) (The word "Satan" means "enemy", the devil being the enemy of mankind).

Job, having shown himself admirably faithful after the test, God says to Satan: "'Job is a sound and honest man who fears God and shuns evil. His life continues blameless as ever; in vain you provoked me to ruin him' ... Satan replied, 'stretch out your hand and lay a finger on his bone and flesh; I warrant you, he will curse you to your face!' 'Very well!' Yahweh said to Satan, 'he is in your power. But spare his life.'" (Job 2,3-6)

The devil then "struck Job with malignant ulcers from the sole of his foot to the top of his head." (Job 2,7) His wife pushed him to curse God but Job put her back in place: "'That is how foolish woman talk, if we take happiness from God's hand, must we not take sorrow too?' And in all this misfortune Job uttered no sinful word." (Job 2,9-10)

Therefore, Job triumphed in the trials as far as his flesh was concerned.

Three friends of Job visit him in his misfortune in order to speak to him and invite him to recognize that he sinned to deserve all these misfortunes. Their remarks are reported poetically and, each, in his turn, addresses Job to try to convince him of being a sinner. Their tone is often ironic, even sarcastic and malicious. That only increased Job's pain, as you will notice reading the text. But Job too, did not lack finesse in his answers and knew how to put his interlocutors in place and affirm his innocence: "To one so weak, what a help you are, for the arm that is powerless, what a rescuer! What excellent advice you give the unlearned...", Job replied ironically to one of the three, adding: "But who are they aimed at, these speeches of yours, and what spirit is this that comes out of you? (*To imply that it is not the spirit of God*)

... Far from ever admitting you to be in the right (*admitting to having sinned*), I will maintain my innocence to my dying day." This was Job's constant attitude (Job 26,1 to 27,5).

To one of the three friends who came to confuse Job by claiming to know the secrets of God and his reasons for acting against him, God replied: "I burn with anger against you and your two friends, for not speaking truthfully about me as my servant Job has done." (Job 42,7) "Yahweh restored Job's fortunes... More than that, Yahweh gave him double what he had before..." (Job 42,10-17)

Read this book now, understanding that its morality is that God permits the righteous to be tested. This aims to upset the mentality of believers similar to that of Job's three friends. And aims above all, to prepare believers to understand the sufferings of the Messiah to come, the Just Man par excellence, who suffered not for his sins, but because of the sins of others and their numerous crimes.

9.2 The Book of Psalms

At this stage, it is not necessary to read the whole book at once. I will talk to you of some psalms and you can refer to them as I present them to you.

This book is a collection of the most important psalms. A psalm is a biblical prayer sung with a musical instrument, which Christians call "canticles" or "hymns" and that they address to God, to Christ or the Blessed Virgin.

Most of the psalms were composed by David on different occasions. These are often mentioned: "Psalm 3: Psalm of David. When he was fleeing from his son Absalom", etc... Some psalms are about Solomon (Psalm 72), of Asaph (Psalms 73-83), of the sons of Korah (Psalm 84), etc... The authors of some psalms are unknown.

There are, all in all, 150 psalms. The Greek Bible divides psalm 9 into two psalms, 9 and 10. This somewhat complicates the numeration starting from psalm 11 which becomes 11 (10), (10) being the numeration in the Hebrew Bible. On the contrary, Psalm 147 joins the two Psalms 146 and 147. Therefore, you will always find 150 psalms in all the Bibles.

A word now on the main psalms: the most important are the Messianic Psalms, ie those which speak of the Messiah to come. They are the main ones that I will present to you.

9.2.1 Psalm 2

This psalm presents the Messiah as the sacred king by God and as his son: "Kings on earth rising in revolt, princes plotting against Yahweh and His Anointed (*the Messiah, 'Anointed' with divine perfume by God, as the kings of the earth were anointed with perfumed oil during their coronation*) ... The One whose throne is in heaven sits laughing, Yahweh derides them. Then angrily he addresses them, in a rage he strikes them with panic, 'This is my king, installed by me on Zion, my holy mountain.' Let me proclaim Yahweh's decree (*it is the Messiah who speaks in anticipation*); he has told me, 'You are my son, today I have become your father. Ask and I will give you the nations for your heritage'".

The author of this Messianic psalm is unknown. The Messiah is announced therein as king of all nations, God giving them to him "as heritage". The devil tempted Jesus, promising to give him **political** empire over the world (Matthew 4,8-10). Jesus refused because his Kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18,36). In this psalm, the power promised to the Messiah must be understood spiritually, not politically as the devil presents it to Jesus.

The Jews too, wanted (and still) to understand the royalty of the Messiah politically. This is why they resisted (and still) Jesus; they persecuted him, him and his Apostles. St Peter applies

this psalm to Jesus and denounces “Herod and Pontius Pilate with the pagan nations and the peoples of Israel” to be this conspiracy fomented by "the kings of the earth" of which this psalm speaks, “making an alliance against the Lord and against his Anointed” (Acts 4,25-28).

The Messiah’s royalty cannot be political since God says: “**I Myself** have anointed **my** King on my Holy Mountain”. Now, the royalty in Israel, as we saw in 1 Samuel 8, was not wanted by God: it was even condemned by Him. This is indeed the spiritual kingdom in this psalm, that which was established by Jesus, the Christ-King chosen by God to be the spiritual Sovereign of the whole world despite all those who resist him.

9.2.2 Psalm 22

The Messiah is described therein as suffering, dying, but resurrected after the ordeal. Jesus, on the cross, pronounced the beginning of this Messianic psalm to attribute it to Himself and to confuse the Jews who saw in his crucifixion a sign of a malediction from God. The psalm begins with the expected Messiah saying: “Eli (*My God*)! Eli (*My God*)! Lema sabachthani (*Why have you forsaken me*)?” (Matthew 27,46). Some do not understand the underlying reasons why Jesus pronounced these words; they misinterpret believing that Jesus feels abandoned by God. The enemies of Jesus go so far to say that Jesus understood, on the cross, that God was cursing him. The Jews who crucified him believed that he was calling the prophet Elijah for help (Matthew 27,49). The truth is that this last cry of Jesus is prophetic; these last words are a light for those who want to see in it a prophetic accomplishment. For these are the words of Psalm 22 to which Jesus, even dying, refers us to confirm our faith in him. David, in this psalm, foresaw the Messiah dying surrounded by enemies. The psalm begins with the very words that Jesus, while dying, pronounced:

“**My God! My God! Why have you deserted me?** ... A pack of dogs surrounds me, a gang of villains closes me in, **they pierce me hand and foot** and leave me lying down in the dust of death... They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothes... (Psalm 22,1-19) ... The whole earth, from end to end, will remember and come back to Yahweh (Psalm 22,27) ... And my soul will live for Him (*these words indicate the resurrection of Jesus*), my children will serve Him... All this He has done.” (Psalm 22,30-31).

This psalm cannot be applied to David, its author. He did not die surrounded by enemies, hands and feet pierced.

This prophetic psalm is similar to chapter 53 of Isaiah which also predicts the sufferings, death and resurrection of the Messiah.

9.2.3 Psalm 110

This psalm introduces the Messiah to come as **king** and **priest** at the same time:

“Yahweh will force all your enemies under the sway of your **sceptre** in Zion (Psalm 110,2) ... Yahweh has sworn an oath which he will never retract, ‘You are a **priest** of the order of Melchizedek, for ever.’” (Psalm 110,4).

Neither the Messiah’s **royalty**, nor his **priesthood** revealed themselves as the Israelites imagined and practiced them. The Messianic royalty is not according to the political dynasty of David (which, moreover, was abolished with Nebuchadnezzar), and the messianic priesthood has nothing to do with that of Levi, since it was prophesied “according to the order of **Melchizedek**”, not according to the order of Levi. This signifies a radical change in Jewish worship, as Paul explains in chapters 5 to 7 of his letter to the Hebrews. Jesus, through his sacrifice, ended the Jewish sacrifices, priesthood and kingdom.

With the Apocalypse, a new era opens where all the **true** faithful of Jesus Christ will be "made a Kingdom of **priests**" (Revelation 1,6) as God intended from the start (Exodus 19,6), but without being understood. The sacerdotal heart is the one who is capable of compassion, of suffering with the innocent persecuted by the unjust, who comes to the defense of the poor unjustly accused and a witness for justice and truth by denouncing the identity of the Antichrist, the Beast of Revelation (Revelation 13,18), even at the price of his life. This is the sacerdotal sacrifice accepted by God.

The remaining psalms are hymns of praise to God, of recourse to his Omnipotence against an unjust enemy, or also recognition and thanksgiving for being saved. We get to know the psalms by praying them with the Holy Spirit who is in Jesus, and not according to a mentality of material or Zionist interest.

9.3 The Book of Proverbs

It entails proverbs of high morality which should be read from time to time to deepen one's spiritual life and to be enthusiastic in search of wisdom: "Wisdom calls aloud in the streets... (Proverbs 1,20) ... 'You ignorant people, how much longer will you cling to your ignorance? How much longer will mockers revel in their mocking and fools hold knowledge contemptible?' (Proverbs 1,22) ... My son, if you take my words to heart... you will discover the knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2,1-5)

Skim through it quickly the first time to get acquainted with it. Then keep coming back it to know it in depth and gain wisdom.

9.4 The Book of Ecclesiastes

It is the collection of the "Qoheleth", which in Hebrew means "the reader" in the assembly. Ecclesiastes comes from the Greek "ecclesia" which means "assembly". So they are words of wisdom said by a preacher in religious assemblies. The substance of its teaching is that everything repeats itself on earth. Whoever lives for this earth will only find monotony in it. We must conclude from this that Eternal life must be sought. It alone can satisfy man: "Vanity of vanities, Qoheleth says. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity! For all his toil, his toil under the sun, what does man gain by it?" (Ecclesiastes 1,2) All that we make materially has no other interest than for the time of our life "under the sun", it is really not worth the trouble that we give ourselves: "If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people", says Paul (1 Corinthians 15,19).

9.5 The Song of Songs

It is a dialogue of love between the Bridegroom (God) and his bride (the elect).

A striking point: the bride does not come from Israel, but from Lebanon: "Come from Lebanon, my promised bride, come from Lebanon, come on your way." (Song of Songs 4,8) Lebanon is often seen as the place from which Gods' chosen will arise. Ezekiel announces the triumph of the Cedar (symbol of Lebanon) on Mount Zion: "I", says God, "From the top of the Cedar, from the highest branch I will take a shoot and plant it myself on a very high mountain. I will plant it myself on the high mountain of Israel. It will sprout branches and bear fruit... I, Yahweh, have spoken, and I will do it." (Ezekiel 17,22-24) It is, indeed, from Lebanon that God opened St John's Revelation to explain it to the whole world and to bear much fruit.

The theme of the Bridegroom and the Bride is taken up again by the Book of Revelation. The Bride calls the Bridegroom: "Come! ... Amen, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22,17-20). You will understand all this later with the study of the Book of Revelation.

9.6 The Book of Wisdom

It is a book that urges us to the research and knowledge of God whose Wisdom is not like that of men: "'If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him... Let us test him with cruelty and with torture... Let us condemn him to a shameful death since he will be looked after—we have his word for it.' This is the way they reason, but they are misled, their malice makes them blind. They do not know the hidden things of God" (Wisdom 2,18-22). These words were said by the Jews regarding Christ on the cross (Matthew 27,41-43). This is not wisdom, but madness to speak so!

This book invites us to understand God's Wisdom and not be modeled after the false wisdom of men.

9.7 The Book of Ecclesiasticus

It was written by Ben Sira. It is the book of the Assembly (ecclesia in Greek), and not of the reader who reads or speaks in the assembly, as is the case with Ecclesiastes. So it is a book which is read as is in the assemblies, in the synagogue for example. It was not included in the Hebrew Bible, but was read in the synagogues in the past because of its high morality. Like the other Books of Wisdom, it invites us to get closer to God, to seek to know Him, to understand Him, despite all the difficulties, arming oneself with patience during tribulations, because this knowledge is worth all the pain that we go through to reach it:

"All wisdom is from the Lord (Ecclesiasticus 1,1) ... If you desire Wisdom, keep the commandments, and the Lord will convey her to you (Ecclesiasticus 1,26) ... My son, if you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for an ordeal (Ecclesiasticus 2,1) ... Whatever happens to you, accept it, and in the uncertainties of your humble state, be patient, since gold is tested in the fire, and chosen men in the furnace of humiliation." (Ecclesiasticus 2,4-5).

You have now contacted all the Books of Wisdom. They are worthy of being read and read again several times and you could read extracts from them every day of your life to nourish your soul by elevating it. I did nothing but point out to you the general guidelines, now it is your personal effort which will able you to reap the spiritual fruits of mature Wisdom in measure of where you apply it for the rest of your life to get to know God and his Messiah: "And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent," said Jesus (John 17,3).

For the moment, be content with this first reading that you have accomplished of the Books of Wisdom, and pursue the study of the Biblical Course with the Books of the Prophets.

10. Lesson 10 – The Four Greater Prophetic Books

10.1 Introduction

Now you have a certain knowledge of the historical framework of the people formed by God to welcome the Messiah, Jesus. You are thus in measure of understanding the prophets. Without this knowledge, no one can grasp the insinuations of these men sent by God to rectify the

continual deviations of the Israelites, deviations which **all** of us are exposed to. This renders the prophets' sayings valid to men of all times, if however, we are able to translate and adapt them to the historical context of the different times.

The study of the Prophetic Books gives a complementary aspect to the Historical Books. They reveal the **spiritual** sense of the events, the true designs -often hidden- of God. It is necessary to know how **to read between the lines** to understand the prophets and grasp the finesse of their insinuations. Living in a Zionist politicized environment, they often faced insurmountable difficulties in expressing the spiritual, anti-Zionist thoughts of God. They were persecuted and rejected most of the time, considered traitors to the "homeland" and to the kingdom; a homeland and a kingdom never desired by God. They were considered prophets only after their death, after having been persecuted while alive (read what Jesus says of this in Matthew 23,29-39).

The prophet is a spokesman of God. God manifests himself to the prophet, asking him to reveal his view, his advice or his judgements on the events and attitudes of men, particularly the responsible leaders (kings, priests). They are invited, under penalty of divine punishment, to yield to the divine thoughts and demands. It was mostly about renouncing the Zionist mentality (a morbid attachment to the exclusive possession of the Palestinian land and the Israeli empire). Jeremiah, for example, was persecuted, as you will see, for having said to the Jews to subject themselves to Nebuchadnezzar and for having announced the destruction of the Temple.

The core of the prophetic message pivots around two points:

1. The deportation as punishment for unfaithfulness,
2. The future sending of a savior (the Messiah) whom the Jews mistakenly imagined as a politico-military leader.

The Prophetic Books are the writings of the words and actions of the prophets who existed just before, during, and shortly after the deportation. They thus prophesied the exile, lived it, and announced the return from exile (after 70 years in exile) and the reconstruction of the Temple (the second).

This fact of the deportation has deeply bruised the Israelites' soul. The Jews were on the lookout for a solution to this tragedy they were going through, seeking the "liberation of Israel" (according to the prophetic expression). Along the centuries, the hope of liberation revolved around the person of the awaited Messiah, with extreme impatience and thirst. But this Messiah was to liberate the soul from sin, not the Jews from a political condition.

Before reading a prophet, **he must be placed in his historical context**: did he exist before, during, or after the Assyrian invasion of the North (Israel: 721 BC), the fall of Nineveh (612 BC), the battles of Megiddo, of Carchemish, the Babylonian invasion of the South (Judaea), the return from exile, the reconstruction of the Temple (515 BC)? These historical stages accompany the Prophetic Books. Keep them in mind.

The prophets in question in these books are to be distinguished from other prophets, like Elijah and Elisha, or still, the group of prophets mentioned in 1 Samuel 10,5-6. We do not have any written collections from this latter. We only know of them, what is reported in the Historical Books.

The prophets we are about to see (considered as "writer" prophets), existed over a period of approximately 300 years (750 to 450 BC). They are generally divided into two groups:

1. The 4 "Greater" prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.

2. The 12 "Lesser" prophets.

The first ones are known as "Greater" because their books are bigger than the "Lesser" Books of the 12 others, and not because of spiritual worthiness (compare Isaiah's 66 chapters to Joel's 4 chapters and Obadiah's single chapter).

Along with the 4 greater prophets, I will include, when studying Jeremiah, the Book of "Lamentations" of Jeremiah and the prophet "Baruch" whose smaller book comes after that of Jeremiah, being the disciple and secretary of this latter. The Book of Baruch is not found in the Hebrew Bible.

Certain Bibles (like the Bible of Jerusalem) add useful introductions to the Historical Books. They aid in knowing the time during which the prophet lived, and in understanding him better. It would be beneficial, later, if you get to know better one or two prophets. I suggest Jeremiah, who is very close to us psychologically, and to Jesus spiritually.

We begin the 4 greater prophets with Isaiah. As with all the Prophetic Books, read them only after my explanations.

10.2 Isaiah

Isaiah is a senior royal official. He largely influenced the events of his time. He was born around 765 BC. In the year 740, at the age of 25, he had a vision in which God entrusted him the difficult and courageous mission of announcing Israel's ruin, followed by Judah's, as punishment to the multiple infidelities of the Jews.

In chapter 6, Isaiah recounts his vision in which God asks: "Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" And Isaiah answers without hesitation, courageously: "Here I am, send me." It was necessary, of-course, to have a strong character so to accept such a painful and dangerous mission of denouncing the kings and powerful of the royal court. Jeremiah, like Moses, started by declining the divine offer (Jeremiah 1,6). It is not a light and pleasant load to reprimand the powerful, even on God's behalf; it is never done without persecution, unbearable most of the time. Isaiah's courage is admirable.

Read this 6th chapter; in it, God announces the deportation to the Jews: "Towns have been laid waste and deserted, houses left untenanted... Yahweh drives the people out. There will be a great emptiness in the country... only the stock remains. The stock is a holy seed." This stock is the "small remnant" of which I spoke, and who God saves to pursue his Messianic plan.

Isaiah predicted the exile more than once: "My people will go into exile, for want of perception" (Isaiah 5,13), but a remainder will survive to pursue the mission: "Those who **are left** of Zion and remain of Jerusalem shall be called holy" (Isaiah 4,3). This theme of a "**small remnant**" was first revealed by the prophet Amos who had a large spiritual influence over Isaiah (Amos 3,11-12 / 5,15). Amos preceded Isaiah by a short period. He was old and had already prophesied for almost 40 years when Isaiah began his mission.

Other than the deportation, Isaiah's most important prophecies concern the Messiah. I point out to you the most important:

10.2.1 "Immanuel" (Isaiah 7,14)

Isaiah declares to king Ahaz who wanted a son: "The Lord himself, therefore, will give you a sign. It is this: the maiden (*'almah' in Hebrew*) is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel." This name means: "God with us". This is a "sign" that God will give on his behalf (Isaiah 7,14).

To understand this prophecy, we should know the historical context in which it was proclaimed. Go back to 2 Kings 16. It is king Ahaz's question to which Isaiah addresses. At this time, Pekah (known as "son of Remaliah" in Isaiah 7,9) was king of Israel and Razon king of Syria (Aram: Isaiah 7,1). The king of Assyria (Tiglath-Pileser, called "Pul": 2 Kings 15,19) threatened the whole region. Razon and Pekah wanted to engage Ahaz with them against Pul, but he refused. He offered his only son, heir to the throne, in sacrifice to the idols (2 Kings 16,3) to ward off fate. He therefore no longer had an heir, and the succession of the dynasty was threatened.

Razon and Pekah decided to invade Judaea to dethrone Ahaz and place a king on Judaea's throne ("the son of Tabeel" see Isaiah 7,6), who would ally with them against Pul (Isaiah 7,1-2). Ahaz was afraid: "The heart of the king and the hearts of the people shuddered as the trees. . . " (Isaiah 7,2) But God sent Isaiah to Ahaz to calm him by assuring that "these two smoldering stumps of firebrands" (Isaiah 7,4), Razon and Pekah, will not succeed in their venture against Judaea because "the capital of Aram is Damascus, the head of Damascus, Razon, the capital of Ephraim (*in the North*), Samaria, the head of Samaria, the son of Remaliah (*Pekah*)" (Isaiah 7,8-9), which implies that the capital of Judaea is Jerusalem and the head of Jerusalem is Ahaz. God also seizes the occasion to reveal the near crushing of Samaria: "Six or five years more and a shattered Ephraim shall no longer be a people." (Isaiah 7,8) It is the announcement of the northern Assyrian invasion (Samaria).

Ahaz is overwhelmed by the events and the loss of his only son whom he had himself sacrificed. But the prophecies had predicted that the "Son of David", the awaited Messiah, would be installed on David's throne forever. Isaiah confirmed that too: "A shoot (*the Messiah*) springs out from the stock of Jesse (*David's father*) . . . on him the Spirit of Yahweh rests. . . " (Isaiah 11,1-2) So there is nothing to fear with regards to the throne because the "Lord himself will give you a sign: the "almah" is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel." (Isaiah 7,14) The pregnancy of the young queen was a divine sign given to Ahaz for two reasons:

– Ahaz did not know that his wife was pregnant

– He did not know that the child was a boy. This son was not granted by God to please Ahaz who had shown to be more impious than other kings, but to accomplish the Messianic designs of God.

King Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz. He was a reformer and "did what is pleasing to Yahweh", by abolishing the idols and Moses' bronze serpent too (2 Kings 18,1-4). But he was not this "Immanuel" who was to reunite Judaea and Israel, to return the exiled Jews from Assyria that they may "**pillage** the sons of the East. . . " and establish, together, the illusionary Zionist empire by **plunder**. . . (Isaiah 11,10-16).

It was not until eight centuries later that the prophecy of Immanuel was fulfilled. It was then that it was understood by those who have eyes to see and an intelligence capable of understanding the designs of God. Matthew reveals that it is with Jesus that this prophecy was fulfilled:

"Now all this took place to fulfill the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The Virgin (*Almah*) will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Immanuel" (Matthew 1,22-23).

God wanted that his Messiah be born of the Virgin Mary, the "Almah" par excellence, whom Isaiah spoke of. Therefore, it is only with its fulfillment that a prophecy, in general, is understood. So we must be awake and attentive, agile and willing to understand God's intentions, without insisting on our points of view -as did the Jews who refused Jesus- but on those of God.

We should retain from the name "Immanuel" its symbolism since it means "God with us" as Matthew explains. Hence, it was not necessary that the Messiah bears that name, as many Jews understood, but that he is "God with us", God living among us corporally, on earth. This fact is confirmed by other symbolic names that Isaiah gives to the Messiah: "This is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, **Mighty-God, Eternal-Father**, Prince-of-Peace." (Isaiah 9,5) These names reveal the divine identity of the Messiah. In fact, God said through Ezekiel: "I am going to take care of my flock **myself**..." (Ezekiel 34,11).

Isaiah unconsciously felt the need for the divine incarnation; addressing God, he exclaimed: "Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down" (Isaiah 63,19).

10.2.2 The Messiah is Galilean

Isaiah sees "a Great light" over the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, tribes of North Palestine, in Galilee, there where Jesus lived (Isaiah 8,23-9,6). Bordering Lebanon, pagan at that time, this region's inhabitants were detested by the Jews who considered them defiled by their pagan neighbors: "From Nazareth (in Galilee)? Can anything good come from that place?", says Nathanael to Philip (John 1,45-46). And the Pharisees, seeing Nicodemus taking up the defense of Jesus, said to him: "Study the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee" (John 7,52).

If the Pharisees had indeed studied the prophecies themselves, they would have understood that, contrary to what they thought, the Messiah, the most important of the prophets, had to emerge specifically from Galilee. Isaiah says indeed:

"In days past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (*Galilee*), but **in days to come** he will confer glory on the Way of the Sea on the far side of Jordan, province of the nations (*the pagans*). The people that walked in darkness has seen a **great** light; on those who live in a land (*Galilee*) of deep shadow a light (*the Messiah*) has shone... For there is a child born for us, a son given to us (*Immanuel, the Son of the Almah-Virgin*), and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: 'Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace'." (Isaiah 8,23 – 9,5).

In his gospel, Matthew refers to this prophecy of Isaiah (Matthew 4,12-16).

Humiliated by the Assyrian invader, Galilee was then glorified by Jesus who lived and worked in Nazareth (Zebulun), and preached in Capernaum (Naphtali).

10.2.3 The Messiah will be persecuted and killed by the Jews.

Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be rejected by his people, that he would be the subject of atrocious suffering and led to death. But he also foretold His resurrection since "His soul's anguish **over**, he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall my servant (the Messiah is the 'Servant' of God) justify many, taking their faults on himself." (Isaiah 53,11). The light that this faithful servant will see is the resurrection after death.

I report the principal verses of chapter 53 of Isaiah that speak of this Good Servant, explaining them in italic and in between parentheses:

"Who could believe what we have heard? (*Isaiah 53,1: who would have believed that the long-awaited Messiah will be a poor and rejected anti-Zionist*) ... Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes (*Isaiah 53,2: He comes from a poor and modest society, no pompous clothing or human glory*) ... He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering... and we (*by the Jews themselves, his people!*) took no account of him. And yet ours were the sufferings he bore... But we (*Jews*), we thought of

him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through (*the crucifixion*) for our faults... Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death... If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs... His soul's anguish over he shall see the light (*the Resurrection*) ... "

Read this chapter now. No one has ever written more beautifully or more truthfully, even after the Advent of Jesus who fulfilled all these prophecies. When he walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24,25-27), Jesus tells them: "'Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' ... Then He explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about himself." Chapter 53 of Isaiah (as well as Psalm 22) was part of his explanations. We ask ourselves how some Jews still do not understand! The answer is that they are blinded by the Zionist mentality: greed for power and possession.

10.2.4 The "consolation" of Israel

The last 26 chapters of Isaiah are intended to comfort the Jews by announcing to them the salvation. This salvation was misunderstood as the return to Palestine and a "Jewish national" restoration. But God was referring to the **spiritual** salvation brought by Jesus for **all men**, yet rejected by many Jews. These chapters are known as "the Book of consolation" because they begin as follows: "'Console my people, console them, speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for' (*by sending the Messiah in the future*) ... A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness a way for Yahweh...'" (Isaiah 40,1-4). These verses were applied by the Gospels to John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for the Messiah in the desert of sleeping souls (Matthew 3,3).

Some think that these chapters of consolation were not written by Isaiah himself but by his disciples **after** the return from exile.

The end of Isaiah is unknown. According to Jewish tradition, he was put to death, sawn in half, under king Manasseh who, "shed innocent blood in such great quantity that he flooded Jerusalem... apart from doing what is displeasing to Yahweh." (2 Kings 21,16)

10.3 Jeremiah – Lamentations – Baruch

10.3.1 Jeremiah

Jeremiah is from a sacerdotal family established near Jerusalem, in Anathoth (Jeremiah 1,1). He prophesied in Jerusalem from Josiah's 13th year (626 BC), "until the eleventh year of Zedekiah" (Jeremiah 1,3), which is the year of the deportation (2 Kings 25,2). He thus personally lived the tragedy of the deportation from its preparation and had predicted it.

The fall of Nineveh (612 BC) and Josiah's reforms gave some hope of salvation, but despair overtook the Israelites with the dramatic defeat of Megiddo (609 BC) and the surge of the Babylonian threats.

Jeremiah was son of the high priest Hilkiah (Jeremiah 1,1). He was called by God when he was still a very young man: "'The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you... I appointed you as a prophet **to the nations**'. I said, 'Ah, Lord Yahweh; look, I do not know how to speak: I am a child¡" (Jeremiah 1,5-6). But, despite his adolescence, God insisted: "Do not say: 'I am a child'... for I am with you to protect you... There! I am putting my words into your mouth... I am setting you **over nations** and over kingdoms, to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.'" (Jeremiah 1,6-10) Before building, God must destroy what men built without his consent.

Isaiah's chronology

Note that Jeremiah is chosen as prophet "of the nations", not only of the Israelites; he is thus universal: "over **nations** and over **kingdoms**". He must "destroy and overthrow" to be able to "build and to plant" afterwards. His mission is similar to the prophet of the Apocalypse who must "prophesy against many different nations and countries and languages and emperors." (Revelation 10,11)

Jeremiah had the difficult mission of announcing the Babylonian invasion through the North, the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the deportation, followed by the return after 70 years of exile: "The North is where disaster is boiling over for all who live in this land... (Jeremiah 1,14) ... Now I will bring on all you an invincible nation... they will devour your sons and daughters... bring down your fortified towns" (Jeremiah 5,13-17). Thus does Yahweh speak: "Only when the seventy years granted to Babylon are over, will I visit you and fulfill my promise in your favor by bringing you back to this place." (Jeremiah 29,4-10)

On the other hand, the false prophets contradicted Jeremiah: "No evil will overtake us, we shall not see sword or famine..." (Jeremiah 5,12) This gave the people false hope and they preferred to listen to the priests and so-called prophets who prophesied peace and security, instead of Jeremiah, who prophesied the bitter truth. God always intervened to ask Jeremiah to proclaim: "Monstrous, horrible things are happening in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, the priests teach whatever they please. And my people love it! But when the end comes, what will you do?" (Jeremiah 5,30-31)

God constantly reprimanded the laymen and religious chiefs, and Jeremiah always conveyed the message with courage: "The priests have never asked, 'Where is Yahweh?' Those who administer the Law have no knowledge of me, (*they have misinterpreted the words of God, understanding them in a political spirit, a spirit condemned by God*). The shepherds (*kings*)

have rebelled against me (*doing 'what is displeasing to Yahweh'*); the prophets (*who claimed to be prophets*) have prophesied in the name of Baal…" (Jeremiah 2,8).

Jeremiah again denounces the bad Jewish interpreters, scribes and priests, because they make God say in the Torah what He never said. This is why he qualifies "the lying pen" of the scribes, that changed the Torah into lies in the service of their interests (Jeremiah 8,8), prescribing animal sacrifices and a worship that **God never asked for**: "For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, **I said nothing to them**, gave them no orders, about holocaust and sacrifice. These were my orders: Listen to my Voice… (Jeremiah 7,22-23) … How dare you say: 'We are wise, and we possess the Law of Yahweh? But look how it has been **falsified** by the **lying** pen of the scribes!'" (Jeremiah 8,8).

Notice that Jeremiah, being from a sacerdotal family and son of the high priest Hilkiah, was well placed to know that the scribes manipulated the text of the Torah to their interest, with their "lying pen" (Jeremiah 8,8). For it is this same Hilkiah, his father, who found the text of the Torah in the Temple (2 Kings 22,8). He must have spoken to his son, Jeremiah, about it; who thus learnt that the scribes and the priests had modified the texts to their convenience. Jesus too, did not fail to denounce the "hypocrite scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 23).

Like Jesus with the second Temple, Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of the first Temple: "Do you take this temple that bears my name for a robbers'? … I will treat this Temple… just as I treated Shiloh." (Jeremiah 7,11-14) (*Shiloh is the city where the first sanctuary was found, and that was destroyed by the Philistines, the Palestinians of the time: 1 Samuel 4,17-18*).

The Israelites did not want to believe Jeremiah, even after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and their deportation. Indeed, he had predicted that the exile would last: 70 years (Jeremiah 25,11). Hananiah the prophet contradicts him: "Yahweh, the God of Israel, says this, 'I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. In two years' time I will bring back all the vessels of the Temple of Yahweh… and all the exiles of Judah who have gone to Babylon…" (Jeremiah 28,1-4) So Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles recommending that they organize themselves in Babylon, to "build houses, settle down… take wives and have sons and daughters… Work for the **good** of the country to which I have exiled you; **pray to Yahweh on its behalf**… For Yahweh says this: Only when the seventy years granted to Babylon are over… I will bring you back to this place." (Jeremiah 29,4-10) It was absurd for many Jews to pray **in favor** of the Babylonians, their enemies. They saw Jeremiah as a traitor and persecuted him. Compare with Jesus who asked the Jews "to love and to pray for their enemies" (Luke 6,27).

We recognize the real prophet from the false one when the prophecies are accomplished. Jeremiah, like all the authentic prophets, knew that God spoke to him and had sent him. The false prophets are guilty because they falsely use God's Name. This is why Jeremiah warned against these liars who claimed to speak on behalf of God: "Do not be deceived by the prophets… do not listen to the dreams they dream, since they prophesy lies to you in my name. I have not sent them—it is Yahweh who speaks." (Jeremiah 29,8-9)

Jeremiah's firm attitude was the reason for his persecution: Pashhur, the Temple's chief of police, "had Jeremiah beaten and then put in the stocks…" (Jeremiah 20,1-2)

The increasing animosity almost demoralized the prophet: "I hear so many disparaging me… All those who used to be my friends watched for my downfall… A curse on the day when I was born!" (Jeremiah 20,10-15) God revealed to him that even his family would line up against him: "Yes, even your own brothers and your own family play you false. Behind your back, they too criticize you openly. Put no reliance on them when they seem to be friendly." (Jeremiah 12,6).

Jeremiah's mission weighed heavy on his shoulders: "Woe is me, my mother, for you have borne me to be a man of strife and dissension for all the land." (Jeremiah 15,10) Discouraged,

he almost abandoned his heavy burden: "The word of Yahweh has meant for me insult, derision, all day long. I used to say, 'I will not think about Him, I will not speak in His name any more.'" (Jeremiah 20,8-9) And Jeremiah remained silent. But God does not abandon his prophets, He burns the deepest parts of themselves by His insistent love and obtains from them the testimony that He wants. Jeremiah acknowledges that his silence was like a fire burning his heart: "... then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart... The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not bear it." (Jeremiah 20,9) The prophet ends up yielding to the love of God, powerful and intoxicating love and, resuming his mission for God's sake says: "You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger." (Jeremiah 20,7) This beautiful attitude of profound love contrasts with that of Jacob, "Israel", who claims to defeat God! (Genesis 32,25-33). The greatness of man, his greatest victory, is to let himself be overcome by God.

The internal and intense suffering purified Jeremiah's heart. "Seduced" by God, he assumed his mission until the end. Fortunately for us, because he prophesied the "New Covenant" that Jesus was to found: "See, the days are coming—it is Yahweh who speaks—when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, **but not a covenant like** the one I made with their ancestors... **They** broke that covenant of mine... The covenant I will make with the House of Israel... I will plant my Law, writing it on **their hearts**..." (Jeremiah 31,31-34) Read this text and contemplate it well, comparing it with the words of Jesus: "The kingdom of God is **among you**." (Luke 17,21) It is at the price of his sacrifice that Jesus founded this New Covenant: "This cup", he said to his Apostles, "is the **New Covenant** in my blood poured out for you". (Luke 22,20).

Note that Jeremiah, speaking of this new Covenant, does not mention a "promised land", but an interior life, God inscribing his words in the **hearts** of believers and "there will be no further need for neighbor to try to teach neighbor, or brother to say to brother, 'Learn to know Yahweh!' No, they will all know me, the least no less than the greatest..." (Jeremiah 31,34) This means that believers will no longer have **to insist** on those who do not believe to spread the knowledge of God, this knowledge already being spread all over the world, as is the case today. He who thirsts for it will find it, he who desires it not will neglect it: "Meanwhile, let the sinner go on sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let those who do good go on doing good, and those who are holy continue to be holy", says the Book of Revelation (Revelation 22,11). Each person is free to choose their path between temporary pleasures and the permanent joys of Eternity.

God asked Jeremiah to write his prophecies and send them to king Jehoiakim. "Jeremiah therefore summoned Baruch son of Neriah, who at his dictation wrote down on the scroll all the words Yahweh had spoken to him." (Jeremiah 36,1-4) The king remained incredulous and burnt the scroll (Jeremiah 36,23). Jeremiah had to dictate his prophecies a second time to Baruch, "with many similar words in addition." (Jeremiah 36,32) It is this Baruch that we will speak of further down.

Jeremiah advised the Jews not to resist Nebuchadnezzar's army, but to surrender instead, or leave Jerusalem: "Those who stay in this city will die by sword, by famine, or by plague; but anyone who leaves it and surrenders to the Chaldaeans (*Babylonians*) now besieging it will live; he shall escape with his life." (Jeremiah 21,8-9). Some leading men were against him for having spoken this way (Jeremiah 38,1-3) and wanted to kill him. They insisted on king Zedekiah: "Let this man be put to death: he is unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people too, by talking like this." King Zedekiah replied: "He is in your hands..." So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the well... and into the mud Jeremiah sank. (Jeremiah 38,4-6). Read chapter 38 and the one that follows to know how the king saved the prophet from a horrible and certain death, and how Nebuchadnezzar then took him out of prison, treating him better than the supposedly pious Jews had done.

The tragic situation experienced by the Israelites raised the hope for the messianic salvation. Jeremiah proclaimed deliverance through the future Advent of the Messiah. But this Messiah was still conceived as a political king who "will restore" the nation (Jeremiah 30,18). Now the restoration **according to God** is spiritual; it was launched by Jesus to be completed, in the end of times, with the final downfall of the current State of Israel (Acts 3,21). You will find in Jeremiah 23,5-6 and Jeremiah 30,8-9 two messianic prophecies.

Jeremiah was taken along by force to Egypt by a group of Israelites who fled the country despite the urgent injunctions of God, through Jeremiah, commanding them to remain in Jerusalem.

We know nothing of Jeremiah after that. It is probable that his last days were in Egypt. Read chapters 42 and 43, which speak of this event, prophesying the Babylonian invasion against Egypt, and then continue your reading of the Book of Jeremiah.

Note that Jeremiah came from a sacerdotal family. His father "Hilkiah", was the high priest who found the "Book of the Law" (Torah) in the Temple. On the basis of this book, king Josiah undertook the religious reforms. The scribes and priests added to this book clauses appropriate to them. Jeremiah, being the son of the high priest, was informed of it and revealed this infamy in Jeremiah 7,22 and 8,8. It is up to us to learn the lesson!

10.3.2 The Book of Lamentations

These lamentations, or "moaning", were composed after Jerusalem's ruin and the fire of the Temple. Perhaps Jeremiah wrote some verses, but there is probably more than one author. All cry and compose funeral cantos to express their mourning after the defeat of Jerusalem. Read it with this spirit: "Oh, how lonely she sits, the city once thronged with people, as if suddenly widowed. Though once great among the nations, she, the princess among provinces, is now reduced to vassalage." (Lamentations 1,1) See 2 Chronicles 35,25 in relation to the lamentation composed by Jeremiah after king Josiah's death in Megiddo.

10.3.3 Appendix of the study of Jeremiah

The 5 kings at the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1,2).

(2 Kings 22 to 26 and 2 Chronicles 34 to 36).

1. **Josiah 640-609 BC** (Great religious reforms + Book of the Law found again) In 609, Neko came to the aid of the Assyrians against the Babylonians; Josiah tried to prevent the union between the Egyptians and the Assyrians. He desired the definitive ruin of Assyria, which still occupied a part of northern Israel. Its defeat was thus advantageous to the kingdom of Judah. But Neko killed Josiah at Megiddo in 609 BC, then continued his route to Carchemish where Nebuchadnezzar overcame him in 605 BC (2 Kings 23,29 and 2 Chronicles 35,20-25). That put an end to the Assyrian empire.

2. **Jehoahaz 609 BC**

He remained three months on the throne after Josiah's death. After Assyria's defeat at Carchemish, Neko, on his way back to Egypt, seized Syria and Palestine. He dethroned Jehoahaz and took him along as a prisoner to Egypt. He established his brother Jehoiakim as king in his place, imposing a tribute on Judaea (2 Kings 23,31-35 and 2 Chronicles 36,1-4). Jeremiah refers bitterly to Jehoahaz' exile to Egypt: "Do not weep for the man who is dead (*king Josiah*)... Weep bitterly for the man (*Jehoahaz*) who has gone away (*to Egypt*), since he will never come back, never see his native land again... but will die in the place to which he has been taken captive..." (Jeremiah 22,10-12).

3. **Jehoiakim 609-598 BC**

The prophet Jeremiah

History		Life of Jeremiah	
640	Josiah		
630	The prophet Zephaniah		
627	Vocation of Jeremiah	Ch 1	Vocation of Jeremiah
		Ch 2-6	Before reforms of Josiah
622	Discovery of the Book of the Law (2 Kings 23,25)		
	Religious reforms	Ch 30-31	Book of Consolation, New Covenant 31,31
612	The prophet Nahum		
609	Meggido		
609	**Jehoahaz** (Eliakim 3 months)	Ch 11	Broken covenant
	Return of Paganism	Ch 7-9	Against the Temple
609	**Jehoiakim**	Ch 26	Arrest of Jeremiah
		Ch 14-15	Drought - rejection of Judah
605	Carchemish	Ch 19-20	Broken jug and Pashur, Jeremiah enclosed
	Prophecy of the 70 years exile (Jeremiah 25)	Ch 25	Prophecy of the 70 years
		Ch 36	Roll torn
	Jehoiakim vassal during 3 years (2 Kings 24,1)		
600	Revolt of Jehoiakim		
	The prophet Habakkuk		
598	**Jehoiachin** (3 months)	Ch 13	Threats to Jehoiachin and exile
1st DEPORTATION			
597	**Zedekiah**	Ch 27	Take the yoke of Babylon
	The prophet Ezekiel	Ch 28	False prophet Hananiah
		Ch 29	Letter to the exiles
589-588	Revolt of Zedekiah		
	Siege of Jerusalem	Ch 21-22	Response to Zedekiah about the siege of Jerusalem
		Ch 34	Fate of Zedekiah
		Ch 37-38	Interruption of the siege 588, Jeremiah in the tank
		Ch 32-33	Resumption of the siege, promises of restoration
586	Taking of Jerusalem	Ch 39-40,6	Jeremiah history until the fall of Jerusalem
2nd DEPORTATION			
586	Godoliah	Ch 40,7-45	Godoliah until the end of Jeremiah

The Prophet Jeremiah

Jehoiakim, in his fourth year of reign (605 BC), so 4 years after Megiddo, noticing Nebuchadnezzar's strength, submitted to him (Jeremiah 36,1; see the note in the Jerusalem Bible). He felt secure, safe from Pharaoh's wrath. Jehoiakim, happy to feel secure, wanted to kill Jeremiah after hearing him predict the curse against his country. He tore the scroll that Jeremiah asked Baruch to write. He gave the order to arrest the both of them. But Jeremiah was protected by Ahikam son of Shaphan (Jeremiah 26 and 36). Shaphan was close to the royal court, under Josiah, and had helped the king with the reforms (2 Kings 22,3-12). As Jeremiah was from a sacerdotal family, Shaphan knew him well, and so helped the prophet (Jeremiah 26,24). Shaphan is also the grandfather of Gedaliah, son of Ahikam (2 Kings 25,22), who also helped Jeremiah (Jeremiah 40,5-6). (Shaphan, father of Ahikam, father of Gedaliah, are all Jeremiah's friends and protectors).

4. **Jehoiachin 598 BC**

First deportation: the king along with all his royal court and all persons of good condition (2 Kings 24,15). Nebuchadnezzar establishes as king in his place, Zedekiah, his uncle (2 Kings 24,17 and 2 Chronicles 36,9-10).

5. **Zedekiah 598-586 BC**

Zedekiah revolted against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24,20). The latter thus invaded Jerusalem (2 Kings 25,2). Wanting to escape, Nebuchadnezzar arrests, deports and judges him. The Babylonians entered Jerusalem destroying the Temple and deported the rest of the Judaeans, leaving the peasants to cultivate the land. They established Gedaliah as governor (2 Kings 25 and 2 Chronicles 36,11-21).

10.3.4 Baruch

The Book of Baruch is absent in the Hebrew Bible. It was written by Baruch in Babylon after the deportation: "These are the words of the book written in Babylon by Baruch" (Baruch 1,1). The exiled assemblies read it "to Jeconiah... king of Judah (*exiled*), and to all the people who had come to hear the reading, to the nobles... to all who lived in Babylon" (Baruch 1,3-4). We notice in this book the great impression that Jeremiah's message had made; an impression that lasted a very long time in the Jewish conscience (2 Maccabees 2,1-7 & 15,14 / Matthew 16,14). Baruch himself had no interest but to repeat and remind people of the fiery words of his professor, words rejected by the Jews: "You have sent down your anger and your fury on us, as you promised through your servants the prophets when they said... 'Bend your necks and submit to the king of Babylon...' But we did not listen to your voice and submit to the king of Babylon" (Baruch 2,20-24).

Baruch reminds us of the New Covenant predicted by Jeremiah to encourage the exiled: "But in the country of their exile they **will take all this to heart** and acknowledge that I am the Lord their God... Then I will bring them back to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them... And will never again drive my people Israel out of the land that I have given them" (Baruch 2,30-35). This "land" is Eternal Life, a heavenly, not a geographic entity.

The **Everlasting** Covenant in question is the one already proclaimed by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31,31) and fulfilled by Jesus. Notice that Baruch had already grasped the internal spiritual dimension of this covenant: "They **will take all this to heart**". But he still believed in the promised land as a geographic reality, "the land promised to Abraham..." and predicted the return to this land (Palestine) prophesying that God "will **never again** drive his people Israel out of the land given to them" (Baruch 2,35). Now, the Jews were once again exiled by Titus in the 70 AD and were scattered all over the world. It is clear then, that God's intention was

for a psychological and spiritual stability, not a geographic one, which unfolds **in the souls** of believers, "in themselves".

Baruch considers the Jews as "the **widow's** cherished sons" (Baruch 4,16), because Israel, punished by God, is compared to a sad and abandoned widow. This topic of "the widow" is often evoked in esoteric assemblies (Freemasonry, Rosicrucian brotherhood), and refers to Israel.

Retain the expression "put on sackcloth" (Baruch 4,20) which means to be in mourning because of tragic situations. You will see it again in the Book of Revelation regarding the two witnesses of God persecuted by the Beast's followers (Revelation 11,3).

Baruch ends his book on an optimistic note by reminding us of the return from exile: "Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress... see your sons reassembled from west and east..." (Baruch 5,1-9). The book closes with the reproduction of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles.

Therefore, Baruch is a revision of Jeremiah, a testimony in his favor.

10.4 Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel is a priest exiled from the first Judaean deportation to Babylon (2 Kings 24,10-17): "It was the fifth year of exile for king Jehoiachin (593-592 BC), the word of Yahweh was addressed to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi **in Chaldaea**" (Ezekiel 1,1-3). The Temple of Solomon had not yet been destroyed when his mission began. Ezekiel is thus a contemporary of Jeremiah. In exile, Ezekiel had visions concerning the second deportation and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, which occurred a few years later (in 586 BC). God asked him to prophesy against the unsubdued Israelites, to announce against them this punishment: "Mountains of Israel... I am going to summon the sword against you... your inhabitants are going to be cut to pieces..." (Ezekiel 6,1-7), but while keeping a **remnant** to pursue the divine Messianic plan: "But I shall spare some of you; they will escape the sword... Your survivors will remember me" (Ezekiel 6,8-10).

Ezekiel's most important visions and prophecies are:

(Read them progressively after my explanations).

10.4.1 The end of Israel

Notice that Ezekiel prophesied "the end" of Israel: "The Lord Yahweh says this to the land of Israel: Finished! **The end** is coming for the four quarters of the land... **The end** is coming, the end is coming for **you**... I mean to show you neither pity nor mercy..." says the Lord (Ezekiel 7,1-9).

With Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, it was the **first end** of Israel. Jesus too, had spoken of the "end" of Israel (Matthew 24,3-14). This took place in 70 AD, when Titus burnt down the second Temple. Most of the Israelis had escaped into the diaspora. That was Israel's **second end**. The apocalyptic times we live in now, Israel will know **a third and ultimate end** (Matthew 24,14). This "Beast" of chapter 13 of Revelation is "never to be seen again" (Revelation 18,21).

It is this third and final end of Israel that Jesus spoke of in the Gospels:

"This good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world... And then **the end** will come." (Matthew 24,14).

The Gospels are already proclaimed to the whole world. The end of ends of Israel is very near.

10.4.2 Vision of the 4 living animals (Ezekiel 1,4-28)

"I looked; a stormy wind blew from the north... In the center I saw what seemed four animals (Ezekiel 1,4-5). Each had four faces, each had four wings... **Human hands** showed under their wings (Ezekiel 1,6-8) ... they had **human** faces, and all four had a lion's... a bull's... an eagle's... (Ezekiel 1,10). Above the vault over their heads was... a throne and high up on this throne was a being that looked like a **man**... It was something that looked like the glory of Yahweh." (Ezekiel 1,26-28).

This great vision, like all Messianic prophecies, was misunderstood in its time. It is a prophecy about the Four Gospels which present the Messiah, Jesus. God announces the Babylonian punishment that befalls the North of Israel like a stormy wind. For God's judgement hits, unexpectedly, like a storm. "Stay awake and pray so to not be taken by surprise", like the sensible bridesmaids, recommended Jesus (Matthew 24,42 / 25,1-13). In this same vision, God reveals his plan of salvation in Jesus for the whole of humanity: the 4 animals represent the 4 Evangelists. Their wings are symbols of their spiritual elevation; the hands under the wings indicate that they are writers, having written the 4 Gospels with their hands. The "vault" is Heaven; the "Throne" is God's Seat to judge men through the Gospels. At the summit of the Throne is the Messiah, who is both man and God, "a being that looked like a **man**", and "something that looked like the **glory of Yahweh**".

We are able to understand today that, in this vision, the Messiah was announced by God as being his own human incarnation, God Himself being this Messiah who will be incarnated to save the believers and judge the unbelievers: "The Word became flesh" says John in his Gospel, "we saw **his glory, the glory** that he has from the Father" (John 1,1-14). We are able to understand today, after the incarnation of the Messiah-God, that this divine glory seen by Ezekiel was in Jesus of Nazareth, in its fullness.

The four animals have "a human form. Each had four faces; each had four wings... They touched one another with their wings". Human form indicates that they are men. Their faces are turned towards the four directions, because their Message is intended for the four corners of the earth. Their wings touch one another because they are united by the same Message, that of the Messiah.

"And they all went straight forward; they went where the spirit urged them; they did not turn as they moved" (Ezekiel 1,12), because they are driven by the same spirit, the Spirit of God which is straight. They deliver their Message as "the sower who went out to sow" (Matthew 13,4), without looking back. "They do not turn as they move", insists Ezekiel, because "once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9,62)

"Between these animals something could be seen like flaming brands or torches" (Ezekiel 1,13). These flaming brands or torches are the hearts of the Apostles and believers who, like flaming brands, are burning of love for God and his Messiah and who, like torches, light up this darkened world by their flames.

"The fire flashed light, and lightning streaked from the fire. And the creatures ran to and fro like thunderbolts." (Ezekiel 1,13-14) Jesus said: "The coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning striking in east and flashing far into the west." (Matthew 24,27)

The Gospels, as well as the Message of the Book of Revelation are widespread throughout the whole world, via the internet. It is spread in a blink of an eye, like a flash of lightning which

parts from East to West. And this, by the Apostles of the End of Times, small flaming brands with burning hearts of love for the Messiah and His Holy Mother.

In his Book of Revelation, John sees, he too, these 4 Animals, always "in the center, grouped around the throne itself" (Revelation 4,6), because, being on the Throne, they take part in Judgement through their Gospels. "Those who prove victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I was victorious myself and took my place with my Father on his throne", says Jesus (Revelation 3,21). Had he not said to his Apostles: "When the Son of man is seated in his throne of glory, you yourselves will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel"? (Matthew 19,28).

Just as Ezekiel announces through this vision the First Coming of the Messiah, so too, does John's Revelation announce his Second Coming at the end of times, after the ultimate end of the existing State of Israel.

10.4.3 Vision of the eaten scroll (Ezekiel 3,1-15)

"**Eat** this scroll... I **ate** it, and it tasted sweet as honey. He then said, 'Son of man, go to the House of Israel and tell them what I have said... Do not be afraid of them... for they are a set of rebels... whether they listen or not'."

Ezekiel is invited "**to eat**" the book of his prophecy ie to assume his mission against the Israelites: "You are not being sent to a nation that speaks a difficult foreign language; you are being sent to the House of Israel. Not **to big nations**", God says to his prophet (Ezekiel 3,5-6). Ezekiel's mission -at his time- was limited to the "House of Israel", so it was specific and did not extend to "big nations".

The Book of Revelation returns to this image of the "eaten" scroll. At the end of times, when Israel reappears, God's prophets are "once again" invited "to eat a scroll" and to witness, not only against Israel again, as was Ezekiel's case, but also against "many different nations and countries and languages and emperors" who support it in its injustice: "Take that open scroll... eat it...' I swallowed it (*the book*); it was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach turned sour. Then I was told: 'You are to prophesy **again**, this time against many different nations and countries and languages and emperors'." (Revelation 10,8-11) Note the **bitterness** of the Apocalyptic prophesy, nonexistent in that of Ezekiel, being more painful because it is universal, coming up against more obstacles: Ezekiel's prophecy was addressed only to the Jews to inform them of Christ's First Coming. Now the Book of Revelation, harder to carry, is addressed to people from all over the world to warn them and prepare them for the Return of Jesus at the time of his Second Coming, which is near at hand: "It is he who is coming... everyone will see him, even those who pierced him (*the Jews*), and **all the races** of the earth will mourn over him" (Revelation 1,7).

10.4.4 The New Covenant (Ezekiel 11,18-20 & 36,25-27)

Here too, the prophecy of the New Covenant insists on the heart and spirit, not on possession of a geographic territory: "I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit **in them**". It is the Holy Spirit that Jesus speaks of (Luke 11,13), which his **real** subjects receive (John 14,15-26 / 16,7-15).

10.4.5 Widowhood and mourning of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 24,15-27)

God announces to Ezekiel the death of his wife, "the delight of his eyes" (Ezekiel 24,16), asking him not to carry on mourning: "But you are not to lament... Groan in silence, do not go into mourning for the dead..." (Ezekiel 24,16-17).

This mourning was meant to symbolize the destruction of the Temple, which was to the Israelites "the delight of their eyes" (Ezekiel 24,21). Only after the Temple's destruction did Ezekiel's mission start; with the accomplishment of his prophecy, he would be better heard. Then God allowed him to speak and untied his tongue: "You will no longer be dumb" (Ezekiel 24,27), after having reduced him to silence because of the Jews' impiety: "you will be dumb; you will stop warning them, for they are a set of rebels." (Ezekiel 3,26).

The Apocalyptic prophecy also experienced a long period of silence: "Keep the words of the seven thunders secret and do not write them down" (Revelation 10,4). This period -which lasted for 20 centuries- was followed by the time of the frank and open proclamation of the message: "Do not keep the prophecies in this book a secret, because the Time (*of Christ's Return*) is close" (Revelation 22,10). In the Book of Revelation, the period of silence was due to the fact that the apocalyptic prophecies were not yet accomplished to be understood.

10.4.6 The Resurrection (Ezekiel 37,1-28)

Ezekiel sees in vision "dried bones" take up bodily form and return to life: "I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel." (Ezekiel 37,12) This resurrection is interpreted, by some, as the return to life of the current Israeli State. It is wrong. This State will be destroyed forever.

The resurrection in question is that of the soul, of its return to spiritual life which Jesus spoke of (John 5,24-27). It is reserved to his **faithful** followers. This is what the Book of Revelation calls "the First Resurrection" (Revelation 20,6). It differs from the final resurrection at the end of times, called the "Second Resurrection", when the body will resurrect too, renewed (John 5,28-29).

10.4.7 Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39)

These names symbolize the pagans of the time. The chosen, the "people of God", will triumph over them. The Book of Revelation tells us that Gog and Magog in the 20th century are none other than the Israelis "who came swarming over the entire country (*Palestine*)" (Revelation 20,7-9). The Book of Revelation throws a divine light that helps us to well-interpret God's intention in Ezekiel's prophecy.

10.4.8 Vision of the rebuilt Temple (Ezekiel 40-48)

About fifteen years after the Temple's ruin, "in the 25th year of our captivity" (Ezekiel 40,1), Ezekiel had a vision of its reconstruction. He sees "a man who seemed to be made of bronze. He had a flax cord and a measuring rod in his hand (*to measure the Temple*) ... He measured the thickness of this construction, etc..." (Ezekiel 40,3-5).

This is indeed the spiritual Temple since God tells Ezekiel: "No alien, uncircumcised **in heart**, to frequent my sanctuary" (*scribes willingly add: "and uncircumcised **body**"*) (Ezekiel 44,6-9). The Book of Revelation also speaks of the construction of the **spiritual** Temple at the end of times, a measured Temple as well, to admit only the true believers (Revelation 11,1). This eternal Temple is none other than God and Jesus Christ (Revelation 21,22), "Nothing unclean may come into it: no one who does what is loathsome or false" (Revelation 21,27). This is the true dimension of the Temple of God that the Israelites could not understand.

Ezekiel's new Temple is the one described in the Book of Revelation. It is spiritual. Compare "the water" of life which comes out from the Temple's sanctuary seen by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 47,12), with the "River of life" of the Book of Revelation (Revelation 22,1-2). The Temple seen by

	KINGDOM	DATES
GOLD	BABYLON	606 - 539 BC
SILVER	MEDO-PERSIA	539 - 331 BC
BRONZE	GREECE	331 - 30 BC
IRON and CLAY	ROME	30 BC - 397 AD

The statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar and the 4 empires

Ezekiel is spiritual, this is a simple deduction from the fact that its measures and form do not correspond to the Temple built by Ezra after the return from exile. No river of life came out of this Temple.

10.5 Daniel

Daniel was taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar probably during the first deportation of Judah (2 Kings 24). He belonged to the Jewish nobility: "the king ordered to select from the Israelites a certain number of boys of either royal or noble descent... suitable for service in the palace of the king... Among them were Daniel... who were Judaeans." (Daniel 1,3-6) So the prophet was only a young child when he left Palestine. "Daniel remained there (*in exile*) until the first year of king Cyrus." (Daniel 1,21).

Daniel became important in the court after having been the only one to reveal to the king his dream and its interpretation (like Joseph with Pharaoh). Read chapter 2 then resume this course.

The statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar represents 4 empires that follow each other historically: Babylonian, Mede-Persian, Greek, and Roman. It was under the fourth of these empires -the Roman- that the Messiah was announced, He was this "stone which broke away, untouched by any hand, and struck the statue... And then, iron and earthenware, bronze, silver, gold, all broke into small pieces... The wind blew them away, leaving not a trace behind. And the stone that had struck the statue grew into a great mountain, filling the whole earth." (Daniel 2,34) The 4 empires are explained by Daniel (Daniel 2,36-43). "**In the time of those kings** the God of heaven will set up a kingdom (*that of Christ, whose Kingdom is not of this world: John 18,36*) which will never be destroyed" (Daniel 2,44). Jesus came -in the time of these kings- under the Roman empire. His Kingdom always and forever exists in the hearts of his faithful.

The Roman Empire has passed; what are some Jews still waiting for to understand?!

Apart from Nebuchadnezzar's visions, Daniel himself had to warn him of historical developments concerning the 4 empires. You will notice that all these visions troubled and fatigued the prophet (Daniel 7,28 / 8,27). Divine messages are often heavy to carry.

Here are Daniel's principal visions:

10.5.1 Chapter 7: Vision of the 4 "Beasts"

The four "Beasts" represent the 4 pagan empires which precede the Advent of Christ. This vision is similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar's statue (Daniel 2). Under the fourth empire will come the Messiah: it is He, "the One of great age (*because His origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of eternity: Micah 5,2*) who took His seat on the Throne" to judge (Daniel 7,9). The judgment is signaled by the fact that "the books were opened." (Daniel 7,10) This expression is mentioned again in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 10,2 / 20,12). These open books are those of the Old Testament. They are "opened" to demonstrate, through the prophecies therein, that Jesus is truly the Messiah.

Therefore, those who do not recognize that Jesus is the Messiah are confused and condemned by the prophecies which had announced Him (see Luke 24,25-27 / Acts 17,2-11 / Acts 18,28). Isaiah rebukes those who do not understand the prophetic visions, saying that these are for them like "a closed (*or sealed*) book" (Isaiah 29,11).

These 4 pagan "Beasts" are still found in the Book of Revelation in the form of the "four horsemen" (Revelation 6,1-8). They are mustered together in one "Beast" which represents them all (Revelation 13). This Beast of Revelation which appears at the end of times, differs from those seen by Daniel: it symbolizes neo-paganism, which manifests itself with force as one nation, militarily and universally powerful, and whose center is Palestine and its coveted capital: Jerusalem (Revelation 13 and Revelation 20,7-9). It is Israel.

10.5.2 Chapter 8: Vision of the "Goat of the West"

Vision of the "Goat from the West" (*Alexander the Great: "the king of Javan", Daniel 8,5 & 21*), who triumphs over the Persian Empire, the "Ram" (Daniel 8,6 & 20). After his multiple victories, Alexander died at the ripe age of 33: "Then the he-goat grew more powerful than ever, but at the height of its strength the great horn snapped, and in its place sprouted four majestic horns. . . " They are the 4 generals of Alexander who divided his empire among them (Daniel 8,8). Antiochus Epiphanes, whom you knew by reading Maccabees (1 Maccabees 1,10-44), succeeded one of these 4 generals and ruled the region of Palestine. His policy of Hellenization provoked the revolt of the Maccabees (in 167 BC: 1 Maccabees 2). He is symbolized by the "horn which grew to great size toward south and east and toward the Land of Splendor" (*Palestine*). This "Horn" defiled the Temple of Jerusalem by "putting iniquity (*statue of Zeus*) on the sacrifice and flung truth to the ground" (Daniel 8,9-12).

Note that Daniel did not understand the vision (Daniel 8,27). We must remember this prophetic principle already mentioned: a prophecy concerning a historical event is only understood after the fulfillment of the predicted event. So "open" up the Prophetic Books that predicted it. These books remain "closed" (*or sealed*) for those who refuse to admit the historical fulfillment of the prophecy. They will remain forever blinded, their eyes closed to the divine truths.

10.5.3 Chapter 9: End of the 70 years of deportation

Daniel "was studying the Scriptures" (*Jeremiah's*) and prayed to God to know "the number of years -as revealed by Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah- that were to pass before the successive devastations of Jerusalem would come to an end, namely seventy years" (Daniel 9,2). God takes the opportunity rather to reveal to him his plan of salvation by sending the "Anointed Prince" (*Jesus*), who will be suppressed 69 weeks after the reconstruction of Jerusalem (Daniel

Daniel 9,20-27

9,25-26). God invites Daniel not to limit himself to the 70 years of Jeremiah, but to look well ahead and have a global vision: the 70 years are 70 "weeks" **of years**, therefore 70 x 7 = 490 years, approximate time of the Advent of Jesus.

These "70 weeks **of years**" are divided into 3 periods: 62-7-1. "After the 62 weeks, an Anointed One will be cut off (*He was indeed rejected and crucified*) and... (*the political Zionist throne of David*) will not be for Him", because His reign is spiritual. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple will therefore again be "destroyed by a prince who will come." (Daniel 9,26) It is Titus who fulfills this prophecy by destroying the Temple a second time in the year 70 AD. Such a prophecy, announcing a second destruction of the Temple, was not likely to comfort Daniel.

The period of time between Daniel and the "Anointed Prince" is 62+7= 69 weeks of years (symbolic). The last week of years concerns the period of the Advent of the Messiah. The last half-week, which is 3 days and half, represents the apocalyptical times in which we live. They are known as the end of times, when we will see "the disastrous abomination" in Jerusalem (Daniel 9,27 / Matthew 24,15). This abomination is none other than the Zionist Antichrist in Jerusalem today: the enemy of Christ in the Holy Land with its never-ending procession of crimes and destruction. The "70 weeks of years" will last "until the end, until the doom assigned to the devastator (*Israel*)." (Daniel 9,27) Or still, according to the expression of Jesus: "Jerusalem will be trampled down by the pagans (*the Zionists who reject Him*) until the age of the pagans is completely over (*the State of Israel*)." (Luke 21,24).

10.5.4 Chapter 12: Vision of the end times

This last vision concerns the apocalyptic period which immediately precedes the end times. "That is going to be a time of great distress, **unparalleled** since nations first came into existence" (Daniel 12,1) ... "nor ever will be again", Jesus confirmed later (Matthew 24,21). This period is a sign of the end of times, a sign given for the wise to prepare for the Final

Judgment, when "those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace." (Daniel 12,2)

This vision is similar to the Apocalyptic visions of John. It reveals a symbolic number of days (1290 & 1335 days: Daniel 12,11-12), a complementary number revealed to John (1260: Revelation 11,3 & 12,6). A comparison between the two texts will be indispensable to understand.

Nevertheless, it is only after the achievement of the apocalyptic events (the fall of Israel and the 3rd world war) that these numbers "will be opened" to our intelligence and their symbolism become clear. It is the reason why Daniel "listened **but did not understand**." (Daniel 12,8) These events will last "a time and two times, and half a time", three times (or periods) and a half (Daniel 12,7). TThey are the "three and a half times" and the "three and a half days" of Revelation 11,8-11. They correspond to the half-week of Daniel 9,27. No one can understand this prophecy before "all these things are going to happen when he who crushes the power of the holy peoples meets his end." (Daniel 12,7) It is the destruction of the Israeli Antichrist which has seduced and weakened the believers. "Daniel, go away: these words are to remain **secret and sealed** until the time of the End." (Daniel 12,9) It is with the explanation of the Book of Revelation that all of these prophecies are clarified.

The Hebrew Bible ends with chapter 12 of the Book of Daniel. Chapters 13 and 14 are only found in the Greek Bible. They reveal Daniel's wisdom. They are easy to understand.

10.5.5 The synthesis

Here is a concise text to better understand Daniel's prophecies. I propose to read the first 12 chapters of his book, and specifically chapters 1 / 2 / 3,1-23 / 4 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 12. The key to understanding these prophecies is to realize that they are aimed at the time of the future Advent of the Messiah, impatiently awaited by the Jews in the past.

Jesus, repeatedly (more than 40 times in the Gospels), had said that He was the "Son of Man" (Matthew 8,20 / 12,40 / 24,30... Mark 9,12 / 13,29 / Luke 12,8 / 18,8 / 21,36 / John 1,51 / 6,27 / 9,35 / Acts 7,56). The Jews did not understand and asked him: "Who is this Son of man?" (John 12,34). Jesus referred to Daniel's vision (7,13-14) which announced the Advent of the Messiah "coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a **Son of Man**... His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty... " Notice that by his coming "a court was held and the **books were opened**." (Daniel 7,10) It is about the Prophetic Books to be opened, to be consulted, to demonstrate by these Sacred Scriptures that Jesus is indeed the Messiah announced by the prophets (Acts 17,2 / 17,11). This expression is found again in Revelation 20,12 regarding the Second Coming of Jesus to demonstrate, always by the **open** Holy Scriptures -and especially the Book of Revelation, this "other open Book"- that the Messiah, who came 2000 years ago, is already spiritually back.

To understand Daniel's prophecies, we have to realize that everything in his book is focused on the Advent of the Messiah. This is **the core** of this book. All the other prophecies have a historical context and relate to the empires preceding the Advent of the Messiah, those which succeeded each other during and after Daniel: Babylonian, Medes, Persian, Greek, then Roman. It is under this last empire, the Roman Empire, that the Book of Daniel announces the Advent of this "Son of Man" (Daniel 7,13-14), this "Anointed One... cut off" (Daniel 9,26), this "stone which broke away from the mountain, **untouched by any hand**" (Daniel 2,34), this "cornerstone" mentioned by Jesus (Matthew 21,42) which pummeled the human empires to dust and whose spiritual kingdom will last forever (Daniel 2,29-45).

Daniel's anguish was due to the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the temple. Jeremiah had predicted that this exile would last for 70 years (Jeremiah 25,11-12 and Jeremiah 29,10). And yet, this period was exceeded. Daniel did not see the end of Israel's woes. Because there

were two exoduses: the first one in 597 BC, followed by a second in 587 BC. After the Edict of Cyrus in 538 BC, there was a shy return from exile. In around 515 BC, there was an attempt to construct the temple, but followed by an interruption that lasted "until the **second year** of the reign of Darius", because of the opposition of the Samaritans (Ezra 4,24). So we understand Daniel's anxiety, impatient to see the Temple rebuilt: "**In the first year** of Darius' reign, I, Daniel, was perusing the Scriptures, counting over the number of years—as revealed by Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah—that were to pass before the successive devastations of Jerusalem would come to an end, namely 70 years." (Daniel 9,1-2) So then, in the first year of Darius, the 70 years had passed but the Temple was not yet rebuilt according to the expectations of Daniel and all Jews.

Therefore, the important point to grasp is that Daniel languished to see the Temple erect and the expected Messiah as an almighty emperor to -finally- establish the Israeli empire over the world. As is the case with Israeli Zionists today.

This prophet then decided to do penance by fasting and to confess, pleading in a well-structured manner, the multiple faults of his people, begging the Creator to forgive and rebuild the Temple, not so much for the merits of the sinner Israeli people, but for his own divine honor (Daniel 9,3-19). He seeks to convince Him that God's own divine reputation is at stake: "Lord, let your face smile again on your desolate sanctuary... We are not relying on our own good works but on your great mercy, to command our humble plea to you. Listen, Lord! ... because they **bear your name**, this is your city (*Jerusalem*), this is your people." (Daniel 9,17-19).

Faced with this human insistence in good faith, an insistence due to the ignorance and the incomprehension of the divine plan by that "man of predilection" (Daniel 10,11), Heaven intervenes at Daniel's side -suddenly and fiercely- to interrupt this litany of vain words: "I was still speaking... when Gabriel... flew suddenly down to me..." (Daniel 9,20) Gabriel's brutal interruption reminds us of Jesus' teaching: "In your prayers do not babble... your Father **knows what you need**..." (Matthew 6,7) Daniel needed this angelical intervention to put an end to this avalanche of useless words. Because, "I was **still** speaking...", he acknowledges (Daniel 9,20).

Gabriel tells him: "Grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision: 'Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city, for putting an end to transgression, for placing the seals on sin, for expiating crime, for introducing everlasting integrity, for setting the seal on vision and on prophecy, for anointing the Holy of Holies. Know this, then, and understand... and on the wing of the Temple will be the disastrous abomination until the end, until the doom assigned to the devastator.'" (Daniel 9,23-27).

Daniel understood nothing of this vision despite Gabriel telling him: "Grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision". The prophet was in a hurry to see the achievement of the events announced by Jeremiah on the ground after 70 years of exile. And yet, Heaven comes to announce that 70 weeks are assigned, namely 70 weeks of years, that is to say 70 x 7 = 490 years, were still to pass before the historical fulfillment of the prophecies, and that, not for the reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem according to Daniel's expectations, but "for anointing the Holy of Holies", namely the Messiah who, He, is the real Temple in the divine conception. Therefore, the Temple of Jerusalem loses its importance. It is Jesus who clarified this prophecy by announcing at the time of his Advent approximately 490 years later (70 weeks of years after Daniel): "Destroy this sanctuary (*temple*), and in three days I will raise it up... But He was speaking of the sanctuary that was His body" (John 2,18-22). Much later still, after Jesus' Resurrection, the Apostles understood that the Temple of God resides in every soul, follower of Jesus (1 Corinthians 3,16-17). John's Revelation reveals even better: any material religious building -temple, church, mosque, pagoda, etc- becomes obsolete, because in the Heavenly Jerusalem, no temple or building of this sort is found (Revelation 21,22). Daniel

was very far from this divine conception, he was overwhelmed, shaken by this cult in spirit. We thus understand his exhausted state of mind (Daniel 8,27 / 10,9-10).

It is through the Spirit of Jesus that we are able to understand the prophecies according to God's intention. Daniel could therefore not yet grasp them. John the Baptist himself, who came 5 centuries later, he the forerunner of the Messiah, had not yet understood them. According to Jesus' testimony, "a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater that he is." (Matthew 11,11) Because John the Baptist too, like Daniel, expected a theocratic Israeli kingdom. Now, "the least in the Kingdom of Heaven" has indeed grasped the spiritual, interior dimension of the Divine Kingdom and its eternal empire. The psychological upheaval produced in Daniel, even unconsciously, resulted in him "losing consciousness and was ill for several days." (Daniel 8,27)

Daniel's visions are not limited to Jesus' First Coming; they extend in time until His Return during the Apocalyptic times: "A time of great distress, unparalleled since nations came into existence" (Daniel 12,1). Jesus goes back to this prophecy in Mathew 24,21 and refers to "the disastrous abomination" of which the prophet Daniel spoke (Matthew 24,15). Jesus, by his first and second comings, "opens the books", namely the Prophetic Books which announce his Advent and his Return for judgment (Daniel 7,10 and Revelation 20,12). So all Daniel's prophecies are fulfilled by these two Advents. We await the "doom assigned to the devastator" (Daniel 9,27): namely the fall of the Beast. Then we will understand the little that we still have to understand of the prophecies.

To retain: the Book of Daniel mainly targets the two Advents of Jesus who, by his return, will explain the words of Daniel destined by our Father to remain "sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12,4). This time is here!

10.5.6 Supplement

A reflection on Daniel in the past and us today, the Romans with the Israelis in the past and the USA with them today:

Daniel depicts Nebuchadnezzar's dream of "this statue, its head was of fine gold... its feet part iron, part earthenware." This means that, "the iron and the clay of the earthenware mixed together, so the two will be mixed together **in the seed of man**; but they will not hold together any more than iron will blend with earthenware." (Daniel 2,43) This fragile **human** seed, in God's intention, taking place 3 centuries after Daniel, designated a fragile alliance between the Romans and the Israelis of that time as revealed in the First Book of Maccabees 8,17 etc... This alliance "in the seed of man", ie between the Romans and Israelis, could only be fragile. Such a human mixture is as brittle as the impossible amalgamation between iron and clay. The Romans, at that time, had the reputation of being invincible, a reputation which the United States holds today (1 Maccabees 8,1-14 and especially verses 11-13). The unconditional Roman support for the Jews is seen in the letter revealed in 1 Maccabees 15,15-24. So under the Roman Empire, Israel already existed as a State. It is therefore not wrong to say that this "Beast you have seen once was and now is not" (Revelation 17,8), was supported by the Romans. All of this prepared the Advent of the One whose "Kingdom shall never be destroyed... and itself last forever" (Daniel 2,44), being in the souls. In fact, it was under the Roman Empire that our Blessed Savior came. Despite Roman support for the Israelis in the past, it was indeed the Romans who destroyed the Israeli kingdom by Titus in the year 70. Thus appeared the fragility of the alliance.

Today, "again", Israel, the First Apocalyptic Beast, has obtained protection from the almighty American State, the Second Apocalyptic Beast. This also prepared, and still prepares, the coming of the One whose "Kingdom will last forever..." But today, it is about his **Second**

Coming, his Return, always in the soul. Those who sleep not and remain faithful until the end, remaining awake with the weapon of discernment, "will open to Him **as soon as He knocks** the door of the heart" (Luke 12,35-36 / 24,33 / Revelation 3,20).

11. Lesson 11 – The 12 Lesser Prophetic Books

11.1 Hosea

He is originally from the North. He prophesied against the Jews "during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah (*the South*) and of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel (*the North*)" (Hosea 1,1). He is thus a contemporary of Isaiah (who also prophesied against Ahaz). Hosea is a contemporary of Amos. It is possible that he saw the ruin of Samaria by the Assyrians (721 BC).

God asked him to be a sign for the Jews by marrying a "whore (*like all the Jewish people*), and get children with a whore, for the country itself has become nothing but a whore by abandoning Yahweh." (Hosea 1,2) God declares out of his mouth: "I will put an end to the sovereignty of the House of Israel. When that day comes, I will break Israel's bow in the Valley of Jezreel." (Hosea 1,2-5) This is the valley of Megiddo, where the disastrous defeat of Josiah took place a century and a half later (2 Kings 23,29-30). It comes back in the Book of Revelation as a symbol of the final defeat of modern Israel (Revelation 16,16).

Hosea announces, like Jeremiah later (Jeremiah 3,18), the reunion of Israel and Judah under "one single leader... so great will be the Day of Jezreel." (Hosea 2,2) This "single leader" is the Messiah who must unite in His Person all men after the destruction of the Israeli army, which is an obstacle to God's plan. This is why it will be the "great Day of Jezreel", which will see this army annihilated: "I mean to Destroy you, Israel" (Hosea 13,9). Hosea is against Jewish nationalism and its kingdom (Hosea 8,4 and 13,9-11); he reveals the non-military, spiritual salvation, a salvation which is desired "not by bow or sword or battle, horse or horsemen." (Hosea 1,7) See also Hosea 10,13-15 about the military destruction of Israel, "you have trusted in your chariots, in your host of warriors" rather than in God. Hosea dared therefore, to denounce, like Samuel before him, the Israeli royalty, hence Jewish nationalism.

Hosea revolts especially against the priests and so-called prophets who leave the people in ignorance (Hosea 4,4-6). As you read this great prophet, be sensible to his pain; it is an internal groan that he addresses the Jews. He denounces their spiritual adultery, predicting the deportation of the North (Hosea 8,6-13). The Israelis persecuted him: "The prophet is mad... traps are set for him on all his paths, in the house of his God enmity awaits him." (Hosea 9,7-8)

11.2 Joel

As you read Joel attentively, you will notice that he addresses two different societies, centuries apart from each other:

1. To the Jews of Judah
2. Much later, to all the nations.

Both societies will be punished for their infidelity. After the punishment there will be a restoration. This is the general theme of Joel. Here are the details:

Historical context of Daniel's prophecies

	The Assyrian Empire
612	Fall of Nineveh
	1.The Babylonian Empire
609	Battle of Meggido
605	Battle of Carchemish
604	**Nebuchadnezzar** (604-562)
587	**Deportation** (Jeremiah 25 : the 70 years)
	Deportation of Daniel (Daniel 1)
545	**Balthazar** (son of Nabonide,
	son of Nebuchadnezzar)
	2a.The Empire of Medes
555	**Cyrus** the Persian : revolt
	against the Medes
539	Cyrus enters in Babylon :
	Death of Balthazar (Daniel 5,30)
	2b. The Persian Empire
538	Cyrus' edict (Daniel 9)
530	Cambyses (son of Cyrus)
	Interruption building Temple
	Ezra 4 and 5
522	**Darius I : (522-486) (Daniel 6,1)**
	Resumes building Temple
	Ezra 6
	3. The Greek Empire
336	**Alexander The Great**
333	Battle of Issus
331	Battle of Arbela
319	Four Seleucides
175	**Antiochus IV Epiphanes**
	(175-164) (Daniel 7,8 / 8,9)
170	Abomination of desolation
	(Daniel 9,27 / 11,31 / 12,11
	Matthew 24,25)
	4. The Roman Empire
63	Pompey takes Jerusalem
1	Jesus : (Daniel 9,25)
70	Titus destroyed the 2nd Temple
	(Daniel 9,26)

Daniel 1 : Daniel to Babylon

Daniel 2 : Statue of 4 empires (under Nebucha.)
(Babylonian, Mede-Persian, Greek, Roman)

Daniel 3 : Golden statue and canticle

Daniel 4 : The tree and madness of Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 5 : Death of Balthazar

Daniel 6 : Daniel in lions' den

Daniel 7 : Vision of 4 animals (Year I of Balthazar):
(Babylon - Medes - Persia - Greek)

Daniel 8 : The Ram and The Billy Goat
(Persian-Greek : year III of Balthazar)

Daniel 9 : 70 weeks (year I of Darius)

Daniel 10-11: Persian and Greek(year III of Cyrus)
(Antiochus IV Epiphanes)

Daniel 12 : Time of the End

N.B.: To read :
1Maccabees 1 ; compare with Daniel 11,31-39
Matthiew 24 / Luke 19,41-44 / Luke 21,20-24
Ezra and Nehemiah.

Historical context of Daniel's prophecies

11.2.1 Punishment of Judah

It is to the Judaeans that Joel addresses the divine invectives: "Sound the trumpet in **Zion** (*Jerusalem*), give the alarm on my holy mountain!" (Joel 2,1) "For a nation has invaded my country, mighty and innumerable... it has laid waste my vines and torn my fig trees to pieces" (Joel 1,6-7). "Vine" and "Fig tree" are symbols of Israel. When Jesus curses the fig tree, He insinuated the destruction of Israel (Matthew 21,18-21).

Joel is a prophet after the exile. The announced punishment is therefore the Roman invasion and the destruction of the Temple by Titus (70 AD). Priests are invited to penance before worship is abolished in the Temple: "Priests, put on sackcloth (*symbol of repentance*) ... For the house of our God has been deprived of oblation and libation (*which the faithful offered*) ... (Joel 1,13-14) ... come back to Me with all your heart... Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to Yahweh your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion... Who knows if he will not turn again (*on his decision to destroy you*), will not relent, will not leave a blessing as he passes (*and no longer punish you because of your repentance*)?" (Joel 2,12-14).

The predicted plague will come "from the North" and will be similar, by the devastation it will cause, to the different kinds of locusts: "What the gnawer has left, the grown locust has devoured, what the grown locust has left, the hopper has devoured..." (Joel 1,4) This plague of locusts is also mentioned by Amos (Amos 4,9) and Malachi (Malachi 3,11). It is taken up again in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 9,2-11).

This punishment is "the Day of Yahweh" (Joel 1,15 / 2,1 / 2,11), a prophetic expression that has become traditional (Isaiah 13,6 / Ezekiel 30,2-3/ Amos 5,18). Some Jews thought that this day would be in their favor; but all the prophets invited them not to delude themselves: "For the day of Yahweh is near, it comes as a **devastation** from Shaddai (*Powerful-God*) ... (Joel 1,15) ... Let all the inhabitants of the country tremble... Day of darkness and gloom" (Joel 2,1-2). "Trouble for those who are waiting so longingly for the day of Yahweh... It will mean darkness, not light" (Amos 5,18).

11.2.2 The Restoration

After destruction, God announces restoration: "I will make up to you for the years devoured by grown locust and hopper... You will eat to your heart's content" (Joel 2,25). This restoration will be done by Christ and will be spiritual; it will be done by His Body and His Blood. Jesus had spoken to his Apostles about it: "I tell you solemnly, when all is **made new**..." (Matthew 19,28) Those whose mentality will remain materialistic and political will not taste this Holy Food and "the **new wine** will be dashed from your lips." (Joel 1,5) The "new wine" is the one Jesus gives for the **restoration of the soul** (John 6,53-57 / Luke 22,14-20 / Matthew 26,27-29).

This **first** restoration is done by the gift of of God's Spirit: "After that (*the plague of locusts*) I will pour out my Spirit on **all mankind**" (*therefore on all men -through Jesus- not on the Jews only*) (Joel 3,1). The Jews understood this restoration politically, a "resurrection" of the State of Israel.

Yet the Apostles of Jesus understood that it was about an inner spiritual dimension, in the human soul. This is why Peter refers to this prophecy of the effusion of the Divine Spirit in Acts 2,17-21. He also specifies in Acts 3,20-21 that the "universal restoration which God proclaimed, speaking through His holy prophets" is realized by Jesus.

This restoration is accomplished in two steps: the first took place with the Advent of Jesus 2000 years ago, and the second is currently taking place in our Apocalyptic times by the Return

of Jesus Christ inside us. I speak of the latter further down, as well as in the text “”The Key of the Apocalypse“”.

11.2.3 The Punishment of the world

The punishment inflicted on Israel is an example, a lesson for all the nations of the world who have become indifferent to the message of Jesus. “For in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I am going to gather all the nations and take them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; there I intend to put them on trial for all they have done to Israel, my people and my heritage.” (Joel 4,1-2) “Let the nations rouse themselves, let them march to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for I am going to sit in judgement there on all the nations around. Put the sickle in: the harvest is ripe; come and tread: the winepress is full, the vats are overflowing, so great is their wickedness! . . . Host on host in the Valley of Decision!” (Joel 4,12-14)

The “Valley of Jehoshaphat” does not exist geographically; it is a symbolic location whose name means: “God judges”; it is also the “Valley of Judgement” or “Destruction” or “Decision”, to destroy the enemies of God and his Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

This judgement is executed shortly before the end of times since the “harvest is **ripe**” and the “winepress is **full**”. John’s Revelation returns to the same expressions of Joel (Revelation 14,14-19) and explains that Jesus, “The Word of God. . . is the one who will tread out the wine of Almighty God’s fierce anger.” (Revelation 19,13-15)

So then, “Israel” or “the people of God”, whom Joel (Joel 4,1) spoke of, is composed of the disciples of Jesus. They are the **true** people of God. In our Apocalyptic days, therefore, all the nations which support Israel, the state founded on injustice and the rejection of Jesus, are judged. The deniers of Christ are assembled from all nations in Palestine to be “crushed” there, like grapes in the winepress. This is the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” where God judges, crushes, under the feet of the Messiah, the Antichrist and all nations which support it.

With the First Coming of Jesus, there was a first outpouring of the Divine Spirit. This bestowal was not without bloody events: the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. Before the Return of Christ, a second outpouring will occur (and is currently taking place), always with bloody events -wars and revolutions- which prepare the 3rd World War: “After this I will pour out my Spirit on all mankind. . . I will display portents in heaven and on earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke”, says the Lord (Joel 3,1-3). These signs indicate wars: the columns of smoke are characteristic of modern bombs. . . nuclear bombs in particular.

Jesus speaks to us again of all these signs (Matthew 24/ Luke 21), on “the distress of these days” when “the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness” (Matthew 24,29), as Joel also said (Joel 3,4) and the Apocalypse (Revelation 6,12). We do not have to understand these literally, and expect the disappearance of the sun and the moon. They are symbolic and prophetic expressions; they indicate difficult times, the disappearance of faith and morality: the eclipse of the **spiritual** Sun.

11.2.4 The Universal Restoration

After these cataclysms, everything will be renewed: “When that Day comes, the mountains will run with new wine. . . and all the river beds of Judah will run with water. A (*spiritual*) fountain will spring from the house of Yahweh” (Joel 4,18-19).

The “new wine” or the “fresh juice of the vine” (as some translate) symbolizes the “new era” that will follow the universal punishment. It is “the new Heaven and the new Earth” after the

defeat of Jesus' enemies (Revelation 21,1). Egypt symbolizes the unbelievers who will always be in desolation.

This is a time of collective spiritual regeneration, I mean indeed, **spiritual** and **collective**. It occurs inside the souls of believers, of **all** believers, the true ones. Christ Himself will appear to them as He had promised (John 14,21) and as Peter revealed: "Then He will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus, whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets." (Acts 3,20-21) Because, as Paul reveals to us: "Christ, too... appears **a second time** (*in spirit, in the soul*) ... with salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9,28).

Those who have understood that universal restoration is an Israeli national resurrection will perish in the "Valley of Jehoshaphat", crushed in the "vat of divine anger".

11.3 Amos

He is the oldest of the prophetic writers; his mission lasted from 783 to 743 BC. He is thus a contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, but preceded them.

Amos preached in the North, at the sanctuary of Bethel, where he was sent by God to prophesy against Israel and its king, Jeroboam II (Amos 7,7-17). But he was from the South, from Tekoa in Judaea (Amos 1,1), more reason to be hated by the Israelis.

Amos was a simple shepherd, without wealth or instruction. He did not belong to a recognized prophetic institution, nor did he possess a diploma to prophesy like the other claimed prophets of his time. He admits so, "I was no prophet, neither did I belong to any brotherhoods of the prophets" (Amos 7,14), being no member of a fraternity or prophetic group (like some "charismatic" movements nowadays). God is not impressed by religious diplomas in the selection of His men. Also, God took Amos "as he followed the flock" (Amos 7,15), just as He chose Peter, Andrew, James and John eight centuries later, tearing them away from their fishermen nets to make them Apostles of his Messiah. He disdained the Scribes and Pharisees -however more instructed and educated than him in religious matters- preferring men with soft hearts, docile to the Holy Spirit.

God asks Amos to prophesy against Israel: "Look, I am going to measure my people Israel by plumb line; no longer will I overlook their offenses... the sanctuaries of Israel destroyed..." (Amos 7,7-9) The "plumb-line" is a measuring instrument: God "measures" the rectitude of the souls, as in Revelation 11,1, to reveal the hearts and to condemn the evil. It is the prediction of the Assyrian invasion (Amos 3,11) and the deportation (Amos 5,27).

Amos is the first to speak of the "Day of Yahweh... it will mean darkness, not light" (Amos 5,18), and of the "remnant" that will survive after the punishment (Amos 5,15).

He is the prophet of social justice, because he rose against the rich and their disproportionate luxury (Amos 2,6-7 / 4,1-3 / 5,7-12).

His prophecy extended against Judah too, predicting its ruin: "Yahweh says this... I am going to hurl fire on Judah to burn up the palaces of Jerusalem." (Amos 2,4-5).

Amos denounced the exterior worship, revealing that God despises it, that He desires rather the practice of justice as worship: "**I hate and despise** your feasts... **I reject** your oblations... But let justice flow like water, and integrity like an unfailing stream." (Amos 5,21-24).

11.4 Obadiah

This is the shortest of the Prophetic Books. The name of the prophet means "Slave of God" (in Arabic: "Abdallah").

This small book is a prophecy against the Edomites because they had invaded Judaea: "For the slaughter, for the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame will cover you and you will vanish forever." (Obadiah 1,9-10)

Obadiah predicts a restoration to the Judaeans: "Men from the Negeb (*South of Judah*) will occupy the Mount of Esau (*Edom*), etc. . . " (Obadiah 1,19-21) This restoration is still nationalist with its expansionist ambitions to seize Edom.

11.5 Jonah

The story reported in this book is symbolic, non-historical, even if it is attributed to the prophet Jonah mentioned in 2 Kings 14,25.

The moral of the story: God accepts the repentance of all men, even if they are Ninevites (Assyrians), enemies of the Jews. So God is not the monopoly, nor the possession of the Israelites alone, but of the whole of mankind.

Jonah is sent to the Ninevites, just like Jesus' Apostles preached repentance and the Messiah to the Pagans, and as Jesus was benevolent with Roman soldiers. All this is a cause of scandal for fanatics, Jews and others. What would Christians think today, if one of their bishops preferred Muslims over them. And vice versa, what would Muslims say of one of their religious leaders who preferred some upright Christians over some impious Muslims?

Jonah's stay in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights (Jonah 2,1) symbolizes the Messiah's burial for three days before his resurrection. The psalm said by Jonah, after his exit from the whale's belly, can be perfectly applied to Christ buried in the belly of the earth after the torture of the crucifixion and his resurrection after death: "at the roots of the mountains I went down into the countries underneath the earth, to the peoples of the past. But you lifted my life from the pit, Yahweh my God." (Jonah 2,7)

This is why Jesus spoke of Jonah as a "sign" (Matthew 12,40-41). This sign was and remains misunderstood by many, especially by the majority of the Jews, who will be judged by the men of Nineveh -who will condemn them- for not having believed in Jesus as the Messiah! For the Ninevites believed in Jonah, less important than Jesus (Matthew 12,41). This judgement is a fatal blow to all fanatics.

11.6 Micah

Micah is from the Southern Judaean country, "from Moresheth" in the South of Hebron. He prophesied "during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Micah 1,1). A simple villager, he is mentally similar to Amos, a simple shepherd. He is a contemporary of Isaiah. Like Amos, he denounced the unrestrained luxury of those who "seize the fields that they covet, who take over houses as well. . . " (Micah 2,1-2)

He denounced the impiety of the Israelites and prophesied the ruin of Samaria and Judah: "I mean to make Samaria a ruin. . . For there is no healing for the blow that Yahweh strikes; it reaches into Judah, it knocks at the very door of my people, reaches even into Jerusalem." (Micah 1,6-9) He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Micah 3,12) as well as the deportation (Micah 4,10): "Because of this, since the fault is yours, Zion will become plowland, Jerusalem a heap of rubble, and the mountain of the Temple a wooded height (Micah 3,12) . . . To Babylon you must go" (Micah 4,10).

Micah comforts the Jews by the Messiah-King who will "bring them together like sheep in the fold. . . their king will go on in front of them" (Micah 2,12-13). This king will be born in Bethlehem: "But you, **(Bethlehem) Ephrata**, the least of the clans of Judah, out of you will

be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel; his origin go back to the distant past, to the days of **eternity**" (Micah 5,1). This prophecy was achieved in Jesus, born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2,6 / John 7,42). Remember well this important prophecy, especially as it reveals the **eternal** origins of the Messiah (compare with his holy names: Isaiah 9,5).

Micah still comforts the Jews by the restoration after the ruin. But this restoration was once again understood from a nationalist point of view: "The mountain of the Temple of Yahweh will be put on top of the mountains... The peoples will stream to it... to you shall be given back your former sovereignty, and royal power over the House of Israel." (Micah 4,1-8). Likewise, the Messiah was only seen as the nationalist king who "from then on will extend his power to the ends of the land... He will deliver us from Assyria should it invade our country" (Micah 5,2-5).

Micah had great influence. The Jews remember his prophecies several centuries after him, as Jeremiah testifies (Jeremiah 26,18) regarding the prophecy of Micah concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Micah 3,12).

11.7 Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk

These 3 prophets must be studied together as they were contemporaries. They lived the same difficult period which preceded the fall of Nineveh (in 612 BC), and were animated by the same hope, of seeing the national restoration of Israel after the high hopes of Nineveh's fall. Now, after this fall, there was total despair with the crushing defeat of Megiddo and king Josiah's death, who embodied the hopes of the nationalist Jews.

Historically, Zephaniah was older than Nahum. I will thus introduce him before the two other prophets, contrary to his place in the Bible.

11.7.1 Zephaniah

Zephaniah prophesied under Josiah, so in between 640 and 609 BC (year of Josiah's death in Megiddo). Josiah ascended to the throne at a very young age (he was merely 8 years old in 640 BC: 2 Kings 22,1). So he had not yet undertaken his religious reforms and the clergy was corrupt. Zephaniah therefore rose against the ministers of worship and announced the destruction of Judah. This destruction is the "Day of Yahweh" which is "near, and coming with all speed", and will be a "day of distress and agony..." (Zephaniah 1,14-18)

Josiah was influenced by Zephaniah. He undertook his reforms to avoid the worst for the nation. But, like the prophetess Huldah had predicted at this time, the divine punishment was inevitable (2 Kings 22,14-20).

After this punishment, a humble and small "remnant" will survive, which will turn back to God (Zephaniah 3,12). It is through this remnant that the "restoration" predicted by the prophets will be done. But Zephaniah continued to believe that this restoration was nationalist (Zephaniah 3,19-20).

Zephaniah prophesied not only against Judah, but against Assyria too, and predicted the fall of Nineveh: "God will make Nineveh a waste" (Zephaniah 2,13-15). By predicting the end of Assyria and the ruin of Judah, Zephaniah indirectly proclaimed the coming of the Babylonian empire which, at his time, was reinforcing itself more and more.

11.7.2 Nahum

He prophesied a few years after Zephaniah. The danger for Nineveh becomes clearer with the increase of Babylonian power. Nahum unleashes himself against Nineveh very shortly before

its fall: "A destroyer (*Nebupolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father*) advances against you... The gates that give on the River (*Tigris*) are opened, in the palace all is panic (*of Nineveh, the Babylonians had already crossed the Tigris to reach Nineveh*) ... Nineveh is like a pool whose waters are draining away (Nahum 2,2-9) ... 'Nineveh is a ruin!'" (Nahum 3,7).

Exalted at the prospect of an Assyrian defeat, Israel's enemies, Nahum sees nothing but salvation for Judah and its restoration. He is carried away by the hope of (national) restoration: "See... 'Peace!' (*for Judah, by the destruction of Nineveh*) ... (Nahum 2,1) ... Yes, Yahweh is restoring the vineyard of Jacob" (Nahum 2,3). This hope was short-lived because the Jews' defeat at Megiddo in 609 BC followed shortly after Nineveh's in 612 BC. Thus, the hope of salvation gave way to disarray. Jeremiah says a few years later on this subject: "We were hoping for peace—no good came of it! For the moment of healing—nothing but terror!" (Jeremiah 8,15 and 14,19)

However, the prophecy of restoration is not in vain if it is spiritually understood, according to the divine intention: in Jesus.

11.7.3 Habakkuk

He prophesied after the fall of Nineveh. The danger for the Israelis now came from the "Chaldaeans" (*Babylonians*): "For now I am stirring up the Chaldaeans... to seize the homes of others." (Habakkuk 1,6).

Habakkuk resumes Micah's threats against Jerusalem in a veiled manner: "Trouble is coming to the man who builds a town with blood and founds a city (*Jerusalem*) on crime." (Habakkuk 2,12 / Micah 3,10) It is the proclamation of retribution by the Babylonian invasion.

11.8 Haggai and Zechariah

These two prophets are to be seen together because they worked together for the reconstruction of the Temple after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 5,1).

11.8.1 Haggai

The two chapters of Haggai are consecrated to the reconstruction of the Temple. Haggai encourages Zerubbabel and Joshua to build this sanctuary: "... the word of Yahweh was addressed through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, high commissioner of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest... Go to the hill country (*of the Temple*), fetch wood (*for construction*), and rebuild the House (*Temple*)" (Haggai 1,1-8).

The second Temple was completed in around the year 515 BC. It was not as luxurious as the first and the elderly cried at the nostalgic memory of the first scintillating Temple of "glory" (Ezra 3,12). Haggai consoled them and promised them a Temple more marvelous than the first: "Who is there left among you that saw this Temple in its former glory? And how does it look to you now? Does it seem nothing to you? But take courage now... The new glory of this Temple is going to surpass the old, says Yahweh Sabaoth..." (Haggai 2,3-9) It was not so since this Temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 BC... is Haggai an authentic prophet?!

Haggai and the whole community understood this "glory" materially, believing in the amassing of wealth from all non-Jews. Indeed, Haggai made the Lord say: "I will shake all the nations and the treasures of all the nations shall flow in, and I will fill this Temple with glory, says Yahweh Sabaoth. Mine is the silver, mine the gold!" (Haggai 2,7-8) It is hard to believe that the Lord demanded all this material wealth for the coffers of the State of Israel! This was certainly

not God's intention, who always insists on the **spiritual** glory of the **spiritual** Temple which is found in the souls of believers, and not silver and gold. This spiritual glory goes **infinitely** beyond the mediocre and false material glory of Solomon's Temple. It is of this that Jesus speaks by saying: "Think of the flowers growing in the fields... I assure you that not even Solomon (*renowned for his taste for luxury*) in all his regalia was robed like one of these." (Matthew 6,28-29).

Before the invasion, the prophets predicted **retribution**. During exile, they spoke of consolation, and, on their return to Palestine, they pressed for national **restoration**. In the days of Haggai and Zechariah, national hope was based on Zerubbabel, descendent of king David. He was High-Commissioner. The community hoped that he will restore the kingdom of Israel. He was believed to be the announced Messiah and Haggai, "inspired", says to him: "I will take you Zerubbabel... -it is Yahweh who speaks- and make you like a signet ring. For I have chosen you" (Haggai 2,23). This divine choice did not mean that Zerubbabel was the Messiah, but that the Messiah comes from his descendants (Matthew 1,12-13).

11.8.2 Zechariah

Zechariah pushed the people to rebuild the Temple (Zechariah 1,16). He had 8 visions of which the two most important are:

1. The "measurement" of Jerusalem: to test the hearts in order to restore the community with true believers: Zechariah 2,5-9 (Compare with Revelation 11,1 and 21,15).

2. The "two Olive-Trees" ("the two Anointed ones" who build the Temple: Zechariah 4,1-10. Compare with Revelation 11,4).

Zechariah proclaimed an important prophecy regarding the Messiah, "humble and riding on a donkey", not on a chariot of war; who "will banish chariots and horses" of war (Zechariah 9,9-10). It is an invention in the warlike Jewish mentality. This prophecy is accomplished with Jesus, the humble Messiah par excellence, who entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21,1-5 and 11,29).

11.9 Malachi

This book derives its name from the word "Malachi", which means "my Angel". This name derives from the fact that the author prophesies the near coming of the Messiah called "the Angel -Malach- of the Covenant" (Malachi 3,1). Malachi (*My Angel*) is therefore an alias and the author, unknown, wrote after the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, around 450 BC.

Like other prophets before him, Malachi denounced the impiety of the priests and the vanity of their worship, declaring destroyed the covenant of God with Levi, tribe from which the priests emanate: "And now, priests, this warning is for you... I will send the curse on you and curse your very blessing... I am going to paralyze your arm and throw dung in your face—the dung from your very solemnities—and sweep you away with it... But you, you have strayed from the way... You have destroyed the covenant of Levi" (Malachi 2,1-8. See the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31,31-32).

Remind yourself that David had prophesied the establishment, by the Messiah, of a priesthood different from that of Levi, a priesthood "of the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110,4). This priesthood was instituted by Jesus; it is the only priesthood pleasing to God (Hebrews 7,11-19).

The new point in Malachi is the revelation of a precursor sent to prepare the Advent of the Messiah: "Look, I am going to send my messenger (a precursor) **to prepare** a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the Angel of the Covenant (*the Messiah*) whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming" (Malachi 3,1).

This precursory messenger of Christ is "Elijah": "Know that I am going to send you Elijah the prophet **before** My Day comes, that great and terrible Day" (Malachi 3,23). Jesus explained that it was John the Baptist (Matthew 17,10-13), who came, not as a reincarnation of Elijah, but in the same "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1,17), as I have already explained.

This prophecy of the Angel (Malachi), the forerunner of the Messiah, is specific to Malachi. No other prophet speaks of it. That is why it is the highlight of this book and gave it its name: Malachi.

Here ends the study of the books of the Old Testament, a covenant become obsolete, as you have noted, and necessitates **a reform**. This was accomplished by Jesus who inaugurated the times of **spiritual and universal** restoration which we are still living today. For, as Paul points out, the material rules of the Old Covenant "are rules about outward life (*the body*), connected with food and drink and washing at various times, intended to be in force only until it should be time to reform them." (Hebrews 9,10) We will now study the books which present to us this marvelous and invigorating New Covenant in Jesus, the Messiah.

12. Lesson 12 – The Books of the New Testament

The New Testament consists of 27 books, some of which do not exceed a few lines (2 & 3 John and Jude). To study them, we will divide them as follows:

- *Lesson 12*: The Synoptic Gospels & the Acts of the Apostles.
- *Lesson 13*: The Gospel of John and the Epistles of the Apostles.
- *Lesson 14*: The small Book of Revelation.

The Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles

12.1 Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels

Gospel literally means "Good News" (of the Greek: "Ev": good and "angelos": message or news). It is the proclamation of the "Good News" of the Advent of this Messiah, awaited with so much thirst.

There are four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first three are more or less similar and constitute a biography of Jesus. They share the same major concern: to show that Jesus is really the Messiah awaited by the Jews, even if he did not "liberate Israel" politically (Luke 24,21), or "restore the (*political*) royalty in Israel" (Acts 1,6). This point of view is common in these Gospels, and it is the reason why they are called the "Synoptic" Gospels, from the Greek "syn", which means "same", and "optikos", which means "point of view". These three Gospels present a **human** biography of Jesus. This is their common point of view. On the other hand, John reveals, above all, the divinity of Jesus.

I will present to you the Synoptic Gospels together, taking the Gospel of Matthew as a basis. Then, I will speak to you of the common points that he has with Mark and Luke. But first, I

Jesus in prayer

present to you each of these three Evangelists. After the Synoptic Gospels, is the study of the Gospel of John.

12.1.1 Matthew

He was one of the twelve Apostles of Christ. He is mentioned in Matthew 9,9 and 10,3. He is Jewish and was hated by the Jews because he was "publican", ie he levied the fiscal taxes imposed by the Romans from the public. He therefore collected from the Jews to give to the Romans, he who was Jewish. But when Jesus invited Matthew to follow him (Matthew 9,9), he answered the call at once, leaving everything. Mark and Luke call him by his Jewish name: "Levi" (Mark 2,13-14 / Luke 5,27-28).

Matthew is the first to write a narrative of Jesus. He intended it for the Jews who had become Christians; this is why he writes in Hebrew (Aramaic) and often refers to the prophecies of the Old Testament to demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled what was already predicted (Matthew 1,22 / 2,5-6 / 2,15-18 / 3,3 / 4,14-16 etc). Matthew's Gospel is the only Book of the New Testament written in Aramaic, all the others were written in ancient Greek, the international language of the time, and which the Apostles learnt in order to preach (Acts 21,37-40).

12.1.2 Mark

He is not of the group of the Apostles, but joined their ministry after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 12,12). He followed Paul and aided him (Acts 12,25), he then followed Peter who considered him as "his son" (1 Peter 5,13). He was his secretary to some extent. Inspired by Peter, Mark wrote his Gospel and considered by some as being, indirectly, that of Peter. Many biblical commentators think that the "young man" mentioned, without being named, by Mark (Mark 14,51-52), is none other than Mark himself, because this detail does not deserve to be mentioned if it had not been experienced by the writer himself.

12.1.3 Luke

Luke was a pagan doctor. He got to know Christ through Paul and became his travel companion (Colossians 4,14) and faithful collaborator, when others abandoned him (2 Timothy 4,9-11). Influenced by Paul, he wrote his Gospel in Greek to a noble named "Theophilus" (Luke 1,3). His Gospel is, indirectly that of Paul, just as the Gospel of Mark reflects Peter's teachings.

You will notice that Luke writes with the concern to be **precise** in the truth which he reports to Theophilus, "exactly as these were handed down to us by those who from the outset were **eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word (the Virgin Mary, Peter, etc... Luke 1,2-3), I, in my turn, after **carefully** going over the whole story **from the beginning**". He is the only one who gives us details on the birth of John the Baptist, the Annunciation made to Mary and the childhood of Jesus (Luke 1 and 2). That is due to his medical and scientific formation which leaves nothing to chance.

Luke also wrote the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, which he also addressed to the noble "Theophilus" (Acts 1,1), to inform him of the story of Jesus and his disciples, **after the Ascension** of Jesus to Heaven (Acts 1,1-11). So then, the Book of Acts can be considered as the sequel to the Gospel of Luke. I recommend you to study it with the other Synoptic Gospels before the Gospel of John.

Now, starting with the Gospel of Matthew, we will familiarize ourselves with these first three Gospels: The Synoptic Gospels.

The Jews, as you know, knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Also, Matthew hastens to calm them by specifying that Jesus is a descendant of king David. So, he starts his Gospel by giving the "genealogy of Jesus Christ, **son of David**, son of Abraham, etc..." (Matthew 1,1) Most of the names mentioned by Matthew in this genealogy are found in the Old Testament, mainly those of the kings of Judaea, from David to the deportation, until the return from exile with Zerubbabel (Matthew 1,12).

Luke also mentions the genealogy of Jesus (Luke 3,23-38). But instead of listing the names from Abraham to Jesus as Matthew did, Luke starts, on the contrary, from Jesus to Abraham and goes up to "Adam, son of God" (Luke 3,38). The difference in the names of the ancestors is due to the fact that Luke says that Jesus is son of David by "Nathan, **son of David**" (Luke 3,31), whereas Matthew presents him as son of David by Solomon, son of David (Matthew 1,6-7). You will find the name of Nathan in 2 Samuel 5,14 and 1 Chronicles 3,5; he is one of the sons of David born in Jerusalem, and older than Solomon. Whether Jesus descends from one or the other does not matter, nevertheless he is "descendant and son of David". Moreover, notice that Luke, seeking precision in his information, says that Jesus "was **believed to be** son of Joseph, son of Heli, etc..." (Luke 3,23) This "believed to be" adds an important nuance and invites us to go beyond the strict and meticulous human genealogy of names. Jesus is, above all, Son of God!

This nuance invites us above all, not to stop at the human genealogy, but to go up, as John does in his Gospel, to the **divine** genealogy by saying: "At the beginning was the Word (*Jesus*) ... and the Word was God... (John 1,1) ... And the Word was made flesh and lived among us..." (John 1,14) The importance of this last genealogy totally eclipses the first and Jesus invites us Himself to consider it by saying to the Jews: "If David calls him (*Jesus*) **Lord** how then can he be his son?" (Matthew 22,41-46 and Psalm 110,1).

Some Jews seize this text to claim that Jesus "acknowledges" not to be the son of David. It is not so! For Jesus does not say that he is not that too, but that he is even more than that being the "**only** Son of God", the only one to have been miraculously conceived in the world by God, in the womb of a woman still virgin, without the intervention of a man. And, above all, that He already existed before incarnating.

I dwelled a bit on the issue of genealogy, because people weak and immature men in faith, and many enemies of the Gospels, use as a pretext the "difference" between the genealogy of Matthew and that of Luke to claim that the Gospels are false, proof of this is this "divergence" between the two Evangelists on this point. It is a superficial criticism convenient to people unable to go deep. It is necessary however, that you had to be warned and attentive.

At this stage, you can read the texts on the genealogy in Matthew and Luke as well as the other texts mentioned. But do not read the Gospels entirely yet before studying my explanations.

I shall point out from Matthew's Gospel, the points which are in most need of clarification.

12.2 Preparation of Jesus

Before assuming his mission, Jesus withdraws to the desert. This retreat is a period of transition between his life as a carpenter -a life of social and public integration common to all men- and his life as the Messiah who must manifest a new personality, unknown and unsuspected by his entourage. To assume this serious and heavy burden -and prepare society to become aware of it- it was necessary to break away from daily, professional, and routine life. This is why Matthew and the other Evangelists tell us that it is "the Spirit (*of God*) which leads Jesus to the desert" (Matthew 4,1 / Mark 1,12 / Luke 4,1).

Every Apostle must experience, in one way or another, this momentary rupture with society and make a spiritual retreat to deepen and understand God's call, before facing his mission.

The devil always intervenes to disturb this solitude and prevent the soul from capturing God. He deafens the ears by his noise and his deception. Also, before serving God, one must triumph over his enemy, the devil, who is also the enemy of God's beloved.

Jesus "was tempted by the devil" in 3 points:

12.2.1 Act at the request of the devil, not of God

"Tell these stones to turn into loaves", Satan orders (Matthew 4,3-4). Jesus is able to do this miracle. Now, he does not want to act **at the devil's request**, but according to the divine plan, and when the hour of God strikes. Then he will multiply bread and fish so that others may be nourished from it in the desert (Matthew 14,13-21). You must refuse to act, however good it may seem, if it is not inspired by the Divine Spirit. This is a lesson for those who indulge in the condemnable practices of "black" magic, or so-called "white" magic.

12.2.2 Do not put God to test

"If you are Son of God, throw yourself down...", the devil tells Him again (Matthew 4,5-6). "You must not put the Lord your God to the test", replied Jesus. If we are to trust God, we must not, on the contrary, abuse that trust. That would be defying God, putting Him to the test. God does not allow himself be influenced by blackmail. Many believe that they are chosen by God and allow themselves irregularities condemned by God. For example: God refuses a kingdom of Israel, but the Israelis insist on establishing it while continually proclaiming themselves the "chosen people" of God. They are in perfect illusion. By establishing this political kingdom -contrary to God's Will- they will not obtain his blessing either. We cannot force the hand of God nor put him before a fait accompli. If Jesus had listened to Satan and thrown himself down, God would have let him fall, even though it is written: "He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands... etc", because this dive was inspired by the devil, not by God. Moreover, this verse invites us to have full confidence in God during the trials -permitted by Him- that assail us. But God does not assist us in the foolishness we commit to show, with pride, that God will protect us and that He is at our service. In such a case, God abandons us. A person driving like crazy at 200 km/h under the pretext that God is protecting him is deceived. For we must not put God to the test. We should make use of the virtues of prudence, of wisdom, etc... In this case God protects us.

12.2.3 The Kingdom of God is internal

"I will give you all these (kingdoms)", says Satan to Jesus (Matthew 4,8-11). It is the Zionist empire that the devil offers to Christ, a political power, that which the Israelis covet. Jesus is not fooled; He refuses it. His Kingdom is not of this world, it is internal, in the hearts (John 18,36 / Luke 17,20). Defeated, the devil flees without being able to resist the command of Christ: "Be off, Satan!" (Matthew 4,10) This means that Jesus permitted the devil to test him for a profound wisdom: to teach us how to act in the face of this evil one.

The devil went off, but, Luke specifies, "to return at the appointed time" (Luke 4,13). This return of Satan was done by the Jews who wanted to crown Jesus as Zionist king, by force, as we learn from John. But, "Jesus, who could see they were about to come and **take him by force** and make him king, escaped back to the hills by himself." (John 6,14-15) Again Jesus refused to be a king of an Israeli empire that the devil had already offered Him.

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When choosing the Kingdom of God, we must always prepare for the ordeals that the devil and the lovers of the kingdom of the earth will impose on us. "My son", says the Book of Ecclesiasticus, "if you aspire to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for an ordeal. Be sincere of heart, be steadfast, and do not be alarmed when disaster comes." (Ecclesiasticus 2,1-2) This is what Jesus teaches us practically through temptation, to which he has willingly submitted himself, for us. It was only victorious after the trial that "Jesus, **with the power of the Spirit in him**, returned to Galilee" (Luke 4,14). It is **with** this divine spiritual Power that he undertakes his mission. We too must be careful, not to act and commit ourselves without ensuring the indispensable aid of God. So we must know how to discern God's Spirit in us. It is a grace to ask. We must have the Holy Spirit in us; this is the first spiritual treasure that Jesus recommends us to ask our Heavenly Father (Luke 11,13 / Matthew 7,11).

12.3 Jesus in his mission: his inaugural speech (Matthew 5,1 – 7,29)

Jesus does not begin his mission in Nazareth, his village, but farther away, in Capernaum, where he settled (Matthew 4,12). It is Peter's and the first Apostles' village, all fishermen on the Lake of Galilee which lies along Capernaum to the north (See on the chart). This village became his base of operations. The miracles of Jesus made him known throughout the whole region (Matthew 4,23-25). This was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, which designated the land of Zebulon and Naphtali (Galilee), as the center from which the Great Divine Light will shine (Isaiah 8,23 – 9,1).

The crowds followed Jesus who seized the occasion to preach his great inaugural speech, known as the discourse of "the Beatitudes". It entails revolutionary lessons for the Jewish society of the time. It is revolutionary because it is anti-Zionist and anti-racist, intended for the salvation of all men, not exclusive to the Jews.

Luke **specifies** that Jesus addresses himself to **the Jews** who came to listen to him: "But I say this **to you** (*the Jews*) **who are listening**: Love your enemies (*the Palestinians*) . . . " (Luke 6,27) Jesus knew that those who were listening to him were all Zionist Jews who believed that all non-Jews are hateful enemies. He wants to break the ghetto psychology in which his audience was trapped in for many long centuries; this is why He says: "You have learned how it was said: You must love your neighbor (*the Jew like you*) and hate your enemy (*all non-Jews: Leviticus 19,17-18 / Deuteronomy 15,3*). But I say this to you: love your enemies (*those whom **you** consider such*) and pray for those who persecute you (*they do not persecute you, but defend themselves against your wickdness. Think of the Palestinians persecuted by the Israelis and who are considered as 'terrorists'*) . . . " Jesus would say to modern Jews: "Pray for your Palestinian enemies, be good to them, offer them the other cheek if they strike you, because they are the ones who are right. Give them the land that they ask for because it belongs to them". Remember well that it is to the merciless Zionists that Jesus addresses: "I say this to you who are listening. . . "

"If your uprightness goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven", Jesus says again to them, because this so-called "uprightness" is racist and prefers the Jew, with all their faults, over innocent non-Jews (Matthew 5,20). Today, this phrase could be translated as follows: "Men, if your uprightness goes no deeper than that of all theologians and clergy, you will never approach God, whatever your faith. . . If you do not love the upright, whether he is Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Eastern or Western, North or South, vain is your faith".

The Jews hated the Samaritans. It is why Jesus gave the parable of the "**Good** Samaritan" (Luke 10,29). He gave this parable to a Jewish jurist who, it should be noted, "was anxious **to justify himself**" for not being ready to rescue a non-Jew, not defined as his neighbor. This

Jewish jurist does good only according to Jewish racist law: we must overcome this inhuman law if we want to enter God's house.

By teaching these things, Jesus "does not abolish the Law (*Torah*) but completes it, on the contrary, by a Law of Love", which the Jews misinterpreted. "I have come not to abolish but to complete them" said Jesus. He comes to perfect (Matthew 5,17-20). Not only, "you shall not kill", but "you shall not insult" your brother (Matthew 5,21-26). And your brother is any man of virtue. You too must be virtuous and able to understand this noble truth.

For the Jews, as for many believers even today, sin is in the performance of the act materially. Now, Jesus comes to overturn this concept: evil is already in the intention of performing an act: "If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5,27-28). It is not wrong to look, but to look with desire and work to achieve it. So, even if we fail in doing the action, the sin is already accomplished **in us**. If I plan to steal an object, but I am unable to do so for one reason or another, it is considered an evil act already done in my conscience. As the Kingdom of God is **in us**, so too is evil in us.

These are the most misunderstood lessons of the "Beatitudes". The rest is easy to understand.

Also keep in mind that, "to present the other cheek to whoever strikes you", is a commandment addressed to unjust people and does not mean that honest and innocent men should be weak before **injustice**. One must know how to defend himself, self-defense is a duty, especially when one must protect his family, his children and his own life against aggressor criminals. The Apocalypse, speaking of the Antichrist, invites us to pay her "double the amount she exacted", and even to give her a "double strong cup" for the torments she caused to others (Revelation 18,6-7).

In this regard, I invite you to meditate on the attitude of Jesus in front of one of the guards who slapped him when he was arrested (John 18,19-23); he did not present his other cheek, but asked the one who slapped him unjustly to render count for his act. We must guard our dignity and our pride in the face of violent injustice, that too is humility and greatness of the soul. As for the attitude of presenting the other cheek, it must be that of the one who has committed an injustice towards someone who reproaches him for it. The culprit must humble himself and admit guilt, he must redeem himself, and be grateful to those who reprimand him and slap him with the word of justice to rectify him.

12.4 Jesus and John the Baptist (Matthew 11,1-15)

John the Baptist was announced, as previously explained, by Malachi "to clear a way before the Messiah" (Malachi 3,1). Jesus himself refers to this prophecy (Matthew 11,10). This forerunner of the Messiah was, according to the Israeli concept, to prepare the Jews for the Messiah King of Israel, who would restore the kingdom to Israel, a political kingdom of David's dynasty. John the Baptist himself did not understood that the Messiah's Kingdom is spiritual and universal. Matthew relates that "John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing" (Matthew 11,2). These works had nothing political about them: neither an armed rally to depose Herod who was not of David's dynasty, nor a cry of violent resistance against the Romans, as the Zealots wanted (Jewish nationalist party to which the apostle Simon the Zealot belonged: Matthew 10,4), but forgiveness of sins, cure of the sick, and kindness towards Roman officers, considered by Jesus as having a fervent faith: "nowhere in Israel have I found faith like this." (Matthew 8,5-13)

In his prison, John the Baptist expected to be freed by a revolutionary uprising led by Jesus. And yet, what Jesus "was doing", was nothing to do with nationalism, and surprised him and scandalized many other Jews. The Forerunner prisoner sends some of his disciples to ask Jesus:

"Are you the one who is to come (*the 'nationalist' Messiah*), or have we got to wait for someone else?" (Matthew 11,3) This question pestered John the Baptist's disciples, who in their turn harassed their master. They trusted him, he had told them that the expected Messiah was Jesus whom "he was not fit to carry his sandals" (Matthew 3,11). So, they asked themselves, why is this Messiah not working to restore the kingdom to Israel? What is he waiting for? How is it that he is kind to the Romans and visits the Pagans to cure the sick, like the Gadarenes (Matthew 8,28-34) and Sidonians (Matthew 15,21-28)? All this scandalized the fanatic Jews.

Jesus' response to the envoys of John the Baptist aims to break the nationalist and fanatical spirit in the Jewish hearts who, of good faith, were led astray by Zionism: "Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again... etc... (*as Isaiah had predicted: Isaiah 29,18 / 35,5*) ... the Good News (*of the Advent of the Messiah*) is proclaimed to the **poor** (*not to the rich who thought themselves privileged: Isaiah 61,1*); and happy is the one who does not lose faith in me (*in me not being a nationalist activist too*)." (Matthew 11,4-6) This response could only upset John's envoys.

Jesus, in stressing that John the Baptist is a prophet and even that "of all the children born of women, a greater than him has never been seen" (Matthew 11,9-11), invites his listeners to believe in the testimony of this prophet who considered himself "not fit to carry the sandals of Jesus" (Matthew 3,11). He invites them to believe that He, Jesus, is truly this awaited Messiah, even if they find his non-political deeds strange. However, Christ is quick to point out that John the Baptist, despite his greatness, is "the least in the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 11,11). The reason? It is because the least in the Kingdom **of Heaven** (not of Israel) understood that Jesus is king, not of a political State, but of an **inner** spiritual life, non-nationalist, as the good in faith, the great John the Baptist and the Apostles of Jesus themselves believed in good faith in the beginning.

John the Baptist also owes his greatness to the fact that he closes an era, that of the concept of the nationalist Messiah: "It was toward John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading" (*so that he may bear witness to the Messiah, this Jesus, who is neither a military man, nor a politician like an Ariel Sharon, an Itzhak Shamir or a Shimon Peres today*). But from John, a new concept of messianism begins: "Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time (*and still till today*), the Kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm." (Matthew 11,12-13) Why? Because the Jews had to do violence to themselves, to shake themselves violently to liberate themselves from prejudice and preconceived ideas, and from a whole mental inheritance which shaped and distorted their comprehension of messianism. They let themselves be led collectively to expect a Zionist Christ in spite of the many repeated warnings of the prophets, and the refusal, frankly declared by God and Samuel, of an Israeli king.

It is difficult to part from a nationalist mentality. However, if one wants to be part of the Kingdom of God, **as God sees it**, one must force oneself, one must give up any political idea that he has of it. The Jews imprisoned by the idea of an Israeli State, the Christians who believe in the **State of the Vatican** (so-called Christian but become political), and the Muslims who campaign to establish Islamic monarchies or republics must, today, all "do violence" to themselves to be freed from the chains of these deviationist ideas if they want to enter the spiritual Kingdom of Heaven.

In terms of daily and personal life, we often have to shake ourselves, "to subject oneself to violence" to get out of the indolence that paralyses us and thus resist the materialistic current that entrains the weak. They blindly follow the majority, without reflection, and without being able to freely choose a personal life, different from that of others, and more useful for the heart and the soul.

John the Baptist was, in the end, "this Elijah who was to return", explained Jesus (Matthew 11,14 / 17,11-13). I had explained that the precursor of Jesus was to present himself in the world "with the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1,17). It is spiritually then, that we must interpret the prophecy of Malachi 3,23 and not textually, as do those who await Elijah's return in person, his reincarnation. Such was John's intention by saying that he was not Elijah (John 1,21).

An important point needs to be well understood: John the Baptist marked the Jews deeply, to such an extent that many believed that he was the Messiah. It is the reason for which this precursor did not fail to stress that he was not the Messiah: "I am not the Christ" he said (John 1,20). "Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ and not Elijah?" the priests asked him (John 1,25). He answered: "I baptize you in water **for repentance**, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire." (John 1,26 and Matthew 3,11)

John's baptism is thus a preparation, a call to **repentance**. That of Jesus gives the grace and the **forgiveness** that John the Baptist could not grant. This is the reason why Jesus' baptism is more powerful than his precursor's. To obtain it, it must fall on an already repentant heart. John, therefore, calls to repentance with a baptism of water that will no longer have its purpose after the Advent of the Messiah. Jesus inaugurates in the world a new, spiritual baptism, for all men who repent and decide to change for the better.

Many Jewish pilgrims came to Jerusalem during the religious festivals. Some from Ephesus had met John the Baptist and, impressed by him, recognized the importance of his baptism. So they were baptized by him and then returned home. This category of Jews formed the nucleus of the first Christians. They were visited by the Apostles who explained to them the insufficiency of John's baptism and the importance of that of Jesus: "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus... the Holy Spirit came down on them" (Acts 19,1-7). With the Apocalypse, in our time, the concept of baptism is taken to a higher spiritual level.

12.5 How the Apostles conceived the Messiah (Matthew 16)

The Apostles -like the whole of Jewish society of yesterday and of today- did not at all expect the kind of Messiah that they saw in Jesus. It took great pedagogy and a lot of tact on the part of the Carpenter of Nazareth to introduce into the Jewish mentality, very politicized, the concept of the modest and humble Messiah, spiritual and universal.

Under several forms, Jesus presented to his disciples his non-temporal Kingdom, open to all men, that this young and modest carpenter came to inaugurate. Talking to them about the Kingdom they thought was political, he said to them: "there will be no one to say, 'Look here! Look there!' For, you must know, the kingdom of God is **among you**." (Luke 17,21) It should therefore not be sought after outside, in a geographical place, in Jerusalem or in Samaria. Moreover: It should therefore not be sought after outside, in a geographical place, in Jerusalem or in Samaria. And even: "People from east and west, from north and south, will come to take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 13,29) Thus the subjects of this universal Kingdom will not only be the Jews since "many who are last (*the Pagans who came to the faith after the Jews*) will be first, and the first (*the Jews*) will be last" (Matthew 19,30 / Luke 13,30). The messianism explained by Jesus was unthinkable for all Jews, imbued with their nationalist and patriotic ideas. Still today, the idea of such a messianism does not come to mind with the Israelis.

After two years in the company of his Apostles and their preparation, and a year before being delivered to the crucifixion, Jesus probes his Apostles. They had seen his miraculous works,

but had they understood his teachings and the subtleties of his insinuations too? They had to understand two things:

1- That Jesus, in this modest appearance, is the expected Christ.

2- That Christ's mission is not to restore the State of Israel, contrary to their hopes. The Messiah had to confirm his Apostles in their total faith in him so that they would not disavow him after his apparent "defeat" on the cross, and that they would continue to believe in him despite the fact that he had not restored the Israeli State (see Luke 24,21 and Acts 1,6).

Jesus therefore asks, a year before being put to death: "'But you, who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ'" (Matthew 16,15-20). Jesus praised his apostle because, through the appearances of poverty, Peter recognized in Jesus the Messiah who, however, was expected to be of noble, or even royal stock according to the world. Now, no luxurious aspect whatsoever distinguished this humble and modest carpenter of Nazareth; his nobility was internal. Peter discerned in his Master the Messiah, nothing less than "the Son of God", despite the simplicity of his clothes. This is why Jesus said to him: "It was not flesh or blood (*not from the aspect of human glory*), that revealed this to you but my Father in Heaven." It was a strong inner intuition, a powerful and deep spiritual light that prompted Peter to speak up.

Yet, paradoxically, Christ was quick to "give the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ." (Matthew 16,20) Why? Because the crowd would come and force him as political king of Israel as already happened before (John 6,15). Not only did he ask for their total discretion, but, "from that time Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day." (Matthew 16,21)

At these words, flesh and blood took over from Peter; he no longer heard anything that the Heavenly Father could inspire in him. Convinced that the Messiah was to restore the kingdom to Israel, he could not imagine that this savior of "the nation" was to be put to death. With a forceful gesture, Peter, "taking him aside, started **to remonstrate** with him (*reprimand, scold*) by saying "this must not happen to you!!" (Matthew 16,22) If this was the attitude of the Apostles after two years of initiation, imagine what the other Jews with Jesus were thinking... and Judas Iscariot in particular, he who aspired only for the kingdom of Israel.

After having praised Peter for having recognized him as the Messiah, Jesus reprimands him for having "remonstrated" with him. The Messianic concept of Peter was still earthly. "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's!" (Matthew 16,23) The Israelis have been seeking, since Samuel, an Israeli kingdom that God condemns.

By this fact of the condemnation of the State of Israel, God establishes in the world a new principle of judgment of the consciences. This principle is valid for us, people of the 20th century, it is a criterion, a measurement of true faith. Men who have worked -and are still working- for the edification and the permanence of Israel do not think like God, but like men, as Jesus said to Peter. John's Revelation tells us that at the end of time, God will charge his Envoys "to measure the Temple", ie to probe the consciences of men, especially of the believers represented by the "Temple" (Revelation 11,1 / 21,15). This probe is currently being carried out through the State of Israel: those for this State are against God and those who resist Israel are serving God's universal plan of salvation.

The examination of conscience operated by Jesus to his Apostles through the question: "But you, who do you say I am?", revealed that they understood that he was the Christ... but, that according to them, he had to restore the Israeli kingdom. Before his Ascension, they still asked him: "Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1,6) So they

had not understood the Master's thoughts despite that "he had shown himself alive to them **after** his Passion by many manifestations: for **forty days** he continued to appear to them and tell them about the (*spiritual*) Kingdom of God." (Acts 1,3).

The probe carried out by Jesus with his Apostles revealed their unshakable faith in him: "You are the Messiah!" After two years of formation, only this first step was overcome. The second -namely that the Messiah is not a nationalist- still remained to be done. But the Apostles were unable at this moment to advance any further, paralyzed by the age-old concept -erroneous but nonetheless traditional- that the Messiah was to be the temporal king of Israel. For all the Jews this was self-evident and was not even discussed.

So it was already enormous for Peter to have the certitude that Jesus was the Messiah. It was based on this certitude that the rest could be edified: "I still have many things to say to you", Jesus says to the Twelve, "but they would be too much for you **now**" (John 16,12). At this moment, they could not, indeed, understand that the one in whom they had put all their hopes in to establish the Israeli empire, will end up tragically nailed to a cross.

Also, it is only after having guaranteed the solidity of their faith in his person that Jesus "**started**" to reveal to them the plan of God: "I will suffer and be put to death..." (Matthew 16,21-23) To explain to them that this tragedy has deep reasons, that he freely accepts it for their own good, and that he is powerful enough to avoid it, Christ transfigured himself before them in light "six days after" having declared to them his death, this humanly overwhelming outcome of his messianism. But they had to know that, if he wanted to, he could have escaped this ignominious death, he who had transfigured himself before them, he who had risen from the dead. It is for their own sake that he submitted himself -freely- to this sacrifice: "It is **for your own good** that I am going" (John 16,7), Jesus tells them. And also: "**I lay down** my life... No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again" (John 10,17-18). "I have told you this now **before** it happens, so that when it does happen you may **believe**." (John 14,29).

So keep in mind that it was **to save** his disciples that Jesus **voluntarily** accepted to deliver himself to his torturers. But it was first necessary to guarantee their faith in his messianism. After having been assured of this faith with his Apostles, he tested his intimate friends: "I am the resurrection... Do you believe this?" He asks Martha "Yes Lord! I believe that you are the Christ...", she answers (John 11,25-27). What was Jesus going to save them from? From the Zionist lie, from the seduction of nationalism, from the pretense in which they wandered, believing they were the only chosen people and more important in the eyes of God than non-Jews. In summary, Jesus frees from the fire of fanaticism and materialism all those who truly believe in him.

To consolidate the faith of his Apostles, Christ wanted to show them the power of his body over the elements of nature. They witnessed this by seeing him walk on water, something Peter was unable to replicate. This had contributed in the increase of their faith (Matthew 14,25-33).

A second time Jesus reminds his Apostles of his killing being close "and a great sadness came over them" (Matthew 17,22-23), especially since it occurred right after the Transfiguration.

A third time Jesus repeated: "The Son of man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes... and will be crucified" (Matthew 20,17-19). "But", Luke adds, and despite all these warnings, "they could make nothing of this; what he said was quite obscure to them, they did not understand what he was telling them" (Luke 18,31-34). They were obsessed with the Israeli kingdom and imagined (that with Jesus) the illusory Israeli kingdom was going to appear instantly (Luke 9,11).

For the Jews, the "Kingdom of God" (or "of Heaven") on earth meant the kingdom of Israel in Palestine. For Jesus, it is not so. How do you understand this Kingdom, you?

The whole of Jewish society was so thirsty and blinded by political power, that even the mother of two Apostles -James and John- came to Jesus, right after the third announcement of his passion to claim a material favor for her two sons: "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came with her sons to make a request of him... 'Promise that these two sons of mine may sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your kingdom'... When the other ten heard this they were indignant with the two brothers." (Matthew 20,20-24) Believing that this kingdom was of a temporal and immediate nature, the disciples were competing for first place, each one seeing himself more apt to be the Prime Minister, or wanting important ministerial positions.

To the question posed by the Apostles: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?", Jesus did not answer: "It is you, Peter, or you x", but "he called a little child... 'The one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest..." (Matthew 18,1-4) And, in response to the request of the mother of James and John, Jesus says: "their great men make their authority felt. **This is not to happen among you**. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant..." (Matthew 20,24-28).

To remove any illusion from his Apostles, Christ invites them to follow him in the way of sacrifice, not that of glory according to the world: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me... What, then, will a man gain if he wins the whole world (*as the Israelis covet*) and ruins his life?" (Matthew 16,24-26) Hadn't Christ rejected the empire of the world which Satan offered him (Matthew 4,9-10), and subsequently the Jews (John 6,15)? On the contrary, the Antichrist will accept this same empire of the "Dragon" (*Satan*) in the apocalyptic era that we live in (Revelation 13,2).

Most of Jesus' teachings aim to destroy the ghetto and tribal, or familial cast mentality which the Jewish society sank into. It was precisely to break this fanatical mentality that Jesus had told his Jewish listeners: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace (*the "Israeli shalom", a kind of Pax Israeliana*) to the earth, it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come **to set** a man **against** his father, a daughter against her mother... A man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Matthew 10,34-36) The sword which Jesus speaks of is that of the word of truth which cuts through.

The Jews reproached Jesus for these words which, according to them, are contrary to the divine commandment to respect parents. This has nothing to do with it, because what Christ wants to say by this, is that parents will rise up against their children when they see them follow the non-political teachings of Jesus, considering them against the Jewish nation and unpatriotic. Also, those who will let themselves be intimidated by their parents to the point of deviating from Christ, are unworthy of him: "No one who prefers father or mother to me is worthy of me" (Matthew 10,37). God is the first to be served, and it is by doing violence to oneself to break the chains of human traditions that prevent us from gaining the Kingdom of God (Matthew 11,12).

Most modern societies, even those that claim to believe in God and democracy, are damned because of fanaticism. What would the Israelis, Christians, Muslims and the whole world say of Jesus today, hearing the Messiah speak this way? What would the Jews of the 20th century in Palestine say, today, hearing Jesus deny them a divine right to establish an Israeli State in Palestine? What would the Christians say, hearing Jesus condemn the **State** of the Vatican become political and Christian worship in general, become pagan? Who is able to detach himself from his own family to follow Jesus freely? A few people truly.

12.6 Why did the Christ have to be put to death?

By dying without restoring the temporal kingdom to Israel, Jesus delivered the fatal blow to

the concept of a Zionist Messiah. After his death, his disciples continued, indeed, to believe that he was the Messiah, despite the fact that he had not restored the kingdom of the dynasty of David.

Jesus had to die in this way to kill, by dying on the cross, Jewish nationalism. He thus gives life again to the essence of true Judaism which is spiritual, non-political.

It is by his death that Jesus liberates his people by revealing himself as a spiritual and universal Messiah who came to the world for the whole of mankind, not exclusively for the Jews. It is upon the death of Jesus that a non-Jew must possess the Bible. This Book was jealously detained by the Jews before Jesus. Jewish priests and scribes concealed and made inaccessible the words of the prophets because they condemned them. The Jewish chiefs did not want to expose their shame to the world.

This made the Bible inscrutable not only for non-Jews, but also for the large majority of the Jews themselves. Hosea reproached the priests for leaving the people in ignorance (Hosea 4,4-6) and Malachi condemned them for having imprisoned the knowledge of God behind bars of their lips (Micah 2,7-9). Jesus also rose against the clergy, accusing them "for having taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves, and have prevented others going in who wanted to", He tells them (Luke 11,52 / Matthew 23,13). By giving the "keys of Heaven" to Peter, Jesus opened the door of knowledge of God to the people of the whole world (Matthew 16,19), freeing these keys from the hands of the fruitless Jewish cast of clerics.

It took Jesus immense, if not infinite love, and indomitable courage to confront the Israelis. Jesus did not hesitate to go through this burning fire to obtain for us the Light through the Israeli iron curtain: "Yes, God loved the (*whole*) world so much that he gave his only Son, so that **everyone** who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life." (John 3,16).

What would the Jews of Israel do today, especially the Rabbis, to a Jew who presents himself as the Messiah and who refuses any form of Jewish nationalism, of an Israeli State? All the evil comes from the fact that the Jews persist in establishing such a political State. This State was the central conflict between Jesus and the Jews, as it was between them and Samuel... and between them and God (1 Samuel 8). If the Israelis had been able to accept divine, apolitical messianism, there would have been no reason for Jesus to go through physical death. He would have continued to teach peacefully and to proclaim the spiritual path open to all men, aided in this by the entire Israelite community.

Now, it is the disciples of Jesus, they only, who made faith accessible to Pagans, and this to the great surprise of some Jews and a great scandal to the majority (Acts 10,34-48 / 11,1-8 / 14,27 / 15,7-12 / 26,23...) He had to go to the cross to kill political and fanatical messianism, but the "Key" entrusted to Peter produced a lot of fruit (Matthew 16,19).

12.7 When should we forgive or judge?

Some misunderstand Jesus' teaching on forgiveness and judgement. They believe that one must always forgive everything to everyone, unconditionally, without ever judging. Such an attitude is an alienation of oneself, a renunciation of man's dignity and a green light given to evil in the world.

Here is Christ's intention concerning forgiveness and judgement:

12.7.1 Forgiveness

It is only granted under certain conditions: "If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone... If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not

listen... report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector." (Matthew 18,15-17) Pagans and tax collectors were rejected by the community of believers.

That means that we should not be resentful and stop at the fault, but to open one's heart to the other by forgiving **if** the reprimand is heard. If there is repentance, then we must forgive for us to obtain forgiveness too: "Yes, if you forgive... your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either." (Matthew 6,14-15) But if the offender does not regret their fault, then they must be rejected since they would be considered a Pagan.

To forgive then, does not mean having a weak attitude since:

1. The sinner **must be reproved**, openly and publicly if need be, and
2. If he persists in his errors, you must break with him since he refuses to listen. "If your brother does something wrong, **reprove him**", says Luke, "if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I am sorry,' you must forgive him." (Luke 17,3-4) The reprimand must thus be followed by tender forgiveness, **if** the repentance is sincere.

The role of John the Baptist was precisely an invite to repentance to merit forgiveness.

However, there is such a sin that is not forgivable "neither in this world nor in the next", says Jesus, it is the sin "against the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 12,31-32). This consists in opposing one's ideas, one's thoughts, to those of God. There is no forgiveness possible in this case because there will never be true repentance. Jesus, in saying these words, was addressing the Pharisees who resisted him, and who attributed his miraculous power to the devil, not "to the Spirit of God" (Matthew 12,22-28). It is unforgivable for so-called religious persons not to discern the Spirit of God in divine works. This is one aspect of sin against the Spirit. Pride and egoism are other examples. The Book of Revelation draws up a list of this kind of sin (Revelation 21,8).

This grave and unforgivable sin is made up of the over-proud and illogical refusal of the evident truth. To divert eyes from one's wrong doing, to say that Beauty is ugly and that truth is false are sins against the Divine Spirit: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness", says Isaiah (Isaiah 5,20). To attribute to yourself the right to judge without having recourse to God is to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... for on the day you eat of it shall most surely die" (Genesis 2,17) for having given yourself the freedom to judge superficially, according to your own human mentality -often distorted- without referring to the Spirit of God as a criterion for judgment.

John asks us to pray for a brother who "commits a sin that is not a deadly sin, God will give life to this brother (*by the grace of repentance*)". But he does ask us on the other hand, "there is a sin that is death, and I will not say that you must pray about that." (1 John 5,16-17) It is about the sin against the Divine Spirit for which God is inexorable. For only the enemies of God commit this kind of serious fault, even if they present themselves as believers. True children of God do not commit such faults: "We know that anyone who has been begotten by God does not sin, because the begotten Son of God (*Jesus Christ*) protects him, and the Evil One does not touch him", John adds (1 John 5,18-19). Indeed, to pray for the enemies of God is to offend God: "You, for your part must not intercede for this people... for I will not listen to you", says the heavenly Father to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7,16).

To recognize a forgivable sin from an unforgivable one, we must have the Spirit of God in us. God gives his Spirit to his true children (Luke 11,13). It is in the light of God and in the general attitude of the person that we perceive the heart in depth and that we recognize if repentance is sincere or of self-interest, or if the individual clings to his errors with no hope for change.

12.7.2 Judgment

Many think -wrongly- that Jesus prevents believers from judging others when he says: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves" (Luke 6,37).

Now, to recognize any sin, you have to pass judgment. Jesus, in advising not to judge, addresses his interlocutors accustomed to condemning others lightly, to appreciate them according to what suits their interests and their ways of thinking. They rejected Jesus, judging him on superficial grounds, on his poor appearance, which did not match with their pompous concepts of messianism. The Jewish chiefs did not judge Jesus according to the Messianic prophecies and the criteria of justice which demand **absolute objectivity**.

Such objectivity is only obtained after having emptied the prejudices and blind passions. As long as this purification is not achieved, one must abstain from judging the behavior of others: "Do not keep judging according to appearances", said Jesus, but immediately added: "let your judgment be according to what is **right**." (John 7,24).

One must above all judge himself, to recognize his defects, to correct them in order to see clearly and, then, judge others, but "**in justice**", not according to our opinion. And justice prescribes to blot out the evil which is in us, "and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye", Jesus had also said (Matthew 7,5).

Jesus prescribes "not to give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls in front of pigs" (Matthew 7,6). To practice this, **we must judge** who is a "dog" and who is a "pig".

We must therefore conclude that judging is a duty we should not abstain from, but that our judgments must be put forth in the Light of God, according to his perfect Justice.

12.8 Jesus and the rich (Matthew 19,16-26)

Christ is not against the fact of possessing material wealth, but against the fact of being attached to money, like the avarice, preferring it over spiritual values: "You cannot be the slave both of God and of Mammon." (*god of money: Matthew 6,24*).

When Jesus invited this rich young man to follow him as an apostle, but only if he stripped himself of his possessions for the poor, the latter, instead of rejoicing, "went away sad, for he was a man of great wealth." He was not ready to give it up for spiritual wealth (Matthew 19,22).

"It is hard for someone rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven", said Jesus (Matthew 19,23), not because he is rich, but because he places all his confidence in his material wealth, not in God: "Watch, and be on your guard against avarice of any kind, for a man's life is not made secure by what he owns", He said (Luke 12,15). Also, "Warn those who are rich in this world's goods... not to set their hopes on money... but on God... they are to do good, and be rich in good works... if they want to make sure of the only life that is real (*Eternal Life*)." (1 Timothy 6,17-19).

There were rich persons among Jesus' disciples, but who made good use of their material assets: "A rich man of Arimathaea, called Joseph", placed the body of Jesus in his own tomb (Matthew 27,57-60). Lazarus too, and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, were rich, and Zacchaeus, "a wealthy man" (Luke 19,2), who was saved for having decided "to give half of my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount." (Luke 19,1-10) (See 2 Corinthians 8,13: seek equality, but without breaking the bank).

The Apostles, like all the Jews, believed that material wealth was a sign of blessing. So they were shocked by the words of Christ regarding the rich and asked him: "Who can be saved, then?", since the rich themselves have such difficulty (Matthew 19,25). Now Jesus had already

mentioned to them Isaiah's prophecy: "The Good News is proclaimed to the **poor**" (Matthew 11,5 / Isaiah 61,1). This is why "Jesus gazed at them (*them, the poor*). 'For men (*even though they are rich*)', He told them, 'this (*salvation*) is impossible; for God everything is possible.'" (Matthew 19,26) It is to tell them that God preferred them, they the poor who had given up everything (*even though they had little*) to follow him, over the rich who refused to be his disciples.

To summarize, there are some rich people who are also rich spiritually as they put their money to good use. These follow Jesus. There are wealthy people who are spiritually miserable because they are attached to their money on which their security depends. On the other hand, there are poor people who are spiritually rich because they know how to trust in God who never disappoints them (Matthew 6,25-34). There are some poor people who are doubly miserable because they are thirsty for money and are ready to do anything -even injustice- to always have more, instead of relying on God.

12.9 The Curse of the fig tree (Matthew 21,18)

This curse is real, but it is above all symbolic. Note that it follows the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple and precedes the return of Jesus to the Temple, where he was intercepted by the religious chiefs (Matthew 21,23-27) who questioned him maliciously. The fig tree (like the vine) is a symbol of Israel. By cursing it, the Jewish chiefs felt targeted (as would -for example- the Lebanese feel targeted when the Cedar, symbol of Lebanon, is cursed). This curse on the scribes and the "hypocrite" Pharisees becomes obvious in chapter 23 of Matthew, devoted to the condemnation of these "serpents, brood of vipers", whose blood they shed, "and so will draw down on them", and ends with a condemnation of Jerusalem (Matthew 23,33-39), symbolized by the cursed fig tree. But "It was not the season for figs", says Mark (Mark 11,13); So Jesus knew that he could not find figs on the fig tree in this season. The symbol is therefore clear: as the fig tree had no figs and deceives people by hiding this nudity with leaves, so does Jerusalem disguise itself to dissimulate its wickedness and its innumerable crimes (see Jeremiah 4,30 and Matthew 23,37). Read the parable of the sterile fig tree (Luke 13,6-9).

Finally, note the hidden moral of this story: "... if you have faith and do **not doubt at all**, not only will you do what I have done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Get up and throw yourself into the sea', it will be done." (Matthew 21,21) The "Fig tree" and the "Mountain" are two symbols of Israel. Jesus spoke "as he was returning to the city" (*Jerusalem: Matthew 21,18*), and looked at it while speaking. It, this "mountain", mentioned in the Book of Revelation, "was hurled into the sea" (Revelation 8,8). It is the Beast of Revelation against which one must resist and vanquish by **faith** which is not hesitant to "throw it into the sea" from whence it came (Revelation 13,1). This is the moral of the story, the moral to be applied today, after the return of this accursed mountain which have deceived people of little faith. (Mount Zion is often mentioned by the Bible as a symbol of Israel: Micah 3,12 / Joel 2,1 / Daniel 9,20).

12.10 Taxes (Matthew 22,13-17)

The Romans collected taxes from the countries it occupied. In Palestine, the Jews paid their taxes in the available currency which was, in Roman times, carved with the effigy of Caesar. There was no Israeli currency, despite the fact that apparently, there was an Israeli kingdom under king Herod.

The Jews considered the duty of paying such taxes as an insupportable alienation. The Romans charged Jewish civil servants, Publicans, to collect these taxes from their fellow citizens who

hated them. Jesus, in choosing Matthew (a publican) defied and irritated many Jews (Matthew 9,9-11).

"Then the Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap him in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians (*sect under the pay of king Herod who, knowing that he was not loved by the people, had his men spy in the Temple and in the villages*), to say: '... Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not¿" (Matthew 22,15) Had he answered "Yes", Jesus would have been accused of treason to the Jewish nation and would have attracted the animosity of the people who admired him, destroying himself, "taken in by the trap of his word" like the Pharisees wanted. Had he answered "No", He would have been accused by the Romans as a revolutionary who prevents the people from paying taxes. The trap was well prepared.

The Jews would have liked Jesus to be this nationalist revolutionary. They would have supported him. Hadn't they tried to make him king of Israel? (John 6,15) It is only after having understood his apolitical intentions that they decided to forfeit him; even accusing him of what they really wanted him to do: a sedition against Rome. Hypocrites! Note indeed that it was towards the end of Jesus' mission that this episode took place, after the Jews, disappointed, realized that his mission was not nationalist. They then decided to do away with him.

Jesus thwarted their cunning: "But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, '... Let me see the money you pay the tax with... Whose head is this?' 'Caesar's,' they replied." So, the money handled in Israel was carved out with Caesar's effigy, not that of Herod, or any Jewish king of the past. Jesus' thrashing response struck down his detractors: "Pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar and God what belongs to God!" It was not without some embarrassment that the Herodians had to report these remarks to their king.

The Jews, by agreeing to sell and buy in Roman currency, should accept to pay taxes to Rome in the same currency.

12.11 The truth about Judas

Why did Judas betray Jesus?

Few people can clearly answer this question. Try to answer this before resuming your reading.

Why did Judas follow Jesus?

The answer to this question enables us to respond intelligently to the first.

All that Judas wanted from Jesus was the national restoration of the Davidic kingdom. He expected that Jesus will put all his spiritual power in the service of this political goal, hoping to feature among the most brilliant figures. The miracles of Christ and their spiritual significance barely interested him; neither did they arouse his admiration or an enthusiasm able to raise his judgment spiritually. He remained earthly.

After the multiplication of bread, the crowds followed Jesus in admiration to proclaim him king. He hid himself. Going in search for him, they found him, but only to hear a remonstration from his part: "You are not looking for me because you have seen the signs, but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat... work for food that endures to eternal life" (John 6,26-27).

Like Judas, the whole crowd was only interested in the material benefits. Proof of this is that when he spoke of the real food which gives eternal life to the soul, he was no longer listened to and Jesus concluded: "But there are some of you who do not believe". John further explains: "Jesus knew from the outset who did not believe and **who** was to betray him" (John 6,64-71).

Judas was therefore among those who did not believe in the profound signification of the miracles of Jesus, in spite of his presence on site where they were performed. Graver than his

indifference, was the fact that he continued to follow Jesus without believing in him. He should have left with the crowds when Jesus asked the Twelve: "What about you, do you want to go away too?" (John 6,67) Why did Judas stay? It was because he was too attached to the advantages that would come to him from a possible political kingdom that he hoped to see established by Jesus. Nothing else mattered for him.

Jesus understood the real intentions of this false disciple and says: "Did I not choose the Twelve of you? Yet **one** of you is a devil". John does not let us guess who this "devil" was and adds: "He meant Judas son of Simon Iscariot, since this was the man, one of the Twelve, who was to betray him" (John 6,67-71).

When Peter became irritated with Jesus for having announced his imminent death, Jesus retorted: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16,23) But Peter ends up accepting the spiritual kingdom of Jesus. Of the Twelve, only one attached himself to his demon: "One of you is a devil", Jesus specified, only one: Judas Iscariot.

Another difference between Peter and Judas is that Peter, in denying knowing Jesus (Matthew 26,69-75), was **in a state of surprise**. But Judas betrays Christ by cold and calculated premeditation. Peter's sin is of the forgivable kind. That of the traitor, Judas, is against the Holy Spirit, an unforgivable sin (Mark 3,28-30 / John 15,22-24 / 1 John 5,16).

Judas decided to deliver Jesus when he lost all hope of seeing him carrying out his most cherished wish: the kingdom of Israel. The decision gradually germinated in the heart of Judas and the desire to move on to the act was triggered during supper in the house of Lazarus, "six days before the Passover" (John 12,1-11), that is five days before the crucifixion and four days before the betrayal in the Garden of Olives. During supper at Lazarus, "Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus... Then Judas Iscariot... said, 'Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor?' He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contributions." (John 12,3-6) Such is the unknown aspect of Judas; his true face of "thief" revealed by the Apostle John who knew him well.

Jesus responded to the indelicate remark of Judas: "Leave her alone; let her keep it for the day of my burial. You have the poor with you always; you will not always have me" (John 12,7-8). It was with his powerful and penetrating gaze that Jesus addressed these words to him who was to betray him and who seized all the overwhelming weight in his conscience. Judas could not bear this markdown in place, nor the praise that Jesus made of Mary, that he, on the contrary, wanted to take back: "I tell you solemnly, wherever in all the world this Good News is proclaimed, what she has done will be told also, in remembrance of her." (Matthew 26,13) It is "**then**", says Matthew "that one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests" to deliver them the Messiah (Matthew 26,14-15). His pride could not bear this insult in public.

Judas' hypocrisy is also apparent when Jesus announces to the Apostles: "One of you is about to betray me." They were greatly distressed and started to ask him in turn, "Not I, Lord, surely?" At his turn, Judas (knowing well that he was the target), asks him: "Not I, Rabbi, surely?" "'They are your owns words,' answered Jesus." (Matthew 26,20-25)

In delivering Jesus, Judas hoped to be restored in the confidence of the Jewish clergy. Realizing that he had lost the esteem of the Apostles and the Jews, he went to hang himself, gnawed by despair, knowing full well that he had delivered an innocent man to the malice of his executioners (Matthew 27,3-4).

Judas did not expect such a dramatic outcome. He may have been considering putting Jesus up against the wall by handing him over, believing that this would force him to come to an

agreement with the religious chiefs to restore the kingdom to Israel. But one cannot force the hand of God and cause him to do our own will, even under the threat of death. "You will not put the Lord your God to the test!" Judas put God to the test. And this, in his own interest, being too attached to his dream of being among the powerful of this world.

Also, Judas "was filled with remorse", regret for having followed Jesus, only "when he found that Jesus had been condemned" to death (Matthew 27,3). This definitively put an end to his dream. This is the real cause of his regret. He had no **repentance**, which would have earned him divine forgiveness and salvation. All what was left for him was to choose death to escape reality. He committed suicide!

This suicide is the symbol of the final fate of old and modern Zionism. By dying, Jesus puts an end to the false Zionist hopes that lead to spiritual suicide: "Through his death, Jesus has conquered death", says the liturgy of Easter. The Jews attached to Jesus were saved from an inevitable spiritual death. "Death, where is your sting?", said Paul after his conversion to Jesus (1 Corinthians 15,55) This is why "it was ordained that the Christ should suffer" and know death (Luke 24,26). Having annihilated the Zionist illusion with his cross, Jesus resurrected to give back to Judaism its true face and to his faithful the true hope.

Reflection

Like Judas, others think of following Jesus, not for spiritual reasons, but nationalist. Matthew reports two cases (Matthew 8,18-22):

1. *The scribe who says to Jesus "Master, I will follow you wherever you go."* At this moment Christ had just performed several miracles and the spirits were inflamed in his favor. When he "saw the great crowds all about him he gave orders to leave for the other side" of the Lake Tiberius. Now this area was pagan, despised by the Jews and unsavory to them. In the general enthusiasm, this scribe distinguished himself by offering his services and to follow Jesus "wherever he goes", even to impure pagan country, banned by the Torah. Note that it is a scribe, full of himself with Israeli prejudice and patriotism. He was ready to follow Jesus as any other patriot would follow a revolutionary military leader who rushes forward to free the homeland, arms in hand. Now, Christ's Homeland is heavenly, not geographic. That, the scribe had not envisaged. Also, Jesus lets him understand that he will have no earthly glory in joining him: "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head", that means: why then would you follow me? Some believe that Jesus refused the offer of this scribe. Such is not the case, he only mirrored his conscience, in two words, the real requirements and sacrifices which one must consent to for him to be a disciple of the Messiah. We must assume that this scribe withdrew his proposal, because had he followed Jesus, he would have figured among the Apostles. So it was the scribe who retracted, not Jesus who rejected him.

2. This further explains that "*another man,* ***one of his disciples***" who, after having heard Christ's response to the scribe, says to him: "Sir, let me go and bury my father first." He too wanted to withdraw elegantly: "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead", Jesus then retorted, to annul his pretext (Matthew 8,21-22).

It would have been better if Judas dismissed himself too, in time, like many others (John 6,60-71). But, guided by his materialistic lust, he preferred to continue to hope and wait... unwillingly... until despair, treason, and suicide.

12.12 The end times (Matthew 24)

A few days -three or four- before the end of his terrestrial life, Jesus spoke to the Apostles of another end, that of the Temple, therefore of the Israeli State, both destroyed in the year 70 of our era, about 35 years after this prophetic announcement. This was the second "end" of Israel.

By speaking of the prophet Ezekiel, I had mentioned that he too had predicted, in his time, the end of Israel, which occurred in 586 BC. This was the first "end" of Israel.

In our times -specifically since 1948- and for a third time, an Israeli State exists in the world, 2000 years after its second destruction. It will see its near end like the two previous times. For when Jesus speaks of the end, he means to say, like Ezekiel, the end of Israel, that State which obstructs God's plan.

It was destroyed a first time to show the Jews that God's goal is not Hebrew nationalism; that the expected Messiah should not be viewed as a "Jewish patriot" who sets out to conquer the world by military means to expand an Israeli empire (Zionism). Israel was destroyed a second time (70 AD) to show that the Messiah had already come into the world in the person of Jesus. It will be annihilated a third and final time -and forever- never to return again. This third and ultimate end of Israel informs men of the spiritual Return of Jesus as He Himself had announced in the Gospels.

AA few days before being delivered by Judas, Jesus was with his Apostles in Jerusalem. They were admiring the Temple building, embellished by Herod the Great, but were immediately reprimanded by Jesus: "You see all these? I tell you solemnly, not a single stone **here** (*in Jerusalem*) will be left on another: everything will be destroyed!" (*think of Judas' secret indignation upon hearing this*) They then asked him: "Tell us, when is this going to happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24,2-3)

Pay attention to the question posed by the Apostles: they wanted to know "**when** is this (*the destruction of the Temple*) going to happen", and to know too, "what will be the sign of your coming (*political, they believed*) and of the end of the world", the pagan one. They understood that Jesus would reign, but after the destruction of this beautiful Temple. According to their mentality, Jesus would restore, following this, the Israeli kingdom, as it was in the time of David and Solomon. He would thus put an end to the power of the pagan nations, Rome in mind. But Jesus wanted to speak of the destruction of the Temple and of the political end **of Israel**, of this kingdom which, **according to God**, paradoxically embodies paganism. Did Christ not say that the Roman officer, a pagan nonetheless, had more faith than all the Israelis, "subjects of the kingdom who will be turned out into the dark" because of their rejection of Jesus? (Matthew 8,5-13)

Today, especially after the reappearance of Israel, we are able to understand, much better than in the past, the eschatological prophecies of Jesus which are found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. John does not speak of them because he wrote his Gospel well after the Synoptic ones (approximately 45 years), and knew they were found therein.

Jesus answered the Apostles' question ("when is this going to happen?") in a much bigger way than they imagined. His answer englobes not only the Temple's destruction and the second end of Israel (occurring some 35 years later), but future events too. These will take place after the third advent of Israel in 1948, and will precede its third and ultimate fall.

The third reappearance of the Zionist State has specific, universal and spiritual importance: it just precedes the Return of Christ **in the consciences**. This Return began with the revelation

of the Apocalyptic Mystery on May 13, 1970. The third and ultimate end of Israel is very close at hand.

12.12.1 The signs of the times

Chapters 13 of Mark and 21 of Luke revert to these eschatological prophecies (of the end times), whose principal signs are the following:

Persecution of the Apostles Before the second fall of Israel, the Apostles were persecuted as predicted (Luke 21,12). Likewise today, Israel persecutes its enemies who resist it in justice. It is the prelude to the end of the State of Israel.

Jerusalem invaded by the Pagans and false christs The Pagans in Jerusalem are a sign of its near downfall. Yesterday, the Pagans were the Romans who, having invaded the city, burnt it with its Temple and dispersed the Jews in the world (Luke 21,23-24). Today, instead, the Pagans are the so-called Jews who invade Jerusalem: they are the modern Pagans (because of their rejection of Jesus). Their massive presence in Palestine and in the Holy City signifies the near and ultimate end of the State of Israel: "Jerusalem will be trampled down by the pagans (*the 'false Jews' which the Book of Revelation 2,9 and 3,9 speak*) until the age of the pagans is completely over." (Luke 21,24) It will therefore be the end of the visible and occult Zionist power in the world.

False christs will appear saying that "the time (the time of the Zionist Messiah) is very close". They are false prophets (the current Zionists) who see in the State of Israel a "proof" that the time of the advent of the Israeli Messiah has arrived, that he is at the gate, and that he will soon declare himself in front of the whole world. Indeed, Jesus had said: "Many will come using my name and saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will deceive many (Matthew 24,5) ... If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Christ' or, 'He is there', do not believe it" (Matthew 24,23-24). We have heard the Israelis say that the Messianic time has finally arrived, that Ariel Sharon was the Christ, others said that Menahem Begin was the Christ, still others say that Rabbi Meïr Kahana was the Christ, the king of Israel. We know that Jesus is the only Christ of God and that the Messianic time was inaugurated by him 2000 years ago.

International tensions and nuclear threat "On earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamor of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world (*nuclear wars: Luke 21,25-26*) ... Nation will fight against nation... (Matthew 24,7) ... And then they will see the Son of Man (*Jesus*) coming... (Luke 21,27)" This is why we say that these events are the "signs of the times", because they signal the time of the return of Jesus.

Universal propagation of the Gospels "This Good News of the kingdom (*the good news that the Messiah, Jesus, has come into the world*) will be proclaimed to the whole world as a witness to all the nations. And then the end will come." (*the third and ultimate end of Israel: Matthew 24,14*) Today, the Gospel is widespread all over the world. It is translated into more than 360 languages and 1500 dialects. The end of the Israeli Antichrist is very close at hand, as well as the "New Heaven and Earth" announced by Revelation and by Peter (Revelation 21,1 / 2 Peter 3,13).

The Apostles of the end of times Jesus says: "And then... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven... And He will send his angels with a loud trumpet to gather his chosen from the four winds..." (Matthew 24,30-31).

These "angels" are persons sent by God during the end times "to awake" people of goodwill in the world by reminding them of the eschatological prophecies, demonstrating their fulfillment with the "signs of the times" (*the return of Israel, world persecution of its enemies, international tensions, fear of nuclear war, universal propagation of the Gospels*).

The "sounding trumpet" which awakens "the sensible bridesmaids" of the parable (Matthew 25) is the Apocalyptic Message. It reveals the identity of the Antichrist, the "Beast of Revelation" (Revelation 13) who succeeded by misleading and putting them to sleep. Revelation of the Apocalyptic mystery is this "cry of midnight" (Matthew 25,6), when everyone is fully asleep, to wake up from their numbness, all souls of good faith deceived by the satanic wiles of the Zionist "Beast" (Matthew 25,1-7).

Only Matthew speaks to us of the Apostles of the end of times. Indeed, he informs us that Jesus, speaking of these times, says: "... at harvest time (*final selection of the elect in the end of the world*) I shall say to the reapers (*so it is Jesus himself who will send his 'reapers', the Apostles of the end of times*): First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat into my barn." (Matthew 13,30) He also says: "Just as the darnel is gathered up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offenses (*'the darnel'*) and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." (Matthew 13,40-42). "This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels (*Apostles of the end of times*) will appear and separate the wicked from the just" (Matthew 13,49-50). Now read Matthew chapter 13.

12.12.2 Useful clarifications on Matthew 24

The Abomination of desolation installed in the Holy Place, in the Holy Land (Palestine), represents Israel, the pinnacle of abomination because, rejected by God, this State presents itself as the "chosen people" and the work of God in the Holy Land of the Bible.

This State, which has caused countless destruction and horror, presents itself in "sheep's clothing" and accuses others of terrorism, when it is but a "ravenous wolf" that one can easily "recognize by its fruits", murderous, despite its disguise as an innocent sheep (Matthew 7,15-16). The Israeli crimes committed in Palestine, known and seen by the whole world, make Israel this "Abomination of desolation" -the pinnacle of horror- in the Holy Land, predicted by Daniel (Daniel 9,27 / 11,31 / 12,11) and recalled by Jesus (Matthew 24,15).

"Alas for those with child..." because their flight will be harder than that of others due to their pregnant condition. Jesus is not threatening pregnant women, he sympathizes with them. We must translate it as "I pity those with child, or with babies at the breast, when those days come" because these days will be difficult for them in particular (Matthew 24,19).

"Pray that you will not have to make your escape on a Sabbath": irony on the part of Christ, because on the Sabbath, Jews must not walk more than a kilometer... And yet, they will have to flee by traveling very long distances to escape their enemies... (Matthew 24,20).

Now you can undertake the systematic reading of the Synoptic Gospels without encountering any major difficulties. Then, you will be able to move on to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, which you will read after having consulted my explanations.

12.13 Acts of the Apostles

This book is the continuation of the Gospel of Luke and was written by him. It was the second book sent to "Theophilus" to inform him of "everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning... until the day he was taken up to heaven" (Acts 1,1-2). It can be considered as the continuation of the Gospel of Luke. It informs us of what the Apostles did **after** Jesus, until around the year 62 AD, just before the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul which took place in 64 AD in Rome.

Historian of the Apostles, Luke teaches us that he writes as Paul's traveling companion. After having spoken of Paul in the 3rd person, in the singular: "He crossed Syria... He went to Derbe... He took Timothy with him... They traveled through Phrygia...", Luke speaks in the first person in the plural, thus including himself in Paul's group: "**We** lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the Good News." (Acts 16,1-10) It is in Troas, currently in Turkey, that Luke joined Paul (see the biblical chart).

After having informed Theophilus of the Advent of the Messiah in his "first Book", namely his Gospel, Luke, in his second book to Theophilus (the Acts of the Apostles), reports to him the propagation of the evangelical message "not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1,8), ie up to Rome. He informs him about the resistance of the fanatic Jews against the universal and non-racist message of Jesus. This resistance went as far as the persecution and the killing of several Apostles and disciples by these Jews. You will read the story of the conversions of many Jews and Pagans and their union in the person of Jesus.

I will point out to you the most salient points of the book, what you need to understand to grasp the essentials and the spirit that Luke wants to communicate to his reader. Then, read this book attentively. It is of huge interest to us today because of its great actuality now with the reappearance of Israel. The continual resistance of modern Israelis and their subtle to Jesus and real persecution of the disciples of Jesus, make the message of the Book of Acts current and impactful.

12.13.1 The Apostles did not yet understand (Acts 1,6)

At the Ascension of Jesus, the Apostles had not yet understood the interior spiritual dimension of the Kingdom of God and still ask Jesus: "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to **restore the kingdom** to Israel?" After three years of formation and "brainwashing" after the crucifixion, the resurrection of Christ and his miraculous stay with them for 40 days, the Apostles are still at a standstill. It took the intervention of the Holy Spirit, and time, for them to realize the true nature of the Kingdom of God and its true "restoration" (Acts 3,21).

12.13.2 Pentecost

God gives his Spirit, his "mentality", to the Apostles 50 days after the Resurrection (Easter). This corresponded to the Jewish feast of the "Harvest", thus symbolizing the spiritual harvest by the Gospels, the selection of the chosen by the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in it (John 4,34-38 / Luke 10,2 / Matthew 13,30 / Revelation 14,15-16). Disbelievers do not benefit from this Spirit which heals, which gives Eternal Life and happiness to the soul.

The Apostles are then understood by all who do not speak Hebrew, not only by Hebrews. It is a form of restoration after the confusion of Babel, where men no longer understood each other (Genesis 11,1-9).

12.13.3 Strong Jewish opposition to the message of Jesus

This opposition runs throughout the Book of Acts and makes Peter say: "In this very citY (*Jerusalem*) Herod and Pontius Pilate made an alliance with the pagan nations and the peoples of Israel (*Jews everywhere*), **against** your holy servant **Jesus**. . . " (Acts 4,27) "Against Jesus" means "Anti-Christ": it is of them that John speaks by indicating the Antichrist (1 John 2,22 / 4,1-6 / 2 John 1,7). In these end of times, the same anti-Christ league is formed by the Israelis of the world who, while disavowing Jesus, rally behind the so-called Christian nations (see the texts "Christians and Israel" and "The Antichrist and the Return of Christ"). The opposition of the Jews led to the persecution and martyrdom of the Apostles and the disciples of Jesus. Stephen was the first martyr (Acts 7 and Acts 12,1-2).

12.13.4 The conversion of Paul to Christ

Luke insists on Paul's conversion to Christ. Paul "approved of the killing (of Stephen)" (Acts 8,1) and "was still breathing threats to slaughter the Lord's disciples." (Acts 9,1) He repeats the story of his conversion three times (Acts 9,1-19 / 22,5-16 / 26,10-18), after pointing out that this spectacular upheaval of Paul took place after he "began working for the total destruction of the Church; he went from house to house arresting both men and women and sending them to prison." (Acts 8,3) But Paul was acting in good faith, convinced that he was serving God's cause; he was moved by **love** for God, not by **hatred** of Jesus like the other persecutors of the disciples. This is why he deserved to be enlightened by Christ Himself, directly, not by men, because God, He alone, could convince him of his error (Galatians 1,11-17 / 1 Timothy 1,12-16).

12.13.5 The Faith communicated to the Pagans (Acts 10,1-11 and 10,18)

It took divine intervention at the same time with the Pagans (Acts 10,1-8) and Peter (Acts 10,9-24) so that the Biblical Message -knowledge of the one God- kept hermetically sealed by the Jewish clerical cast, passes to the Pagans, then to the world.

The first Jewish disciples of Jesus were themselves shocked that this knowledge was extended to non-Jews: "God can evidently grant even the pagans the repentance that leads to life!" (Acts 11,18) For the Jews believed -and still believe today- that non-Jews, not having a spirit like Jews, live only for this earth and do not have access to eternal life and the resurrection, their fate is similar to that of animals, which do not have an eternal soul.

This contempt for Pagans -due to the fanaticism of the Hebrew clergy- made the mission of the Apostles quite painful, particularly in the Jewish community. Indeed, the evangelical message had to pass through the thick barrier of Jewish extremism, this impassable psychological border set up by the Israelite clergy, and which God alone could break. He did this by intervening, at the same moment, with a Pagan: the centurion Cornelius, and with an Apostle, Peter. But this did not pass without astonishment on the part of well-intentioned Jews, and without resistance from fanatics of the same community (Acts 22,21-22). Without this direct divine intervention, the Evangelical Message would never have passed to the Pagans.

This ferocious resistance from the Jews to the divine message of the Apostles of Jesus manifested under several forms:

1. The persecution of the Apostles as well as believers as previously shown. We should not be surprised because the prophets too, were persecuted in Israel.

2. Infiltration within the Christian ranks to bring back the disciples of Jesus to the practice of the Law of Moses (Acts 15,1-5 / 20,28-30). This insidious method succeeded with some Apostles who, themselves, ended up inciting the practice of Mosaic worship, ineffective for salvation, as Paul said (Galatians 3,11). They yielded thus, to the pressures of "some who do not really belong to the brotherhood and have furtively crept in to spy" on the Christian community from the onset (Galatians 2,4). We thus see the Apostle James himself, who was nothing less than the chief of the Christian community of Jerusalem, demanding Paul to sacrifice to the Mosaic cult as did "the thousands of Jews who have now become believers (*in Jesus*), **all of them staunch upholders** of the Law (*of Moses*)" (Acts 21,17-26). Paul had to submit to the demands of James, but that did not prevent the Jews from pursuing him, "to seize him and kill him" (Acts 21,30-31).

3. Jewish infiltration into the Christian community was denounced by Paul (Galatians 1,7 / 2,4 / 6,12 / Titus 1,10-14 / 2 Corinthians 11,13-15 / Colossians 4,11), by Peter (2 Peter 2,1) and by Jude (Jude 1,4 and 12; compare with 1 Corinthians 11,17-33).

4. Jewish incitement of the Pagans against the Apostles (Acts 14,2 / 17,5-9).

5. Paul was accused of being "a ringleader of the Nazarene **sect**" (Acts 24,5), thus giving the Romans the impression that it is a political party which opposes Caesar to proclaim another king, Jesus, instead of the Emperor (Acts 24,14 / 17,7 / 25,8). This was the same trick employed by the Jews against Jesus (John 19,15). It is the weapon employed today by Christians against the Apostles of the end of times, whose mission is to denounce the Antichrist: Israel. They are accused of "playing politics", they who denounce the politicization of the spiritual by the Zionists and their so-called Christian allies.

12.13.6 "According to Scripture" (Acts 17,2-3)

"Paul... developed the arguments from Scripture for them, explaining and proving how it was ordained that the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead" (Acts 17,2-3), and Believers "every day studied the Scriptures to check whether it was true" (Acts 17,11). Every **true** Christian must be able "to demonstrate **from the Scriptures** that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18,28), and that Israel (which denies that Jesus is the Christ) is the Antichrist announced by John (1 John 2,22).

Peter recommended to "always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have." (1 Peter 3,15)

We cannot defend our faith while in ignorance of the Holy Scriptures. It is through Biblical Knowledge that we can be Apostles of Jesus, the true and unique Messiah.

The goal of this Biblical Course is to give this knowledge to those who are called to be disciples of Jesus and who want to respond to this divine call.

13. Lesson 13 – The Gospel of John and the Letters of the Apostles

13.1 Introduction to the Gospel of John and his letters

John's Gospel is not, like the synoptic ones, a biography of Jesus. What interests the Evangelist here is not the human genealogy of the awaited Messiah, but another reality concerning His

Paul's first missionary journey (46-48 AD).

Paul's second missionary journey (49-52 AD).

Paul's third missionary journey (53-57 AD).

Paul's fourth missionary journey (59-62 AD).

personality, much more profound and moving: His divine origin. Also, he commences his work with a masterly introduction to reveal to us what he had discovered himself, namely the **divine** genealogy of Jesus, saying: "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word **was God** (John 1,1) ... The Word became flesh, he lived among us" (John 1,14).

John is thus not a historian of the earthly life of Christ, like the other Evangelists are, but a **theologian** who reveals His divine nature. The Synoptic Gospels teach us that Jesus is the awaited Messiah. John also attests this truth, but he goes much farther -or rather much higher- to teach us what the others did not reveal, that this Messiah is God Incarnate, the Creator who took human form to be personally present among men on earth and in a tangible way. It is deeply moving, striking, when we think of it. It is above all, true.

John is the only Evangelist who communicates to us this precise information, and it is because of this that he was called "the theologian". He is represented by an eagle because he flew high in his thoughts.

It is only after having reached 90 years of age that John decided to write his Gospel. He was then, the only survivor among the Apostles. He did not think that it was appropriate to write before that because other Gospels were available as well as the multiple letters of the Apostles to inform believers about Jesus. What spurred him to write? It is important that you know why.

We saw in the previous lesson that anti-Christ Jews infiltrated the nascent pro-Christ community to destroy it from within. They troubled believers not only by obliging them to practice Jewish worship, but by claiming that Jesus was not the Messiah, but John the Baptist. Moreover, they attacked Christians because they believed in the divinity of the Messiah. The distressed faithful therefore turned to John, looking for the light they needed. Knowing that he was Jesus' beloved disciple, they knew they could confide in his words.

John thus commenced his Gospel by clarifying to them these two controversial points:

1. **Jesus is the Messiah** *John the Baptist is not the Messiah* (the Light): "He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the Light, so that everyone might believe (*in the Messiah*) through him. He was not the Light, only a witness to speak for the Light. The Word was the true Light..." (John 1,6-9). Jesus, the Word of God, is thus also the Messiah.

2. **Jesus is God Incarnate** *Jesus is the Word, the Word is God* (John 1,1) and the Word was made flesh, He took on a human body to live among men (John 1,14). Jesus is thus truly God Incarnate.

John was once the disciple of John the Baptist, and Apostle of Jesus (like Andrew: John 1,35-40), John was well-placed to calm the faithful who had recourse to him. He confounded the errors spread by the false prophets whom he denounced in his letters (1 John 4,1-6 / 2 John 1,7) and in the Book of Revelation (where he qualifies them as false Jews and the Synagogue of Satan: Revelation 2,9 and 3,9). The "Nicolaitans": Revelation 2,6 were a sect made up of so-called converted Jews who denied the divinity of Jesus.

A good method for studying John's Gospel is to read it whilst being attentive to discover:

1. The verses showing that the Messiah is Jesus, not John the Baptist;

2. The insinuations -often subtle- in the discussions of Jesus, where He reveals Himself as God Incarnate.

You will read this marvelous book after the clarifications given on each of these two points to help you in your research.

13.1.1 Jesus is the Messiah

In the beginning, many Jews believed that John the Baptist was the Messiah. The Gospels inform us that he insisted in telling them: "I baptize you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me (Jesus) is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3,11) Nevertheless, Luke lets us know that, much later, there were still Jews in Ephesus who were satisfied with the baptism of John the Baptist (Acts 19,1-7). However, it was precisely in Ephesus that John was too. The Jews of this city were the most violent "anti-Christs": "... some Jews from Asia caught sight of him in the Temple and stirred up the crowd and seized him..." (Acts 21,27)

In his Gospel, John insisted and often repeated the testimony of John the Baptist: "A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the Light... He was not the Light, only a witness to speak for the Light. The Word was the true Light (John 1,6-9) ... John appears as his witness. He proclaims: 'This is the One of whom I said: He who comes after me ranks before me because he existed before me' (John 1,15) ... This is how John appeared as a witness... 'I am not the Christ'... (John 1,19-27) ... The next day, seeing Jesus coming toward him, John said, 'Look, there is the Lamb of God... This is the One I spoke of when I said: A man is coming after me who ranks before me... Yes, I have seen and I am the witness that He is the Chosen One (*the Christ*) of God." (John 1,29-36) "You yourselves can bear me out: I said: I myself am not the Christ; I am the one who has been sent in front of him..." (John 3,26-36).

So then, from the onset, John comforts his disciples: Jesus is verily Christ-God. He ends his Gospel by confirming them in this belief, saying that he related to them all these signs operated by Jesus "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name." (John 20,30-31)

13.1.2 The Divinity of Jesus

John begins his Gospel with a keyword that has a great impact on the Jewish mentality: "In the beginning", in Hebrew "Bereshit" ("Be": in, "reshit": beginning). The importance of this word is due to the fact that it inaugurates the Old Testament, the Torah. Indeed, the Book of Genesis begins thus: "In the beginning (Bereshit) God created heaven and earth".

It is **intentionally** that John, pushed by the Breath of God, employs this word that strikes the Jewish heart and shocks it to open them up to the books of the New Testament. It is in the same Spirit that John commences his first letter: "What existed since the **beginning**..."

In response to the faithful who came to solicit him, John wanted to write a new Genesis, a new "Bereshit": "In the beginning was the Word... Through Him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life that was the Light of men... He (*John the Baptist*) was not the Light... The Word was the true Light..." (John 1,1-9).

With these courageous words, John explains in depth what Genesis says of God, the Creator of heaven, of the earth and of the light. This Creator is none other than the Word: "Through Him all things came to be" (John 1,3), because "He was with God **in the beginning**" (John 1,2) and He Himself "was God" (John 1,1). "And the Word was made flesh (*in Jesus*)" (John 1,14). Those who had recourse to John could not hope for a better answer. You understand why John was called "the Theologian".

Throughout his Gospel, John strives to faithfully report Jesus' words on which he relies to say that "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God." Did he not hear Him say to the Jews: "Before Abraham ever was, I Am"? (John 8,58) Did he not also

hear the Baptist say in front of him, his disciple: "A man is coming after me who ranks before me because he existed **before me**"? (John 1,30) Now John knew that Abraham preceded Jesus by 2000 years and that John the Baptist preceded Jesus by six months. He could not be silent in his Gospel on the logical conclusions he had drawn from what he had heard. He gives us his testimony with love and precision, so that those who believe in it are saved.

Belief in the divinity of Jesus already existed before John's Gospel. In his letters, Paul alludes to it: "His **state was divine**, yet he did not cling **to his equality with God**", he says of Jesus (Philippians 2,6). Also: "You must live your whole life according to the Christ... In His body lives the **fullness** of divinity" (Colossians 2,6-9). Paul's letters date approximately 40 years before John's Gospel.

Since the Christians already believed in the divine incarnation, in its "fullness", in the Person of Jesus, why did John write to convince his disciples of what they had already known? It was, as I said, because they were troubled by disrupters whose aim was to sow doubt and dissension amidst Christian ranks. It is these disrupters, issuing from the Jewish masses who rejected Jesus, who were qualified as "antichrists" by John: "You were told that the Antichrist must come, and now **several antichrists** have already appeared... Those rivals of Christ came out of **our own number** (*the Jews*), but they had never really belonged... The man who denies that Jesus is the Christ—he is the liar, he is the Antichrist!", he said regarding them (1 John 2,18-22). Paul also alluded to them by writing: "Rebellion is at its work already", against the first Jews faithful to Jesus (2 Thessalonians 2,7).

13.1.3 The two Jewish camps

Speaking of antichrists, I take the opportunity to speak of 2 categories of Jews which resulted from the Advent of Jesus: those who were pro-Christ, and the others who stood against Him, the antichrists.

Jesus, the spiritual Messiah, who was not a nationalist Jew, split Hebrew society into two camps: "These words caused disagreement among the Jews. Many said, 'He is possessed, he is raving; why bother to listen to him?' Others said, 'These are not the words of a man possessed by a devil...'" (John 10,19-21)

Likewise, Paul "stirs up trouble among Jews the world over" (Acts 24,5), separating "the darnel from the wheat", believers from unbelievers. It is in this sense that Jesus had said: "It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man (*who does not believe in me*) against his father (*who believes in me*) ..." (Matthew 10,34-35) The unbelieving Jews reproached Jesus for having said this and accused Him of breaking the unity of the people and of the family...

The believers camp became convinced -from the prophecies- that the Messiah was to pass through death, so that the monotheist message passes from the Jews -who had made it hermetic- to the Pagans (Acts 17,1-4), and that "both Jews and Greek (*Pagans who were polytheists*) ... held the name of the Lord Jesus in great honor." (Acts 19,17) All of them therefore believed in Jesus, despite resistance from Israeli Jews, who did not see in Him this nationalist Christ whom they illusively imagined. So therefore, "thousands of Jews have now become believers", Christians (Acts 21,20).

On the other hand, the fundamentalist Jews formed an exclusively fanatic Jewish camp, a violently nationalist "ghetto"; with one aspiration: "restoration" of the kingdom of David in Palestine; this camp opposed the first without pity. This opposition was so violent that it led to the persecution of the disciples of Jesus, who at their reunions "closed the doors in the rooms for fear of the Jews", non-believers (John 20,19).

The split was therefore total between the two camps, and the words of Jesus were confirmed to the exact: "It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword". Indeed, it is by "the sword" that a good number of Apostles perished, stoned like Stephen was (Acts 7,59), or literally "by the sword" like "James, the brother of John" (Acts 12,2).

To God, which of these two camps represent the **true** face of Judaism? Is it the fundamentalists who remained attached to the nationalist ideal? Or the Jewish disciples of Jesus, transformed into "universalists" after their liberation from the prejudices imposed by the narrow fanatic vision of a misunderstood Judaism?

Jesus answers this question when He says: "Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets (ie the Books of the Old Testament). I have come not to abolish but to **complete them**... if your rightnessous **goes no deeper** than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5,17-20).

Jesus is thus the **perfection** of Judaism and a true Jew is the one who becomes his disciple: "If you wish to be **perfect**... then come, follow me", JJesus says to the rich young man who practiced scrupulously, to the letter, the precepts of Mosaic Law (Matthew 19,21). Having understood this, Paul, who was a practicing Pharisee, declared to the Jews: "Merely by belonging to Christ you are the posterity of Abraham, the heirs he was promised." (Galatians 3,29)

So, according to the Gospels, the true Jew is the one who becomes a disciple of Jesus. Those who deny Him are not true Jews, but "false Jews", "false brothers", these "troublemakers" whom Paul speaks of, "among you who want to change the Good News of Christ" (Galatians 1,7). They are these false Jews whom John denounces as "antichrists" and "deceivers" (1 John 2,18-22 / 1 John 4,2-3 / 2 John 1,7), "refusing to admit that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." (2 John 1,7) "If anyone comes to you bringing a different doctrine", John continues, "you must not receive him in your house or even give him a greeting. To greet him would make you a partner in his wicked work." (2 John 1,10) The Book of Revelation warns us against their reappearance in the end of times and qualifies them as "false Jews", "who falsely claim to be Jews", even belonging to the "Synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2,9 / 3,9), Jesus having accused their predecessors of having "the devil as their father", not God (John 8,44). These false modern Jews are Israeli nationalists.

13.2 The teachings of John's Gospel

What interests John is not so much the works of Jesus, but his teachings. He communicates them to us by making us take part in various discussions his Master had with different people, letting us understand by ourselves the lights that Jesus wants to give to mankind.

John therefore did not draw up a list of doctrines, but appeals to the common sense of those who can read between the lines and draw the teachings of Christ from His own words in his different discussions or controversies.

Jesus often took advantage of an occasion, sometimes apparently banal (eg *his dialogue with the Samaritan woman*: John 4), to reveal a truth. Sometimes, he even created the occasion to initiate a useful discussion. Thus, his miracles were for the indirect and deeper purpose, to spark off discussions during which he exposed his points of view -on the Torah for example- to rectify the deviation in which the Hebrew community had sunk.

Indeed, Jesus worked miracles on Saturdays to say that one should not reduce himself to total immobility, as Jews believed. He thus healed a paralytic, on a Saturday, a great scandal for the Jews and seized the opportunity to reply to them: "'My Father goes on working, and so do I.' But that only made the Jews even more intent on killing him, because, not content with

breaking the Sabbath, he spoke of God as his own Father, and so made himself **God's equal**." (John 5,17-18).

What John wants to give us above all is this word from Jesus: "My teaching is not from myself: it comes from the One who sent me" (John 7,16). This doctrine of Jesus was transmitted to us by John through the following discussions that Jesus had:

13.2.1 Building the Real Temple (John 2,13-22)

Controversy with the Jews in the Temple, telling them of its destruction and the building of the real Temple, the "Temple that was his body", ie his Person (see Revelation 21,22).

13.2.2 Dialogue with Nicodemus (John 3,1-21)

Jesus reveals therein the necessity to "be born again **in spirit**", to decondition oneself and be freed from prejudice in order to be able to see the truth and to objectively choose it after having broken our bodily chains, because "what is born of the flesh (*remains*) is flesh, what is born of the Spirit is spirit", and lives eternally.

13.2.3 Dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John 4,1-42)

Jesus prompts a dialogue with a Samaritan woman for three reasons:

1. To break the hatred between Jews and Samaritans, a hatred erected by ostracism: "Jews, in fact, **do not associate** with Samaritans", John related (John 4,9). The parable of the **good** Samaritan shocked the Jews (Luke 10,29-37). This amicable approach of Jesus, a Jew, therefore astonished the Samaritan woman: "What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" (John 4,9) Jesus took an antiracist step.

2. To break the social prejudices of the time, especially in the mentality of His disciples who were astonished to see Him speaking to a woman (John 4,27), who, more so, was a Samaritan (John 4,9).

3. The main reason is to reveal to the Samaritans that He is the Messiah (John 4,25-26 / 4,41-42).

Note that the Samaritans -like innocent and docile children- believed in Jesus, **not because they had seen Him performing miracles**, but simply from what they "**had heard**" from the Samaritan woman (John 4,39-42). On the contrary, the Jews were reticent. Jesus Himself had declared, on his return to Galilee two days later: "... there is no respect for a prophet in his own country" (John 4,44). In Cana, He also said, and not without bitterness: "So you will not believe **unless you see signs** and portents!" (John 4,48) ... for the Samaritans believed in Him without seeing miracles.

13.2.4 The Spiritual Resurrection (John 5,1-47)

It is the resurrection **of the soul** by welcoming the Truth proclaimed by Jesus. It is called the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20,5-6). Healing a paralytic, Jesus takes the opportunity to reveal his divine filiation, his "equality with God" and "God Himself", as the scandalized Jews said (John 5,17-18 / 10,33). On this occasion, Jesus also announces that "the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it will live." (John 5,25) It means that Pagans, considered dead by Jews, will come to spiritual life thanks to their faith in Jesus. The prophet Baruch told the Jews exiled among the Babylonians, considered "**dead**" who "go to Sheol": "Why, Israel, why are you in the country of your enemies, growing older and older in an alien land, sharing defilement with the dead (*the Babylonians*), reckoned with those who go to Sheol?" (Baruch 3,10-11).

This return of the **soul** to life is a spiritual resurrection, that of the **soul** in the living body, **from down here** on earth. Jesus indeed said: "The hour will come **-in fact it is here already-** when the dead (*sinners*) will hear the voice of the Son of God, and all who hear it (*the repentant*) will live." (John 5,25) Revelation calls this "the first resurrection" (Revelation 20,5-6).

So it is not about the "second resurrection", which will take place **at the end of the world**. Jesus explained it: "For the hour is coming... those who did good will rise again to Life; and those who did evil, to condemnation." (*ie eternal misery: John 5,28-29*) This definitive death of the soul is called the "second death" by Revelation 20,6 (the first being physical death, and the second the death of the soul).

Note*the perseverance* of the man healed from his infirmity: "**for thirty-eight years**" he presented himself to be healed, but "someone else gets there before him." Jesus heals him because He "knew he had been in this condition **for a long time**" without losing hope of being healed.

13.2.5 The "Bread" of Eternal Life (John 6,1-67)

Jesus multiplies bread to speak of another "Bread" which gives Life to the soul, Eternal Life, as he spoke of the "Water" of Eternal Life to the Samaritan, starting from the water of Jacob's well (John 4,13-14).

But before performing the miracle, as "he Himself knew exactly what He was going to do", wanted "to test Philip", as well as the other Apostles. He therefore says to Philip: "Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?" Notice that He said that "**to test Philip**" (John 6,5-6). For Philip was one of the Apostles present at Cana when Jesus multiplied the wine (John 1,43 and 2,1-3). So he should have known that Jesus was able to feed these thousands of people without any problem. And yet, neither Philip, nor Andrew, also present at Cana, understood what the Messiah wanted and was able to do (John 6,8). They should have responded to Him: "But Lord, you can do anything! You have only to say a word, as at Cana, and there will be bread for all!"

It is worth bringing the two miracles together: that of the wine and that of the bread. These two products through which Jesus gives Himself to us in his spiritual Supper. I have not yet explained the miracle of Cana (John 2,1-11) to speak of it now.

Compare the attitude of Mary's faith, the Holy Virgin, at Cana, with that of the Apostles here. At Cana, it is She who takes the initiative to ask Jesus to multiply the wine. His Apostles -Philip and Andrew in particular, and others- "had also been invited" (John 2,2). Knowing this too well, Philip and Andrew were far from thinking of what Jesus wanted and was able to do concerning the miracle of the bread. His Mother at Cana had taken the lead, pushing Jesus to multiply the wine. She won the day for the joy of the guests. Mary, to whom God refuses

nothing, thus succeeded in anticipating the time when Jesus would perform his miracles (John 2,4). This should have inspired Philip and Andrew in their response to Jesus regarding the bread.

I point out a fact of bad translation: at Cana Jesus does not say to His Mother: "Woman, why turn to me? etc..." as some translate, but: "What is it to me and to you woman? My hour has not yet come" (John 2,4). In other words, to Mary, who signals to her son that the wine has run out, He answers: "What has that got to do with you and me? This does not concern us; it is not our business. It is neither my Wedding, nor my hour! At my Wedding the Wine will not lack. Here, no one put me in charge of the wine". It is in this spirit that we must understand and translate the words of Jesus from the original text in Greek (see the translation in the Bible of Andre Chouraqui). So do not think as some do, that in the response of Jesus to his Mother, there was a lack of respect toward her. That would be unworthy of the Messiah... Let us not forget that Jesus ends up granting his Mother's request.

In his controversy with the Jews, Jesus said to them: "No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father who sent me" (John 6,44). He said that because many went to Him believing that He was the Messiah, therefore the **political** King of Israel. So they were not attracted by the Fatherly Spirit of Jesus. This crowd ran after Jesus, not for spiritual reasons, but because they were drawn toward Him, like Judas, for political, economic and earthly interests. This is why Jesus says to them: "Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life" (John 6,27). He was speaking of His Body and His Blood, Bread and Wine of Eternal Life (John 6,51-58). Only those attracted by the Father are able to seize the profound meaning of the **spiritual** words of Jesus. Those who were attracted to Him for earthly benefits saw no sense in his words and ended up abandoning Him, as Judas did later (John 6,60-71).

13.2.6 The Water of Life (John 7,37-39)

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan of the water He gave her to drink, "He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive" (John 7,39). To be watered by this Spirit which gives Life to the soul, we must be thirsty for it. The tepid are excluded. Jesus gives this same Spirit in the Eucharist to "all who are thirsty" (Matthew 26,27-28 / Revelation 22,17).

13.2.7 Discourse of Jesus at the Temple (John 7,1-53)

The feast of Tabernacles, also called the feast of the Harvest (Exodus 23,16), commemorates the duration of 40 years in the Sinai desert under tents (Leviticus 23,42-43). On the occasion of this feast, Jews traveled each year in pilgrimage to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the Temple. This feast is still celebrated in Israel today.

The "brothers" of Jesus, ie the inhabitants of Nazareth therefore say to him, and not without irony: "Why not leave this place and go to Judaea, and let your disciples see the works you are doing; if a man wants to be known he does not do things in secret; since you are doing all this, you should let the whole world see." (John 7,3-4) John explains immediately after these verses that: "Not even his brothers had faith in Him" (John 7,5).

Why did Jesus' fellow-countrymen push him to go to Jerusalem to manifest himself to the world and at the same time did not believe in him? Furthermore, they knew that "the Jews were seeking to kill Him"! (John 7,1 / 7,13)

We must understand that it was with a cynical and mocking tone that these people addressed Jesus and **dared** him to manifest before the people as the awaited Messiah. They did not believe Him capable of being that expected political leader, capable of satisfying the Israelites

thirsty for national independence. Let us not forget, in fact, that John the Baptist himself and the Apostles had difficulty in understanding the purely spiritual mission of Jesus and his spiritual Kingdom, which "is not of this world", as He revealed it to Pilate (John 18,35-37).

These Nazarenes spoke to Jesus in the same defying spirit as the devil, who had said to Him: "If you are the Son of God (*the Messiah*) tell these stones to turn into loaves... If you are the Son of God throw yourself down" (Matthew 4,3-6). It was still in this maleficent spirit that, seeing Jesus on the cross, "the passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said... 'Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!' The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way. 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now (*to restore the reign of David*), and we will believe in Him! ... For he did say: I am the son of God'!" (Matthew 27,39-44) Now, "do not put Yahweh your God to the test!" (Deuteronomy 6,16)

We are able to understand the reason why Jesus replied to his fellow-citizens: "The right time (*to be the spiritual and universal King*) for me has not yet come, but any time is the right time for you (*to expect for the nationalist Messiah*). The world cannot hate you (*because it awaits the same Messiah as you and has the same spirit as you*), but it does hate Me, because I give evidence (*through my spiritual messianism*) that its ways are evil. Go up to the festival yourselves: I am not going to this festival, because for Me the time (*to be King*) is not ripe yet." (John 7,6-8).

Jesus refused to go to Jerusalem with "his brothers" from Galilee, because he did not want to accompany them in their worldly and opportunist spirit. Indeed, they did not invite Him to go to Jerusalem in a spirit of pilgrimage and reverence, but in a spirit of an election campaign, to make use of a religious festival as a springboard for political goals. This is why Jesus retorted: "I am not going to this festival", ie I am not going there with you, nor in that mindset. But John adds, "however, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went up as well, **but quite privately**, without drawing attention to himself." (John 7,10) So Jesus went up to Jerusalem, but in a spirit quite different from the others, since it was "quite privately" that He went up there, without seeking to assert himself or make himself known as they thought (John 7,4).

Jesus always refuses to reveal Himself in a spirit of flashy publicity, to the point that it is the Jews themselves who "were on the lookout for him" (John 7,11), and not Him, Jesus, who sought to appear, as his "brothers" asked Him. Had He not advised the Apostles not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah? (Matthew 16,20)

It was indeed of this discreet Messiah that God spoke to Isaiah, describing him as follows: "Here is my Servant whom I uphold, my Chosen One in Whom my soul delights. I have endowed him with my Spirit... He does not cry out or shout aloud, or makes his voice heard in the streets", to make electoral speeches and make himself famous to the world (Isaiah 42,1-2). Those who have spiritual eyes to see, only they, can understand that Jesus is the Christ, the Chosen One of God: "Anyone who has ears should listen", often said Jesus (Luke 14,35 and Matthew 13,9).

However, it happened to be that Jesus raised his voice, but it was always to proclaim spiritual truths and be heard indeed by all. In fact, John says: "On the last day and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood there and **cried out**: 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me!' As Scripture says: From his breast shall flow fountains of living water. He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive" (John 7,37-39 / see also Ezekiel 47,1-13 and Revelation 22,2). It was of this same "Water of Life" that Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman (John 4,13-14).

The Messiah promised neither an empire over the world, nor temporal glory to His disciples, but the Spirit of God which restores man to the image of God. Those thirsty for it, and who turn to Him, will never be disappointed.

It was not this Divine Spirit that the fellow-citizens of Jesus sought; it was not this Water they were thirsty for. His disciples, on the contrary, wanted to quench themselves only at the life-giving Source that the Messiah came to open within them. St Paul for example, considered the Mosaic worship of the Torah void in relation to faith in Jesus and said: "I am a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents, and I was circumcised when I was eight days old. As for the Law (*the Torah*), I was a Pharisee; as for working for religion, I was a persecutor of the Church; as far as the Law can make you perfect, I was faultless. But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages. Not only that, but I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have accepted the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ…" (Philippians 3,5-8) Paul, who was thirsty for the Spirit of Jesus, was not disappointed. He was verily conscious of possessing It since he says: "I too have the Spirit of God, I think (1 Corinthians 7,40) … We are the real people of the circumcision, we who worship in accordance with the Spirit of God; we have our own glory from Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3,3). Paul would not have said these words that he experienced if he were satisfied with the worship of the Torah, and not satiated with the Water of Jesus.

For us who study this Biblical Course, these words on the Water of Eternal Life are of the highest importance; because the purpose of our study is to have the Source of this Water promised by Jesus within us. We are therefore directly and personally concerned and interested. This is why we must do our "spiritual assessment", as already recommended at the beginning of this Spiritual Itinerary. Let us know if we are thirsty for the Water of Jesus, if we have drunk from it, if "from our breasts flow fountains of living water" (John 7,38). Can we also say like Paul: "I believe that I have the Spirit of God?" Do we think like God? Am I as He wants me to be? If so, then happy we are! Happy are you! Your study will not have been in vain.

Let us thank the Messiah who has given us His Life to grant us this happiness. Do not allow anyone to snatch away this "treasure we hold in jars of earthenware (*fragile*), to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us", as Paul said (2 Corinthians 4,7). Let us remain with God and He will protect us.

13.2.8 Controversy between Jesus and the Jews (John 8,12-59)

In this violent controversy between Jesus and the Jews, Jesus reveals that He always acts according to "what He has seen with His Father", and that, on the other hand, the Jews who reject him act according to "what their father does… the devil" (John 8,38-44).

The lesson from these words is that we all act -consciously or unconsciously- after what we contemplate in the secret of our soul. We reproduce acts inspired by the spirit we listen to. If our hearts lean toward God, we behave in a good way, but if we are attracted by the spirit of the devil, then our actions will be diabolical. If the Jews wanted to kill Jesus, it was because they have "the devil as their father", they are seduced by his dominating spirit and they contemplate him, consciously or not, unceasingly.

Now man, always imitates what he contemplates and admires. This criminal father, the devil, "was a murderer from the start", Jesus declared. Did he not seduce the parents of humanity, seeking to kill their souls by moving them away from God? The Apostles followed Jesus because it was God they unconsciously sought, it is He Whom they contemplate without knowing it. Christ wanted them to be aware of this when He told them the day before his Passion: "No one can come to the Father except through me… **From this moment** you know Him and **have seen** Him." (John 14,6-7) On the same occasion, He also revealed to them that without

their knowledge, they have "the Spirit of truth... but you know Him, because He is with you, He is (*already*) **in you**." (John 14,17).

13.2.9 The Jews wanted a nationalist Christ (John 10,24)

"The Jews gathered around Jesus and said, 'How much longer are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.' Jesus replied: 'I have told you, but you do not believe.'"

The Jews ask for a response, not to submit to the divine requirements which are spiritual, but to lead Jesus to submit to their political demands, to head a violent insurrectionary movement against the Roman occupation. It was to make Him understand that they are ready for battle if he is the nationalist Messiah. He only has to say the word and they would take up arms and follow him.

The Jewish world forgot what the prophet Isaiah had said of the Messiah: "On Him the Spirit of Yahweh rests... His word (*not his sword*) is a rod that strikes the ruthless, his sentences bring death to the wicked." (Isaiah 11,2-4) Jesus never failed to speak out against Israeli violence with his words to kill the sin of nationalism. But the fanatics refused to hear him, preferring "to die in their sin" (John 8,21-24) rather than renounce their ambitions of political hegemony, as is the case of the Israelis of the 20th and 21st centuries who would rather die than give up their dream of "Greater Israel".

13.2.10 The Comforter, the Trinity (John 14,16-31)

John was the only one who spoke to us so much of the Holy Spirit (John 15,26 / 16,7-15). It is the "Paraclete" or "Comforter" Jesus spoke of (in Greek: "Paraclitos", and in Hebrew: "Menahem": John 14,16 and 14,26). This Spirit supported the Apostles and "comforted" them after the tragic departure of Jesus: "I shall ask the Father and he will give you **another** Comforter (*but me*) ... **I** will not leave you orphans (*without Me*); I will come back to you (*by this Comforter*)." (John 14,16-18) Note that it is still Jesus who "comes back to them" in the form of the Holy Spirit to "comfort and console" them. Jesus and this Spirit are thus One, like Jesus and the Father are One too. The Father, Jesus and the Spirit are thus One. This text reveals the Trinity.

Consolation comes from the fact that Christ, after his death, appears -exclusively- to those "who love Him" (John 14,21) to comfort them. But the Apostles did not understand these words. They still imagined that Jesus will be the nationalist king of Israel who will soon manifest himself to the Jews. That is why they asked him: "Lord, do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" And Jesus tried his utmost, up till the last instant, to explain to them that the kingdom they await is not the one they imagined, but that it is internal: "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home **with him**." (John 14,23) They were not yet able to understand this inner dimension. It was indeed much later that John wrote all of this, after he himself understood the profound significance of these words. He then wrote to enlighten the other Judeo-Christians to overcome the limits of false Judaism, whose fatal consequence is an unwanted nationalism to God. These spiritual lessons are valid for all men of all ages... materialists in particular.

13.2.11 To sanctify the Name of God (John 17,1-26)

Jesus prays aloud to give His last teachings before leaving the earth:

1) Eternal Life consists of "**knowing** God and his Messiah", ie to have in oneself the true conception of God, not to imagine Him otherwise than He is. Only the chosen recognize this "image" of God in Jesus, thus taking part in Eternal Life henceforth (John 17,3). St Paul said: "If our Gospel does not penetrate the veil, then the veil is on those who are not on the way to salvation; the unbelievers whose minds the god of this world has blinded, to stop them seeing the light shed by the Good News of the glory of Christ, who is the **image of God**." (2 Corinthians 4,3-4) This applies today to those who fail to recognize the Beast of Revelation, those for whom John's Revelation remains closed.

To demand for a Zionist Messiah means to have a misleading image of God. When Jesus asks us to pray: "May your Name be sanctified", he invites us to purify our concept of God and his plan of salvation in man's favor. Our stains prevent us to see Divine Essence in its purity. A myopic eye sees a face deformed, it is not the face that is deformed, but the eye which looks at it. "Father, heal my eyes so that I can see You as You are. Let your Name be sanctified in me, not disfigured by my blindness". Jesus asked a blind man: "What do you want me to do for you?" He answered: "Sir, let me see again." And Jesus healed him at once. We too, must make this request from Christ with faith. For Jesus is alive, and alive forever, to grant us our prayers. We are waiting for him to say, in our hearts, what he said to the blind man: "Receive your sight! Your faith has saved you." (Luke 18,35-43) Jesus said that he came to give sight, the **inner** Sight (John 9,39-41).

"I have made your Name known to man", Jesus says to the Father (John 17,6). This Name is no longer that of "YHVH", as revealed to Moses, but a much deeper and **immanent** truth to man, written in letters of fire in his intimate life: **God is in the heart** of believers and hell is a heart without God. God is perfect Happiness. Whoever knows God as He is enjoys perfect happiness: "God is Love", John informs us (1 John 4,16), and "anyone who fails to love (*Jesus*) can never have known God (*ie does not love Him*)", John also adds, because "God's love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his Only Son so that we could have life through Him" (1 John 4,9). Such is the "Name" of God by which we recognize Him: Love! And Love **incarnate**: the Messiah! This Blessed Name, for many, is a scandal. But for believers it is Eternal Life. Such is the Name revealed by Jesus and which he alone could reveal.

Jesus revealed this Name of God and said to us that He "will make it known **again**", ie in the future (John 17,26). This revelation is made **in us**, until the end of times, "so that the love with which You loved Me may be **in them**, and so that I may be **in them**", Jesus said. This immanence of God must therefore be perfect in the hearts of believers so that they are filled with Him. The forever living Christ will continue to teach them Love, the Love that unites and unites with the Father.

Those who preach a "transcendence" of God have of him a distant and false image, not in conformity with the Name revealed by Jesus: a Name "**In us**", immanent to the believing man, being love and Love is never transcendent. The Name of God is "Immanent".

2) "I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one." (John 17,15) We should not thus isolate ourselves from the world as some monks and religious persons do. Most of them are afraid of the world and are afraid to face the realities of everyday life and the difficulties of the testimony of Jesus. They resemble this fearful servant who buried his single talent in the earth, thus deserving of being rejected by the Master (Matthew 25,24-30). We are called "to vanquish the world", knowing that "you have in you one (*Jesus*) who is greater than anyone in this world (*Satan*)" (1 John 4,4). The Apostles never isolated themselves.

It is by remaining in the world with the strength of God that we will be able to save people of good will, misled by the cunning of the world. Those who live in the world, like Jesus, but who have the true knowledge of God and the true "Name" of God, do not fear to be "lead into

temptation"; they will vanquish worldly seductions by fighting with courage; they will triumph over evil, "the gates of the underworld can never hold out against them." (Matthew 16,18) You must have this faith!

13.2.12 "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18,33-36)

Pilate, **worried**, asks Jesus if he is king of the Jews. Jesus answered: "Mine is not a kingdom of this world (Pilate did not therefore have to worry or arrest Him); if my Kingdom were of this world, my men (the Apostles and all the disciples following them) would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews." Jesus answered thus to Pilate, who was clearly concerned, believing that Jesus was presenting himself as the temporal king of Israel in place of Herod, the friend of the Romans. He wanted to be sure that Jesus was not preparing an insurrection against Rome. It is necessary to note Pilate's concern, which worsened when he heard Jesus presenting Himself as "Son of God": "When Pilate heard them say this **his fears increased**. . . ", says John (John 19,8). Pilate's crisis of conscience was made even more acute by the premonitory dream of his wife, Claudia Procula, in favor of Jesus (Matthew 27,19). Tradition has it that she abandoned her husband after he delivered Jesus to the Jews. She then became a Christian.

By his response, Jesus wanted to tell Pilate that his mission was not to oppose Rome, otherwise he would have ordered all those who follow him to rise against Herod and Caesar, and to fight by armed violence so "that he is not delivered" to his enemies. All his disciples were waiting for just one word from him to come out. That is what worried Pilate.

The Jewish chiefs introduced Jesus to Pilate as a revolutionary against the Romans. Luke says that they brought Jesus before Pilate and they began accusing him by saying: "We found this man inciting our people to revolt (against Rome), opposing payment of the tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be the Christ, a king." (Luke 23,1-2)

It was this claim to sovereignty that worried Pilate. But seeing that Jesus did not aspire to a political kingdom, he wanted to set Him free (Luke 23,13-16). "But the Jews shouted, 'If you set Him free **you are no friend** of Caesar's; anyone who makes himself king is defying Caesar' . . . 'We have no king except Caesar!'" (John 19,12-15) It was only "**then**", ie after this proclamation of Caesar's unique sovereignty, that Pilate "handed him over to them to be crucified", John specifies (John 19,16). Caesar's representative could not resist the threat of being accused of treason to the emperor and to seem in favor of Jesus, after he was presented to him as a rebellious terrorist against Roman occupation. To be holy, Pilate should have "forced himself" by supporting the just cause of Jesus until the end, at the risk of suffering infamy among men to deserve the eternal glory of Heaven.

In the end, note the ill faith of the Jewish chiefs who "incited the crowd to demand that he should release Barabbas", and that Jesus was condemned (Mark 15,11). "Now Barabbas was a brigand" (John 18,40), "a notorious prisoner" (Matthew 27,16), "with the **rioters** who had committed murder during the **uprising**. (against the Romans)" (Mark 15,7) The ill faith of the Jews manifests in the choice of the release of the activist Barabbas, a "famous" Israeli nationalist of the time, and in the condemnation of Jesus as a revolutionary activist, accusing him of being what Barabbas was.

Note that the Apostles were armed with two swords (Luke 22,38), still believing in an armed uprising against the established power. When Jesus spoke to them of the decisive fight that they were to carry out, he meant the spiritual fight which they were to face after his crucifixion: "But now if you have a purse, take it. . . if you have no sword, sell your cloak and buy one. . . Yes, what scripture says about me is even now reaching its fulfillment." (Luke 22,36) Jesus was speaking of the sword of the word, of the strength of the soul that the Apostles must have in

the face of difficult times and the spiritual struggles that will arise, when "what scripture says about him is reaching its fulfillment" ie his imminent crucifixion. But they did not understand his words; they believed that the hour of revolt against Herod and Caesar had struck. That is why they replied at once: "Here are two swords". Exasperated by their incomprehension, Christ replied: "That is enough!" (Luke 22,35-38) For as Paul later understood: "the sword is the word of God from the Spirit." (Ephesians 6,17) Revelation explains well that, for Christ, "the sword" is the word, the power of the word of truth: "Out of his mouth came a sharp sword, double edged" (Revelation 1,16), "I shall soon come to you and attack these people with the sword out **of my mouth**." (Revelation 2,16).

In the Garden of Olives, during the arrest of Jesus, "his followers, seeing what was happening, said, 'Lord, shall we use our swords?' And one of them struck out at the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear." Jesus intervened to stop his people from delivering Him by the sword and said to His Apostles: "Leave (*your swords*) off! That will do!" (Luke 22,49-51) Receiving no orders to combat, "**then** all the disciples (*disappointed*) deserted him and ran away" (Matthew 26,56), as Jesus had just foretold them: "Listen; the time will come—in fact it has come already—when you will be scattered, each going his own way and leaving me alone." (John 16,32).

13.2.13 John remains until the Return of Jesus (John 21,22)

"If I want him (*John*) to stay behind till I come, what does it matter to you? . . . "

These words were addressed by Jesus to Peter, regarding John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", as John liked to present himself (John 21,20). These words made the disciples believe that the return of Christ was imminent, that it would take place while John was still alive.

This belief is reflected in the words of Paul to the Thessalonians: "Any of us **who are left alive until the Lord's (*Jesus*) coming**. . . " (1 Thessalonians 4,15 / repeated in 4,17).

Also, John, in view of his old age and that his time to leave this earth was close (he was approximately 95 years old when he wrote his Gospel), knowing that "the rumor then went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die (*before the return of Jesus*)", explains the words of the Savior saying: "Yet Jesus had not said to Peter, 'He will not die', but, 'If I want him to stay behind till I come' (*what does it matter to you?*)" (John 21,23).

Paul, who also believed in the imminent return of Jesus, realized his error well before John wrote his Gospel. Also, in his Second Letter to the Thessalonians, he rectifies what he had said in his first one concerning the Advent of Jesus. He clarified by telling them about this: "Please do not get excited too soon or alarmed by any prediction or rumor or any letter claiming to come from us, implying that the Day of the Lord has already arrived. Never let anyone deceive you in this way. It cannot happen until the Great Revolt has taken place and the Rebel, the Lost One has appeared. This is the Enemy" (2 Thessalonians 2,1-4). This "Enemy", called "Antichrist" by John, is the enemy of Christ Jesus (1 John 2,22).

Before the Coming of Jesus, in the end times, a great sign is given to us as a point of reference: the appearance of the Antichrist, the "Beast", which must be recognized (Revelation 13).

John's Book of Revelation is given to us for this purpose. It contains the revelations given to John to help us recognize the identity of this ferocious enemy which must appear on the eve of the Return of Jesus. It is in this sense that John must remain in the world, until Jesus comes. It is by his Revelation that John is still in the world, to prepare believers for this Return because, thanks to this salutary book, we know that the Antichrist has already appeared on earth. The Return of Jesus is therefore no longer far off; he is even already underway in certain souls.

Here ends the study of the Gospels and the Letters of John. What I said about his 3 letters is enough to allow you to read them without finding any major obscure points therein.

Now read the Gospel of John and his Letters before proceeding to study the letters written by the Apostles.

13.3 The Letters of Paul

Paul has written 14 letters to affirm the faith of the first Christians, who were mostly Judaic-Christians. His principal concern was to warn them against these adversaries who employed every effort to draw them away from Jesus; these Jews who resisted him everywhere and who wanted to bring back the neophytes to the practice of works of the Torah with all sorts of reasoning. This is why Paul, writing to the Galatians, said to them: "Are you people in Galatia mad? Has someone put a spell on you... Let me ask you one question: was it because you practiced the Law (*the Torah*) that you received the Spirit, or because you believed what was preached to you (*the Gospels*)?" (Galatians 3,1-2) "I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you... some trouble-makers (*the disbelieving Jews*) among you want to change the Good News of Christ" (Galatians 1,6-7). That is how the diabolical spirit of the Antichrist acts.

The two letters of Paul to the Romans and the Galatians must be studied together because they tackle the same problem: to stop the Judeo-Christians from returning to the useless practice of worship and deeds of the Law (*Torah*): "The Law (*Torah*) will not justify anyone in the sight of God, because we are told: the righteous man finds life through **faith** (*in Jesus, not through the cult*). The Law is not even based on faith (*in Jesus*) ... Christ redeemed (*freed*) us from the **curse of the Law**..." (Galatians 3,11-13) In his letter to the Romans, Paul adds: "A man is justified by faith and not by doing something (*the works*) the Law (*the Torah*) tells him to do." (Romans 3,28) Paul was condemned by the Jews by qualifying the Torah as a curse. But this justified and glorified him with the Father and his Messiah.

Therefore, all Paul's efforts were to convince these Jews who became Christian (accustomed of performing a prescribed worship from the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), that these practices of worship are fruitless for the soul and that only faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and this faith **alone**, without the practice of the Law (Torah), can save.

You can at this stage read the Letter to the Galatians.

Before reading the Letter to the Romans, you must know that Paul addressed it to the Christians of Rome. Now, they were divided into two distinct and, alas, adverse communities:

1. That of the Judeo-Christians, formed of Jews who believed in Jesus.
2. That of the Pagan-Christians, formed of Pagans (mostly Romans) who joined the disciples of Christ.

These two communities maltreated each other. The first, made up of Jews, considered Pagans unworthy of belonging to the community of believers. Jews who followed Jesus thought that Christianity was reserved solely for Jews; they had not yet understood the **universal** dimension of the message of Jesus. Paul then writes to them: "Is God the God of Jews alone and not of the Pagans too? Of the Pagans too, most certainly, since there is only one God, and He is the One who will justify the circumcised (*the Jews*) because of their faith (*in Jesus*) and justify the uncircumcised (*the Pagans*) through their faith (*in Jesus*)." (Romans 3,29-30).

The Pagan-Christian community in turn despised the Judeo-Christians, believing -wrongly- that Jews were to be globally excluded from the community of believers because they rejected

Jesus. Paul contradicts them by saying: "I, an Israelite... could never agree that God had rejected his people... there is a **remnant**, chosen by grace (*through faith in Jesus*). By grace, you see, so nothing to do with good deeds (*of the cult of the Torah*)" (Romans 11,1-6). So one should not close the door in front of "this remnant", these "chosen" Jews, because they believed in Jesus. The case reproduces itself today, because many Jews -like the movement "Jews for Jesus"- believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

By such sincere, true and peaceful arguments, Paul tried to set harmony between Judeo-Christians and Pagan-Christians, inviting them to "treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you." (Romans 15,7)

Modern (Zionist) Israelis use such verses, from the same letter, to be accepted by Christians, misleading them with a cunningly false translation of Paul's words and intentions. By doing so, Zionists aim to obtain the support of the Christian world for the State of Israel. Now, Paul's words were not aimed in supporting the State of Israel, nor the Israelis of the 20th and 21st centuries, but were aimed at "this chosen remnant" (Romans 11,5) among the Jews, chosen in the past, because of their faith in Jesus. These benevolent words also apply to the Jews of our day **who will believe in Jesus**. The nationalist Hebrews of today, by their refusal to recognize in Jesus the Messiah, are the Antichrist (1 John 2,22) and the false Jews denounced by Jesus (Revelation 2,9 and 3,9).

It should not be forgotten too, that Paul gave the Jews **a condition** to be saved. Indeed, he clearly says: "**If they give up in their unbelief** (*ie in their refusal of Jesus*), grafted back in your place (*with the people of God*)" (Romans 11,23).

Those who think that Paul defends the Israelis of our times and of the State of Israel must render count that:

1. Paul is a Hebrew who became an Apostle of Jesus. He gave up the Jewish worship of the Torah which he considered as null, even a curse (Galatians 3,13).

2. Paul violently fought the negators of Jesus, considering them enemies of God and of men; he said indeed: "The people who put the Lord Jesus to death, and the prophets too, have been persecuting us, and acting in a way that cannot please God and makes them the enemies of the whole human race" (1 Thessalonians 2,15).

3. Paul clearly says that the conclusion of his reasoning is the failure of those who are for the State of Israel, and the success of the elect of Jesus: "What follows? It was not Israel as a whole (*an imperialist State*) that found what it was seeking, but only the chosen few (*the disciples of Jesus obtained the Holy Spirit and attained the Kingdom of God*)" (Romans 11,7).

The Letter to the Romans ends with salutations. Paul addresses them to members of both communities, naming them, one by one, to aid in their reconciliation: Prisca and Aquila are of Jewish origins (Romans 16,3) and Luke mentions them in Acts 18,1-2. You will read the names of the Pagan-Christians mentioned by Paul, making to all, this last recommendation of love: "Greet each other with a holy kiss" (Romans 16,16).

Now read the Letter to the Romans, considering that it was addressed to these two communities to reconcile them and unite them in the love of the Messiah, Jesus, inviting the first to rise above the Pharisee considerations condemned by God (see Matthew 5,20), and the latter not to fall in their turn into racism by brushing aside Jews, as such, from the possibility of believing in Jesus.

For Paul constantly taught that in Jesus, Jews and Pagans merge: "For He (*Jesus*) is the peace between us, and has made the two (*Pagans and Jews*) into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in **his own Person** the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law (*the Torah*). This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. . . " (Ephesians 2,14-16).

Knowing that his mission was to reveal God and Christ to the Pagans (Acts 9,15), Paul indeed realized that he had to fight ferociously against the exclusiveness of the Jews who "are hindering us from preaching to the pagans and trying to save them" (1 Thessalonians 2,16).

All the letters of Paul are the fruit of his struggles "to reveal his Son in me, so that I might preach the Good News about Him to the pagans." (Galatians 1,16) He appreciated the grace of announcing to the Pagans "the infinite treasure of Christ" (Ephesians 3,8), "all the rich glory of this mystery to pagans" (Colossians 1,27), thus becoming the indisputable "Apostle of the Pagans" (Galatians 2,8), as Jesus wanted (Acts 9,15).

Having understood this crucial point concerning Paul, you can now read the rest of his letters.

The letters of Peter, James and Jude do not present any difficulties. Read them.

14. Lesson 14 – John's Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation is a prophetic book which reports the events and protagonists of the 20th century. This tumultuous time is that of the reappearance and end of a Beast: the Antichrist, on the eve of the Return of Jesus.

This Book was revealed to John, the Apostle of Jesus, in the year 95 AD.

See the Text: "The Key of the Apocalypse"

15. Lesson 15 – Study of the Themes

15.1 The Afterlife

Read the text: "The Afterlife"

You complete your spiritual formation by opening up yourself to the Qur'anic inspiration. Study "A look of faith at the Quran" and the booklet "The Antichrist in Islam".

15.2 Doctrinal theology

A knowledge of "Theology" will complete your "scholarly" formation and help you grow spiritually. Each religion has its theology. Christian theology is divided into two parts: doctrinal theology and moral theology.

The doctrinal theology

The insignias we need to know and which are based on the Holy Scriptures:

- One God and the Trinity
- God creator
- God Incarnate (Christology)

- The Sacraments
- The Virgin Mary (Mariology)
- The notion of God's people, etc...

The study of this Biblical Course contains several theological teachings.

The Apocalypse brought new light, notably on the notion of who the people of God are, treated in traditional theological works in the chapter on "the Church", as well as the notion of the "Priest".

Moral theology

- The Ten Commandments
- Social and international justice, etc...

This moral is simplified in one phrase by Jesus: "Love God and your neighbor as yourself" ... Here ends the third stage of this Spiritual Itinerary which consists of -as already mentioned in the beginning of the course- choosing and deepening the chosen spiritual path.

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- The conference: "The Bible confutes Israel"
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