

## **ELEVENTH LESSON**

### **The 12 small prophetic books:**

**Hosea - Joel - Amos - Obadiah - Jonah - Micah - Nahum -**

**Habakkuk - Zephaniah - Haggai - Zechariah - Malachi**

#### **I. Hosea (Hos)**

He comes from the North. He prophesied against the Jews “during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah kings of Judah (in the South) and of Jeroboam son of Joash, king of Israel (in the North)” (Hos 1,1). He is thus contemporary of Isaiah (who also prophesied against Ahaz). Hosea is 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 taking for wife 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” (Hos 1,2). God declares by his mouth: “I shall put an end to the sovereignty of the House of Israel. When that day comes, I shall break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel” (Hos 1.2-5). This is the valley of Megiddo, where the disastrous defeat of Josiah took place one century and half later (2 K 23,29-30). The name returns in the book of Revelation as the symbol of the final defeat of the modern Israel (Rv 16,16).

Hosea announces, like Jeremiah later (Jr 3,18), the meeting of Israel and Judah under “a single head...for great will be the Day of Jezreel” (Hos 2,2). This “single head” is the Messiah who must gather in His Person all men after the destruction of the Israeli army which is an obstacle to the plan of God. This is why it will be “great the Day of Jezreel”, that will see the destruction of this army: “Israel, you have destroyed yourself” (Hos 13,9). Hosea is against Jewish nationalism and its kingdom (Hos 8,4 and 13,9-11); he reveals a non military, but spiritual salvation, a salvation which has to be “not by bow or sword, or force of arms, not by horses, or horsemen” (Hos 1,7). See also Hos 10,13-15 about the military destruction of Israel: “you have trusted in your chariots, in your great numbers of warriors” rather than in God. Hosea thus dared to denounce, like Samuel before him, the Israeli royalty, therefore a Jewish nationalism.

Hosea rises up especially against the priests and the so-called prophets who leave the people in the ignorance (Hos 4,4-6). While reading this great prophecy, we can understand very well his pain; it is an interior moan addressed to the Jews. He denounces their spiritual adulteries predicting the deportation of the North (Hos 8,6-13). The Israelites persecuted him: “The prophet is mad...a fowler’s trap is placed on all his paths; and in the shrine of his God there is enmity towards him” (Hos 9,7-8).

#### **II. Joel (Jl)**

Reading Joel carefully you will note that he addressed his words to two different societies, one centuries far from the other:

- a) To the Jews of Judah
- b) Well later, to all the nations

Both societies will be punished for their unfaithfulness. After the punishment there will be a restoration.

This is the general theme of Joel. Here are the details:

### 1. Punishment of Judah

Joel addresses to the Judaeans the divine invectives: “Blow the ram’s horn in **Zion** (Jerusalem) sound the alarm on my holy mountain!” (Jl 2,1). “For a nation has invaded my country, mighty and innumerable...: it has reduced my vines to a desolation, and my fig trees to splinters” (Jl 1,6-7). “Vine” and “Fig tree” are symbols of Israel. When Jesus curses the fig tree, He insinuated the destruction of Israel (Mt 21,18-21).

Joel is a post exilium prophet. The announced punishment is thus the Roman invasion and the destruction of the Temple by Titus (70 AC). The priests are invited to penitence before the worship is abolished in the Temple: “Priests, put on sackcloth (symbol of repentance)... For the Temple of your God has been deprived of cereal offering and libation (that the faithful ones offered)... (Jl 1,13-14)... Come back to Me with all your heart... Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to Yahweh your God, for he is gracious and compassionate... Who knows if he will not come back (on his decision to destroy you), relent and leave a blessing behind him (and does not punish any more because of your repentance)...” (Jl 2,12-14).

The predicted plague will come “from the North” and it will be similar, for the devastation it will cause, to an invasion of grasshoppers: “What the nibbler has left, the grown locust has eaten, what the grown locust has left, the hopper has eaten” (Jl 1,4). This plague of grasshoppers is also mentioned by Amos (Am 4,9) and Malachi (Ml 3,11). It is taken up again in the book of Revelation (Rv 9,2-11).

This punishment is qualified as “the Day of Yahweh” (Jl 1,15; 2,1; 2,11), a prophetic expression that has become traditional (Is 13,6/ Ez 30,2-3/ Am 5,18). Some Jews thought that this day would have been in their favour; but all the prophets invited them not to deceive themselves: “The day of Yahweh is near, coming as **destruction** from Shaddai (strong-God)...(Jl 1,15)...Let everybody in the country tremble...Day of darkness and gloom” (Jl 2,1-2). “Disaster for you who long for the Day of Yahweh... It will mean darkness, not light” (Am 5,18).

### 2. The Restoration

After the destruction, God announces the restoration: “I will make up to you for the years devoured by grown locust and hopper...You will eat to your heart’s content” (Jl 2,25). This restoration will be done by the Christ and will be spiritual; it will be done by His Body and His Blood. Jesus had spoken to his Apostles about it: “In truth I tell you, when everything is **made new again**...” (Mt 19,28). Those whose mentality will remain materialist and political will not taste this divine Food and “the **new wine** will be snatched from your lips” (Jl 1,5). The “new wine” is the one Jesus gives for the **restoration of the heart and soul** (Jn 6,53-57/ Lk 22,14-20/ Mt 26,27-29).

This **first** restoration is done by the gift of the Spirit of God: “After that (the plague of the grasshoppers) I shall pour out my Spirit on **all humanity** (thus on all men - by Jesus - not on the Jews only). The Jews understood this restoration politically, a “resurrection” of the State of Israel. The Apostles of Jesus, instead, understood that it was an interior spiritual dimension in human soul. This is why Peter refers to this prophecy of the effusion of the divine Spirit in

Ac 2,17-21. He still specifies in Ac 3,20-21 that the “universal restoration which God proclaimed speaking through His holy prophets” will be realised by Jesus. This restoration is accomplished in two stages: the first took place with the Coming of Jesus, 2,000 years ago and the second is currently taking place in our apocalyptic times by the Return of Jesus Christ within us. I speak about the latter further in the text “the Key of Revelation”.

### 3. Punishment of the world

The punishment administered to Israel is an example, a lesson for all the nations of the world that has become indifferent to the message of Jesus. The cities will be on their turn judged, punished, because of their injustices and their defects: “When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I shall gather all the nations together and take them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; there I shall put them on trial because of Israel, my people and my heritage (Jl 4,1). Let the nations rouse themselves and march to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I shall sit in judgement on all the nations around. Ply the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come and tread, for the winepress is full. The vats are overflowing, so great is their wickedness...Multitude on multitude in the Valley of Decision! ...” (Jl 4,11-16).

The “Valley of Jehoshaphat” does not exist geographically; it is a symbolic place whose name means: “God judges”; it is also the “Valley of the Judgement” or of the “Destruction” or of “the divine Decision” to kill the enemies of God and his Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

This judgement takes place soon before the end of times since the “harvest is **ripe**” and the “winepress is **full**”. The Revelation of John takes up again the same expressions of Joel (Rv 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 retribution” (Rv 19,13-15).

Thus, “Israel” or “the people of God”, whom Joel (Jl 4,1) speaks about, is composed of the disciples of Jesus. This is the **true** people of God. In our apocalyptic days, all the nations supporting Israel - a state based upon human injustice and the denial of Jesus - are thus judged. The deniers of Christ are gathered from all nations in Palestine “to be treaded there” like the grape in the press. This is the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” where God judges, crushes, under the feet of the Messiah, the Antichrist and all the nations which support it.

With the first advent of Jesus, there has been the first effusion of the divine Spirit in all those who believed in Him. This effusion was not done without bloody events: destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple in 70 AC. At the time of the return of Jesus Christ, the second effusion will be done by bloody events (and it is currently taking place) - wars and revolutions which prepare the 3rd world war: “After this, I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. I shall show portents in the sky and on earth: blood and fire and columns of smoke”, the Lord says (Jl 3,3-5). These signs indicate wars: the columns of smoke are characteristic of the modern bombs...in particular nuclear bombs.

Jesus speaks again about all these signs (Mt 24/ Lk 21), about “the distress of these days” when “the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light” (Mt 24,29), as Joel also said (Jl 3,4) and as the Book of Revelation repeats (Rv 6,12). One does not have to understand those expressions literally expecting the disappearance of the sun and of the moon. They are symbolic and prophetic expressions. They indicate difficult times, the disappearance of faith and morality: the eclipse of the **spiritual** Sun.

#### 4. “The Universal Restoration”

After these cataclysms, all will be renewed: “When that Day comes, the mountains will run with new wine,... and all the stream-beds of Judah will run with water. A (*spiritual*) fountain will spring from Yahweh’s Temple” (Jl 4,18-19).

The “new wine” (or the “fresh juice of the vine” as some translate) symbolises the “new times” that will follow the universal punishment. They are “the new Heaven and the new Earth” after the defeat of the enemies of Jesus (Rv 21,1). Egypt and Edom, considered enemies of Israel by Joel (Jl 4,19) symbolise the unbelievers who will be always in desolation.

This is the time of a spiritual collective regeneration, I say exactly **spiritual** and **collective**. It occurs inside the souls of the believers, of **all** the true believers. The Christ Himself will appear to them as He had promised (Jn 14,21) and as Peter had revealed: “God 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” (Ac 3,20-21). And as Paul also reveals: “Christ will manifest himself a **second time...** (*in spirit, in the soul*) to those who are waiting for him, to bring them salvation” (He 9,28).

Those who will have understood that the universal restoration is an Israeli national resurrection will perish in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat”, crushed in the “tank of divine anger”.

### III. Amos (Am)

He is the oldest of the prophets writers; his mission lasted from 783 to 743 BC. He is thus contemporary of Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, but he 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 (Am 7,7-17). He was from the South, from Tekoa in Judea (Am 1,1), a reason more to be hated by the northern Israelites.

Amos is a simple shepherd, without wealth nor instruction. He does not belong to a recognised prophetic institution, nor does he have a diploma to prophesy like other prophets of his time. He recognizes himself : “I am not a prophet, nor do I belong to a prophetic brotherhood” (Am 7,14), being member of no fraternity or prophetic grouping (like certain “charismatic” movements nowadays). God is not impressed by religious diplomas in the choice of His men. Furthermore God took Amos “as he followed the flock” (Am 7,15), just like He will have chosen Peter, Andrew, James and John eight centuries later, tearing them from their nets of fishermen to make them Apostles of his Messiah. He scorned the Scribes and the Pharisees – even if they were more cultured and more educated in religious topics - preferring men with simple hearts, docile to the Holy Spirit.

God asks Amos to prophesy against Israel: “I am going to put a plumb-line in among my people Israel; never again will I overlook their offences... The sanctuaries of Israel laid waste” (Am 7,7-9). The “plumb-line” is a measuring instrument: God “measures” the rectitude of the souls, as in Rv 11,1, to reveal the hearts and to condemn the bad ones. It is the prediction of the Assyrian invasion (Am 3,11) and of the babylonian deportation (Am 5,27).

Amos is the first speaking about the “Day of Yahweh...it will mean darkness, not light” (Am 5,18) and about the “remnant” who will remain after the punishment (Am 5,15).

He is the prophet of the social justice, because he rose against the rich person and their disproportionate luxury (Am 2,6-7/ 4,1-3/ 5,7-12).

His prophecy extended even against Judah, predicting its ruin: “Yahweh says this:... I shall send fire down on Judah to devour the palaces of Jerusalem” (Am 2,4-5).

Amos denounced the exterior superficial worship, revealing that God dislikes it, that the worship He requires is the practise of justice: “**I hate, I scorn** your festivals. Your oblations **I do not accept them**...But let justice flow like water, and uprightness like a never-failing stream” (Am 5,21-24).

#### **IV. Obadiah (Ob)**

This is the shortest prophetic book. The name of the prophet means “Slave of God” (in Arabic: “Abdallah”).

This small book is a prophecy against Edomites, as they had invaded Judah: “For the slaughter, for the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame will cover you and you will be annihilated for ever”(Ob 1,9-10).

Obadiah predicts to the Judaeans a restoration: “People from the Negeb (Southern of Judea) will occupy the Mount of Esau (Edom)...etc” (Ob 1,19-21). This restoration is still nationalist with its expansionist ambitions to seize Edom.

#### **V. Jonah (Jon)**

The story reported in this book is symbolic, non historical, even if it is ascribed to the prophet Jonah mentioned in 2K 14,25.

The moral of the story is that God accepts the repentance of all men, even if they are Ninevites (Assyrians), enemies of the Jews. God is thus not the monopoly, nor the possession of the Jews only, but of the whole humanity.

Jonah is sent to the Ninevites, just as the Apostles of Jesus preached the repentance and the Messiah to the Pagans, and as Jesus was benevolent with Roman soldiers. This is a cause of scandal for the fanatics, Jews and others. What would some Christians think today, if one of their bishops preferred the Moslems to them? And vice versa, what would some Moslems say of one of their religious chiefs, if he preferred righteous Christians to impious Moslems?

The stay of Jonah in the belly of a whale during three days and three nights (Jon 2,1) symbolises the burial of the Messiah during three days before his resurrection. The psalm pronounced by Jonah, after his exit from the belly of the whale, can be perfectly applied to Christ buried under earth after his crucifixion and His resurrection the third day: “To the roots of the mountains I sank into the underworld, and its bars closed round me for ever. But you raised my life from the pit, Yahweh my God”, said Jonah (Jon 2,7).

This is why Jesus spoke of Jonah like a “sign” (Mt 12,40-41). This sign was and remains misunderstood by many, in particular by the majority of the Jews who will be judged by the men of Nineveh - who will condemn them for not believing in Jesus as the Messiah! Because the Ninevites believed in Jonah, less important than Jesus (Mt 12,41). This judgement is a fatal blow to all fanatics.

## VI. Micah (Mi)

Micah is a countryman of the South of Judea, “of Moresheth”, in the South of Hebron. He prophesied “during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Mi 1,1). Amos, a simple villager, is mentally similar to Amos’, a simple shepherd. He is contemporary of Isaiah. Like Amos, he denounced the unrestrained luxury of those “seizing the fields that they covet, they take over houses as well” (Mi 2,1-2).

He denounced the impiety of the Jews and prophesied the ruin of Samaria and Judea: “So I shall make Samaria a ruin...for there is no cure for the wounds that Yahweh inflicts; the blow falls on Judah, it falls on the gateway of my people, on Jerusalem itself” (Mi 1,6-9). He predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Mi 3,12) as well as the deportation (Mi 4,10):“That is why, thanks to you, Zion will become plough land, Jerusalem a heap of rubble and the Temple Mount a wooded height (Mi 3,12)... To Babylon you must go” (Mi 4,10).

Micah comforts the Jews by the Messiah-King who “shall gather them together like sheep in an enclosure...Their king leading the way” (Mi 2,12-13). This king will be born in Bethlehem: “But you (**Bethlehem**) **Ephrata**, the least of the clans of Judah, from you will come for me a future ruler of Israel, whose origins go back to the distant past, to the days of **eternity**” (Mi 5,1). This prophecy has been achieved in Jesus, born in Bethlehem (Mt 2,6/Jn 7,42). Retain this important prophecy well, especially because it reveals the **eternal** origin of the Messiah (compares to his **divine** names in Is 9,5).

Micah also comforts the Jews by the restoration after the ruin. But this restoration was once again understood from the nationalist point of view: “Yahweh’s Temple Mountain will tower above the mountains...Then many nations will come...To you your former sovereignty will return, the royal power of the daughter of Jerusalem” (Mi 4,1-8). Again the Messiah is seen only as the nationalist king whose “greatness will extend henceforth to the most distant parts of the country...He will save us from Assyria, should he invade our country” (Mi 5,2-5).

Micah had a great influence. The Jews remembered his prophecies several centuries after him, as Jeremiah testifies (Jr 26,18) referring to the prophecy of Micah on the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Mi 3,12).

## VII. Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk

These 3 prophets must be studied together because they are contemporary. They lived the same difficult period which preceded the fall of Nineveh (in 612 BC). They were animated by the same hope, to see the national restoration of Israel after the so much hoped fall of Nineveh. However, after this fall, there was a complete despair with the total defeat of Megiddo and the death of king Josiah who incarnated the hopes of the nationalists Jewish.

Historically, Zephaniah is older than Nahum. I thus will introduce him before the two other prophets, contrary to his place in the Bible.

### Zephaniah (Zp)

Zephaniah prophesies under Josiah, therefore between 640 and 609 BC (year of Josiah’s death in Megiddo). Josiah had ascended the throne when he was very young (he was only 8 years old in 640 B.C.: see 2 K 22,1). He thus had not yet undertaken his religious reforms and the clergy was really corrupted. Zephaniah thus rises against the ministers of worship and

announces the destruction of Judah. This destruction is the “Day of Yahweh” which is “near, and coming with great speed”, and will be a “day of distress and tribulation...” (Zp 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 K 22,14-20).

After this punishment, a humble and small “remnant” will remain, which will turn back to God (Zp 3,12). It is by this remnant that the “restoration”, predicted by the prophets, will be done. Anyway Zephaniah keeps on believing this restoration to be nationalist (Zp 3,19-20).

Zephaniah prophesies not only against Judah, but also against Assyria and predicts the fall of Nineveh: “God will make Nineveh a waste” (Zp 2,13-15). By predicting the end of Assyria and the ruin of Judah, Zephaniah indirectly proclaims the advent of the Babylonian empire which, at his time, was strengthening more and more.

### **Nahum (Na)**

He prophesies few years after Zephaniah. The danger for Nineveh (Assyria) becomes clearer with the increase of the Babylonian power. Nahum breaks out against Nineveh a very short time before its fall: “The destroyer (Nebupolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar) has advanced on you... The sluices of the River (the Tigris) are open, and the palace melts in terror (palace of Nineveh, the Babylonians had already crossed the Tigris to reach Nineveh)... Nineveh is as a lake, whose waters are draining away (Na 2,2-9)... Nineveh has been ruined!” (Na 3,7).

Exalted by the prospect of the defeat of the Assyrians, enemies of Israel, Nahum sees nothing but salvation for Judah and its restoration. He is overcome by the hope of the (national) restoration: “See... Peace! (for Judah, by the destruction of Nineveh)... (Na 2,1)... For Yahweh has restored the vine of Jacob...” (Na 2,3). This hope did not last very long, because the defeat of the Jews in Megiddo in 609 BC followed quickly that of Nineveh in 612 BC. Thus, the hope of the salvation leaves the place to the bewilderment. Jeremiah will say few years later on this subject: “We are hoping for peace – no good came of it...for the moment of cure – nothing but terror” (Jr 8,15 and 14,19).

However the prophecy of the restoration is not vain, if it is spiritually understood, according to the divine intention: in Jesus.

### **Habakkuk (Hab)**

He prophesies after the fall of Nineveh. The danger for the Israelites comes now from the “Chaldeans” (Babylonians): “For look, I am stirring up the Chaldeans...to seize the homes of others” (Hab 1,6).

Habakkuk resumed in a veiled way the threats of Micah against Jerusalem: “Disaster to anyone who builds a town with bloodshed and founds a city (Jerusalem) on wrong-doing” (Hab 2,12/Mi 3,10). It is the proclamation of the punishment by the Babylonian invasion.

## **VIII. Haggai and Zechariah**

These two prophets have to be seen together because they worked together for the rebuilding of the Temple after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezr 5,1).

## Haggai (Hg)

The two chapters of Haggai are centred on the rebuilding 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, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak the high priest... Go up into the hills (of the Temple), fetch timber (for construction) and rebuild the House (Temple)” (Hg 1,1-8).

The second Temple was completed about the year 515 BC. It was not as luxurious as the first and the old men cried with the nostalgic memory of the first scintillating Temple of “glory” (Ezr 3,12). Haggai consoles them and promises a Temple more marvellous than the first: “Is there anyone left among you who saw this Temple in its former glory? And how does it look to you now? Does it not seem as though there is nothing there? But take courage now,... the glory of this new Temple will surpass that of the old one, says Yahweh Sabaoth” (Hg 2,3-9). That did not happen since this Temple was destroyed by Titus in 70 BC... is Haggai an authentic prophet?!

Haggai and all the community understood materially this “glory”, believing in collecting the wealth of all the none Jews. Indeed, Haggai makes the Lord say: “I shall shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will flow in, and I shall fill this Temple with glory, says Yahweh Sabaoth. Mine is the silver, mine the gold!” (Hg 2,7-8). It is difficult to believe that the Lord required all this material wealth for the coffers of the State of Israel! Such was certainly not the intention of God who always insists on the **spiritual** glory of the **spiritual** Temple, the one within the souls of the believers, and not in the vain glory of money and gold. This spiritual glory exceeds **infinitely** the poor and the false material glory of the Temple of Solomon. Jesus speaks of it while saying: “Think of the flowers growing in the fields...I assure you that not even Solomon (famous for his taste for luxury) in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these” (Mt 6,28-29).

Before the invasion, the prophets predicted the **punishment**. During the exile, they spoke about consolation, and, after the return in Palestine, they encouraged the national **restoration**. At the time of Haggai and Zechariah, the national hope was based on Zerubbabel, the descendent of king David. He was the Governor. The community hoped he would restore the kingdom of Israel. He was believed to be the announced Messiah and Haggai, “inspired”, says to him: “I shall take you Zerubbabel...- Yahweh declares - and make you like a signet ring. For I have chosen you” (Hg 2,23). This divine choice did not mean that Zerubbabel was the Messiah, but that the Messiah would have come from his line (Mt 1,12-13).

## Zechariah (Zc)

Zechariah pushed the people to rebuild the Temple (Zc 1,16). He had 8 visions of which the two most important ones are:

1 - The “measurement” of Jerusalem means testing the hearts in order to restore the community with true believers ( Zc 2,5-9. Compare to Rv 11,1 and 21,15).

2 - The “two Olive-trees” (“the two Anointed ones” who build the Temple: Zc 4,1-10. Compare to Rv 11,4).

Zechariah proclaimed an important prophecy about the Messiah “humble and riding on a donkey”, and not on a tank of war; He who will remove “the chariots and the horses” of war (Zc 9,9-10). This is a big innovation in judeo-zionist aggressive mentality. This prophecy is

achieved with Jesus, the humble Messiah par excellence, who entered Jerusalem on a humble donkey (Mt 21,1-5 and 11,29).

## **IX. Malachi (MI)**

This book derives its name from the word “Malachi” that means “my Angel”. This name derives from the fact that the author prophesies the close coming of the Messiah named “the Angel - *malach*- of the Covenant” (MI 3,1). Malachi (*My Angel*) is thus a symbolic name and the unknown author writes after the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, about 450 BC.

As the other prophets before him did, Malachi denounces the impiety of the priests and the vanity of their worship, declaring destroyed the covenant of God with Levi, tribe which the priests derive from: “And now, priests this commandment is for you!...I shall certainly lay a curse on you and I shall curse your blessing...I am going to break your arm and throw offal in your faces – the offal of your solemn feasts – and sweep you away with it...You yourselves have turned aside from the way... You have destroyed the covenant of Levi” (MI 2,1-8. See New Covenant in Jr 31,31-32).

Remember that David had prophesied the establishment, by the Messiah, of a priesthood different from that of Levi, a priesthood “of the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110,4). This priesthood has been instituted by Jesus; it is the only priesthood which pleases God (He 7,11-19).

The new in Malachi’s book is the revelation of a Precursor sent to prepare the Coming of the Messiah: “Look I shall send my messenger (a Precursor) **to clear** a way before me. And suddenly the lord whom you seek will come to his Temple; yes the Angel of the Covenant (the Messiah), for whom you long is on his way, says Yahweh Sabaoth” (MI 3,1).

This precursory messenger of Christ is “Elijah”: “Look, I shall send you the prophet Elijah **before** the great and awesome Day of Yahweh comes...” (MI 3,23). Jesus explained that this prophecy referred to John the Baptist (Mt 17,10-13), who has come, not as a reincarnation of Elijah, but in the same “spirit and power of Elijah” (Lk 1,17) as I have already explained.

This prophecy of the Angel (Malachi), the forerunner of the Messiah, is specific of Malachi. No other prophet did speak about this fact. This is why it is the most important point of this book and gives its name to it: Malachi (*My Angel*).

Here the study of the books of the Old Covenant ends, a covenant become obsolete, as you have noted, and requiring a **reform**. This one was achieved by Jesus who inaugurated times of the **spiritual and universal** restoration that we are still living today. Because, as Paul announces, the material rules of the Old Covenant “are rules about outward life (the body), connected with food and drink and washing at various time, which are in force only until the time comes to **set things right**” (He 9,10).

We now will study the books which present this marvellous and vivifying New Covenant which “sets things right” by and in Jesus, the Messiah.