

LESSON 10

The four big prophetic books:

Isaiah – Jeremiah - Ezekiel - Daniel

Introduction

Now you have certain knowledge about the historical framework of the people formed by God to welcome the Messiah, Jesus. You are able thus to understand the prophets. Without this knowledge, no one can seize the insinuations of these men sent by God in order to rectify the continual deviations of the Israelis, deviations to which **all** of us are exposed. This makes the prophets' sayings valid to men of all times, if however we are able to translate and adapt them to the historical context of various times.

The study of the prophetic books gives a complementary aspect to the historical books. They reveal the **spiritual** meaning of events, the true intentions - often hidden - of God. It is necessary to know how **to read between the lines** in order to understand the prophets and seize their smooth insinuations. Living in a Zionist politicised milieu, they often had insurmountable difficulties to express the spiritual anti-Zionist thoughts of God. They were most of the time persecuted and rejected, considered as traitors to the "fatherland" and to the kingdom; a fatherland and a kingdom never wanted by God. They were not considered prophets until after death, after having been persecuted while alive (read what Jesus said about the subject in Mt 23,29-39).

The prophet is a spokesman of God. The latter appears to the prophet urging him to reveal his opinion, advice or judgements on events and attitudes of men, particularly those responsible (*kings, priests*). They are invited, under penalty of divine punishment, to yield to the divine thoughts and requirements. Mostly, it was a matter of giving up a 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 told the Jews to subject themselves to Nebuchadnezzar and for announcing the destruction of the Temple.

The essence of the prophetic message swivels around two points:

- a) The deportation as punishment for infidelity,
- b) The future sending of a saviour (*the Messiah*) whom the Jews mistook as a political military leader.

The prophetic books are writings of the sayings 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 of the exiled (*70 years after the exile*) and the rebuilding of the Temple (*the second one*).

This fact of the deportation has ravaged deeply the Israeli soul. The Jews were on the lookout for a solution to their political tragedy, seeking the "liberation of Israel" (*according to the prophetic expression*). During centuries, the hope of liberation revolved around the person of the Messiah impatiently awaited for. But this Messiah was to liberate the soul from the sin, not the Jews from certain political situations.

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 B.C.), the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.), the battles of Megiddo, of Carchemish, the Babylonian invasion of the South (Judea), the return from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple (515 B.C.)? These historical periods accompany the prophetic books. Keep them in mind.

The prophets concerned in these books are to be distinguished from the other prophets, as Elijah and Elisha, or also the group of the prophets mentioned in 1S 10,5-6. We have of the latter no written collections. We know of them only what is reported in the historical books.

The prophets we are about to see (regarded as “writers” prophets) existed over a period of approximately 300 years (750 to 450 B.C.). They are generally divided into two groups:

- a) 4 “Big” prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.
- b) 12 “Small” prophets.

The first ones are known as “Big” because of their books being bigger than the “Small” books of the other 12 and not because of a spiritual dignity (compare Isaiah’s 66 chapters to Joel’s 4 chapters and Obadiah’ single chapter).

Along with the 4 big prophets, I will include while studying Jeremiah, the book of “Lamentations” of Jeremiah and the prophet “Baruch” whose small book follows that of Jeremiah, having been 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 help in knowing the time during which lived the prophet and in understanding him better. It would be good, later, for you to get to know well one or two prophets. I suggest Jeremiah who is very close to us psychologically, and to Jesus spiritually.

We begin the 4 big prophets with Isaiah. As with all prophetic books, read them only after my explanations.

I. Isaiah (Is)

Isaiah is a senior royal official. He largely influenced the events of his time. He was born around 765 B.C. 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 later by that of Judah, as a punishment to the multiple infidelities of the Jews.

In chapter 6, Isaiah tells his vision in which God asks: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” And Isaiah answers without hesitating, courageously: “Here am I, send me”. It was certainly necessary, to have a strong character to accept the painful and dangerous mission of denouncing kings and powerful persons belonging to the royal court. Jeremiah, like Moses, started by declining the divine offer (Jr 1,6). It is not a light and pleasant load to reprimand powerful persons, even on behalf of God; it is never done without unbearable persecutions. Isaiah’s courage is admirable.

Read already this chapter 6; in it, God announces the deportation to the Jews: “Towns are in ruin and deserted, houses untenanted... Yahweh has driven the people away and the country is totally abandoned” and will remain only one “stock, a holy seed”; this stock is the “small remainder” about which I spoke and that God saves to pursue his Messianic plan.

More than once, Isaiah predicted the exile: “My people is in exile, for want of perception” (Is 5,13), but a remainder will stay to continue the mission: “Those who **are left** in Zion and remain in Jerusalem will be called holy” (Is 4,3). This theme of a “**small remainder**” was initially revealed by the prophet Amos who had great spiritual influence on Isaiah (Am 3,11-12; 5,15). Amos preceded Isaiah by little. 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 the most important ones

a. “Immanuel” (Is 7,14)

Isaiah declares to king Ahaz who wanted a son: “The Lord will give you a sign: the young woman (“*almah*” in Hebrew, meaning the young virgin) is with child and will 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 (Is 7,14).

To understand this prophecy, you should know the historical context in which it was proclaimed. Go back to chapter 2 Kings 16. It is a prophecy addressed to king Ahaz. At this time, Pekah (*known as “son of Remaliah” in Is 7,9*) was king of Israel and Razon king of Syria (*Aram: Is 7,1*). The king of Assyria (*Tiglath-Pileser, called “Pul”: 2K 15,19*) threatened all the area. 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 (2K 16,3) to ward off fate. He therefore did not have a heir anymore and the dynastic succession was threatened.

Razon and Pekah decided to invade Judea to dethrone Ahaz and place another king on Judea’s throne (“*the son Tabeel*” - see Is 7,6) who would ally with them against Pul (Is 7,1-2). Ahaz was afraid: “His heart and his people’s hearts shook like forest trees...” (Is 7,2) But God sent Isaiah towards Ahaz to tranquillise him by assuring that “these two smouldering sticks of firewood” (Is 7,4), Razon and Pekah, will not succeed in their venture against Judea because “the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Razon. The head of Ephraim (*in the North*) is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah (*Pekah*)” (Is 7,8-9), which implies that the capital of Judea is Jerusalem and the chief of Jerusalem is Ahaz. God seizes also the occasion to reveal the near crushing of Samaria: “Another sixty-five years and Ephraim will cease to be a people” (Is 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’ throne forever. Isaiah too confirmed that: “A shoot (*the Messiah*) will spring from the descendants of Jesse (*David’s father*)... On him will rest the Spirit of Yahweh...” (Is 11,1-2) There is thus nothing to fear regarding the throne because the “Lord will give you a sign: the “*almah*” is with child and will give birth to a son: Immanuel” (Is 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 is not given by God to please Ahaz who had shown to be more impious than other kings, but to achieve God’s Messianic intentions of God.

King Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz. He was reforming and “did what Yahweh regards as right” by abolishing the idols and even destroyed Moses’ bronze serpent (2K 18,1-4). But

he was not this “Immanuel” who was to join Judea and Israel together, the one who would return the exiled Jews from Assyria that they may “together pillage the people of the East...” and establish together the illusive Zionist empire by plundering... (Is 11,10-16).

Eight centuries later the prophecy about Immanuel was accomplished. It is then that it was understood by those who have eyes to see and an intelligence able to understand God’s intentions. Matthew reveals that it is with Jesus that this prophecy was accomplished: “Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “Look! The Virgin (*Almah*) is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel” (Mt 1,22-23).

God wanted his Messiah to be born from the Virgin Mary, the “Almah” by excellence, about whom Isaiah spoke. Therefore, it is only with its achievement that a prophecy is generally understood. It is thus necessary to be aware and attentive, flexible and well disposed to understand God’s intentions, without insisting on our point of views - as did the Jews who refused Jesus - but on those of God.

It is important to retain from the name “Immanuel” that it is symbolic since it means “God with us” as Matthew explains it. Hence, the Messiah was not necessarily to bare that name, as many Jews had 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 he has been given, ‘Wonder-Counsellor, **Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace**’” (Is 9,5). These names reveal the divine identity of the Messiah. Indeed God said through Ezekiel: “I **myself** shall take care of my flock...” (Ez 34,11).

Isaiah unconsciously felt the need for the divine incarnation; addressing himself to God, he exclaimed: “Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down” (Is 63,19).

b. The Messiah is Galilean

Isaiah saw “a great light” on the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, tribes of northern Palestine, in Galilee, where Jesus lived (Is 8,23-9,6). Being on the border with Lebanon, which was pagan at that time, this area’s inhabitants were scorned by the Jews who considered them soiled by their pagan neighbours: “From Nazareth (*in Galilee*)? Can anything good come from that place?” said Nathanael to Philip (Jn 1,45-46). And the Pharisees, seeing that Nicodemus was defending Jesus, said to him: “Study the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise in Galilee” (Jn 7,52).

If the Pharisees themselves had well studied the prophecies, they would have understood that, contrary to what they thought, the Messiah, the most important of all prophets, was to emerge precisely from Galilee. Isaiah said indeed:

“As the past humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali (*Galilee*), so **the future** will glorify the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, the territory of the nations (*the pagans*). The people that walked in darkness have seen a **great** light; on the inhabitants of a country (*Galilee*) in shadow dark as death, light (*the Messiah*) has blazed forth... For a son has been born for us, a son has been given to us (*Immanuel, the Son of the Almah-Virgin*), and dominion has been laid on his shoulders; and this is the name he has been given: “Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace”...” (Is 8,23-9,5)

In his gospel, Matthew refers to this prophecy of Isaiah (Mt 4,12-16)

Humiliated by the Assyrian invader, Galilee was then, in fact, glorified by Jesus who lived and worked in Nazareth (*Zebulun*) and preached in Capernaum (*Naphtali*).

c. The Messiah will be persecuted and put to death by the Jews.

Isaiah had predicted that the Messiah would be rejected by his people and that he will be subject to atrocious suffering and delivered to death. But Isaiah also foretold the Messiah's resurrection since "**after** the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light and be content. By his sufferings, the upright one, my servant (*the Messiah is the "Servant" of God*) will justify many by taking their guilt on himself" (Is 53,11). The light that this faithful servant will see is that of resurrection after death.

I report the principal verses of Isaiah's chapter 53 which speaks about this good Servant by explaining them in italic between brackets:

"Who has given credence to what we have heard? (Is 53,1: *who would have believed that the long awaited Messiah will be a poor and rejected anti-Zionist*)... "He had no form or charm to attract us, no beauty to win our hearts (Is 53,2: *He comes from a poor and modest society, neither pompous clothes nor human glory*)... He was despised, the lowest of men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering... for whom we (*the Jews, his own people!*) had no regard. Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing... while we (*Jews*) thought of him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas he was being wounded (*crucifixion*) for our rebellions... Which of his contemporaries was concerned at his having been cut off from the land of living, at his having been struck dead for his people's rebellion? If he gives his life as a sin offering, he will see his offspring... After the ordeal he has endured, he will see the light (*Resurrection*)".

Read this chapter now. No one had written more beautifully and more truthfully, even after the Advent of Jesus who achieved all these prophecies. While walking with the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24, 25-27) Jesus told them: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into his glory?" He explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about himself". Chapter 53 of Isaiah (as well as the psalm 22) were among his explanations. One wonders how certain Jews still do not understand! The answer is that they are blinded by the Zionist mentality: greed for power and possession.

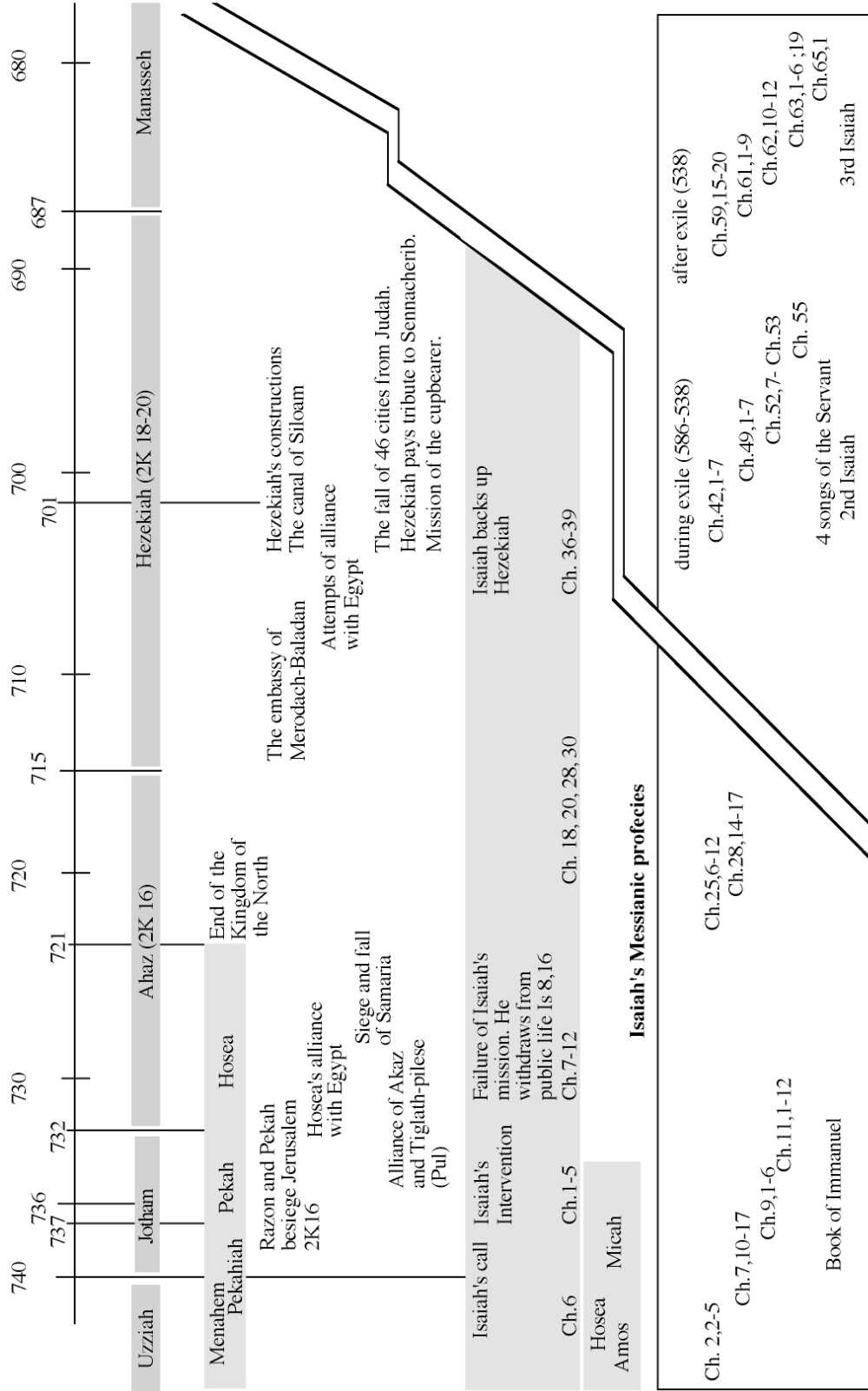
d. The "consolation" of Israel

The last 26 chapters of Isaiah are intended to comfort the Jews by announcing them salvation. This salvation was misinterpreted as the return to Palestine and the "national Jewish" restoration. But God was referring to the **spiritual** salvation brought by Jesus for **all men**. This fact is, however, rejected by most 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 cry to her that her period of service is ended, that her guilt has been atoned for (*by the future sending of the Messiah*)... A voice cries, 'Prepare in the desert a way for Yahweh...'" (Is 40,1-4). These verses were applied by the Gospel to John the Baptist who came to prepare the way for the Messiah in this desert of sleeping souls (Mt 3,3).

Some think that these chapters of consolation were not written by Isaiah himself but by his disciples **after** the return from exile.

We ignore the end of Isaiah. According to a Jewish tradition, he would have been put to death, sawn into two, under king Manasseh who "shed innocent blood in such great quantity that he flooded Jerusalem... besides doing what is displeasing to Yahweh ..." (2K 21,16).

Chronology of Isaiah



II. Jeremiah - Lamentations - Baruch

Jeremiah (Jr)

Jeremiah is of a sacerdotal family established near Jerusalem, in Anathoth (Jr 1,1). He prophesied in Jerusalem starting from Josiah's 13th year (626 B.C.) "until the eleventh year of Zedekiah" (Jr 1,3), which is the year of the deportation (2K 25,2). He thus personally lived the tragedy of the deportation since its preparation and had predicted it.

The fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) and the reforms of Josiah gave a hope of salvation, but despair surprised the Jews with the dramatic defeat of Megiddo (609 B.C.) and the sudden emergence of Babylonian threats.

Jeremiah was the son of the high priest Hilkiah (Jr 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 prophet **to the nations**'. I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!'" (Jr 1,5-6). But, in spite of his adolescence, God insisted: "Do not say: 'I am only a child'... for I am with you to rescue you... I put my words into your mouth ... I have set you **on the nations** and the kingdoms, to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jr 1,6-10). Before building, God must destroy what men built without his consent.

Note that Jeremiah is chosen as prophet "of the nations", not only of the Jews; he is thus universal: "on **the nations** and **the kingdoms**". He must "destroy and overthrow" to be able to "build and plant" later. His mission is similar to the prophet of the book of Revelation who must "prophesy against many different nations and countries and languages and kings" (Rv 10,11).

Jeremiah has the difficult mission of announcing the Babylonian invasion from the North, the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the deportation, followed by the return after 70 years of exile: "From the North disaster will come boiling over on all who live in the country... (Jr 1,14)... I shall bring on you an enduring nation... it will devour your sons and daughters... and demolish your fortified towns" (Jr 5,13-17).

On the other hand, the false prophets contradicted Jeremiah: "No evil will overtake us, we shall not see sword or famine..." (Jr 5,12). This was giving false hopes to the people who preferred listening to the priests and the so-called prophets who prophesied peace and security, rather than to Jeremiah who prophesied the bitter truth. God continuously intervened asking Jeremiah to proclaim: "Horrible, disgusting things are happening in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests exploit the people. And my people love it! But when the end comes what will you do?" (Jr 5,30-31).

Because thus speaks Yahweh: "When the seventy years granted to Babylon are over, I shall intervene on your behalf and fulfil my favourable promise to you by bringing you back to this place" (Jr 29,4-10). God unceasingly reprimanded the laymen and religious chiefs, and Jeremiah always transmitted the message with courage: "The priests never asked, 'Where is Yahweh? Those skilled in the Law did not know me, (*they wrongly interpreted the words of God, understanding them in a political spirit, a spirit condemned by God*). The shepherds (*kings*) too rebelled against me (*doing "what displeases to Yahweh"*) and the prophets (*who claim being prophets*) prophesied by Baal" (Jr 2,8).

Jeremiah also denounced the bad Jewish interpreters, scribes and priests, because they make God say in the Torah what He does not want to say. This is why he qualifies the scribes' pen as "the lying pen" that changed the Torah into lies at the service of their interests (Jr 8,8), prescribing animal sacrifices and worships that **God never demanded** (Jr 7,22): "For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I **said nothing to them**, gave them no orders, about burnt offerings or sacrifices. My one command to them was this: Listen to my Voice... (Jr 7,22-23)... How can you say, 'We are wise, since we have Yahweh's Law?' Look how it has been falsified by the lying pen of the scribes!"(Jr 8,8).

It should be noted that, Jeremiah, being of a sacerdotal family and son of the high priest Hilkiah, was well placed to know that the scribes had handled the text of the Torah in their interest with their "lying pen" (Jr 8,8). It is this same Hilkiah, his father, who had found the text of the Torah in the Temple (2K 22,8). He must have told his son, Jeremiah, about it; who thus learnt that the scribes and priests had modified the texts to their convenience. Jesus did not fail to denounce the "hypocrite scribes and Pharisees" (Mt 23).

As Jesus proclaimed against the second Temple, Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of the first Temple: "Do you look at this temple that bears my name as a den of bandits? ... I shall treat this Temple just as I treated Shiloh" (Jr 7,11-14), (*Shiloh is the city where was found the first sanctuary that was destroyed by the Philistines, the Palestinians of the time: 1S 4,17-18*).

The Israelis did not want to believe Jeremiah even after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion and deportation. Indeed, he had predicted that the exile would be long: 70 years (Jr 25,11). Hananiah the prophet contradicts him: "Yahweh Sabaoth says this: I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon! In exactly two years' time I shall bring back all the vessels of the Temple of Yahweh... and all the exiles of Judah who have gone to Babylon..." (Jr 28,1-4). Therefore, Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiled recommending to organize themselves in Babylon, to "build houses, settle down... marry and have sons and daughters... work for the **good** of the city to which I have exiled you; **pray to Yahweh on its behalf**. For Yahweh says this: "When the seventy years granted to Babylon are over... I will bring you back to this place" (Jr 29,4-10). It was absurd for many Jews to pray for the Babylonians, their enemies. They saw in Jeremiah a traitor and persecuted him. Compare with Jesus who asked the Jews "to love and to pray for their enemies" (Lk 6,27).

We recognize the real prophet from the false one when the prophecies are accomplished. Jeremiah, as all the authentic prophets, knew that God spoke to him and had sent him. The false prophets are guilty because they use God's Name wrongfully. This is why Jeremiah warned against these liars who claim to speak on behalf of God: "Do not be deceived by the prophets... do not listen to the dreams you have, since they prophesy lies to you in my name... I have not sent them, Yahweh declares" (Jr 29,8-9).

Jeremiah's firm attitude caused his persecution: Pashhur, the Temple's chief of police, "struck the prophet Jeremiah and then put him in the stocks" (Jr 20,1-2).

Increasing animosity almost demoralised the prophet: "I heard so many disparaging me... All those who were on good terms with me watched for my downfall... A curse on the day when I was born! " (Jr 20,10-15). God revealed to him that even his family had lined up against him: "For even your brothers and your own family will betray you. They will pursue you in full cry. Put no faith in them when they speak you fair!" (Jr 12,6).

The mission of Jeremiah weighed heavy on his shoulders: “A disaster for me, mother, that you bore me to be a man of strife and dissension for the whole country” (Jr 15,10). Discouraged, he almost abandoned his heavy load: “For me, Yahweh’s word has been the cause of insult and derision all day long. I would say to myself: ‘I will not think about Him, I will not speak in His name any more’ (Jr 20,8-9). And Jeremiah stayed silent. But God does not abandon his prophets, He burns them by His love at their deepest selves, insisting and obtaining from them the testimony He wants. Jeremiah acknowledges that his silence was like a fire burning his heart: “... but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart... I am weary of holding it in, indeed, I cannot” (Jr 20,9). The prophet ends up yielding to the love of God, a powerful seducing love, he takes his mission back by love of God and says: “You have seduced me, Yahweh, and I have let myself be seduced, you have overpowered me: you were the stronger” (Jr 20,7). This beautiful attitude of deep love contrasts that of Jacob, “Israel”, who claimed defeating God! (Gn 32,25-33). The greatness of a man, his greatest victory, is to let himself be defeated by God.

The interior 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” which Jesus was to establish: “Look, the days are Advent, Yahweh declares, when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, but **not like the covenant** I made with their ancestors... a covenant which **they** broke. This is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel... I shall plant my law, writing it on **their hearts**...” (Jr 31,31-34). Read this text and contemplate it well, comparing it with the words of Jesus: “The kingdom of God is **within you**” (Lk 17,21). It is at the price of his sacrifice that Jesus founded this New Covenant: “This cup”, had he said to his Apostles, “is the **New Covenant** in my blood poured out for you”. (Lk 22,20).

Note well that Jeremiah, speaking about this new Covenant, does not mention a “promised land”, but an interior life, God writing his words in the **hearts** of believers and “there will be no further need for everyone to teach neighbour or brother, saying, ‘Learn to know Yahweh!’ No, they will all know me, from the least to the greatest ... “ (Jr 31,34). This means that the believers will not have **to insist** anymore on those who do not believe in order to spread the knowledge of God, this knowledge being already widespread all over the world, as is the case today. The who thirst for it will find it, those who do not wish it will neglect it: “Let the sinner continue sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let the upright continue in his uprightness, and those who are holy to be holy” says the Book of Revelation (Ap 22,11). Each is free to choose between the momentary temporal pleasures and the permanent joys of Eternity.

God asked Jeremiah to write his prophecies and send them to king Jehoiakim. So Jeremiah “summoned Baruch son of Neriah, who at his dictation wrote down on the scroll all the words Yahweh had spoken to him” (Jr 36,1-4). The king remained incredulous and burnt the scroll (Jr 36,23). Jeremiah had to dictate his prophecies a second time to Baruch “with many similar words in addition” (Jr 36,32). It is of this same Baruch that we will speak further on.

Jeremiah had advised the Jews not to resist Nebuchadnezzar’s troops, but instead to surrender or leave Jerusalem: “Anyone who stays in this city will die by sword, by famine, or by plague; but anyone who leaves it and surrenders to the Chaldeans (*Babylonians*) now besieging you will live; he will escape with his life” (Jr 21,8-9). Some high ranked personalities were against him for having spoken this way (Jr 38,1-3) and wanted to kill him. They insisted on king Zedekiah: “You must have this man put to death: he is unquestionably disheartening the remaining soldiers in the city, and all the people too, by talking like this.

King Zedekiah answered: "He is in your hands...". They therefore seized Jeremiah and threw him in the storage-well... and into the mud Jeremiah sank" (Jr 38,4-6). Read this chapter 38 and the one that follows to know how the king saved the prophet from an unquestionably horrible death, and how Nebuchadnezzar then took him out of prison, treating him better than supposedly pious Jews had done.

The dramatic situation lived by the Jews raised the hope of messianic salvation. Jeremiah proclaimed deliverance through the future Advent of the Messiah. But this Messiah is still conceived as a political king who "will restore" the nation (Jr 30,18). **According to God** however, restoration is spiritual; it was started by Jesus to be completed at the end of times, with the final downfall of the current State of Israel (Ac 3,21). You will find in Jr 23,5-6 and Jr 30,8-9 two messianic prophecies.

Jeremiah was taken along by force to Egypt by a group of Israelis who fled the country in spite of God's insistent orders given through Jeremiah, prescribing them to stay in Jerusalem.

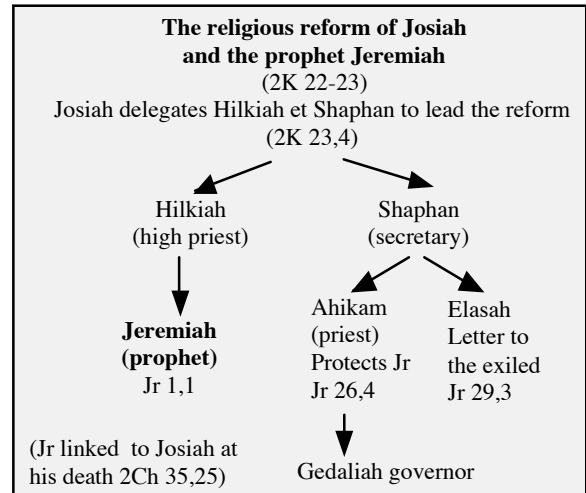
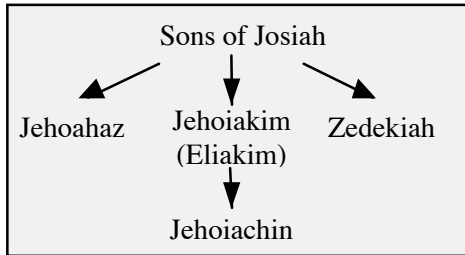
We do nothing of Jeremiah after that. It is probable that his days were in Egypt. Read chapters 42 and 43 who speak about this event, prophesying the Babylonian invasion against Egypt, and then continue your reading of the book of Jeremiah.

It should be noted that Jeremiah was of a sacerdotal family. His father "Hilkiah" was the high priest who found the "Book of the Law" (Torah) in the Temple. It is on this book's basis that king Josiah undertook religious reforms. The scribes and priests added to this book's text clauses appropriate to them. Jeremiah, being the son of the high priest, was informed of it and revealed this infamy in Jr 7,22 and 8,8. It is up to us to discover the scribes' interest and hypocrisy!!

The book of the Lamentations (Lm)

These lamentations, or "moanings", were written after Jerusalem's ruin and the fire of the Temple. Perhaps has Jeremiah written certain verses, but there are probably more than one author. All of them cry and make funeral lines to express their mourning after Jerusalem's defeat. Read it with this spirit: "How deserted she sits, the city once thronged with people! Once the greatest of nations, she is now like a widow. Once the princess of states, she is now put to forced labour." (Lm 1,1) See 2 Chronicles 35, 25 in relation to the lamentation composed by Jeremiah after king Josiah's death in Megiddo.

The prophet Jeremiah



History

640 Josiah

630 The prophet Zephaniah

627 Jeremiah's vocation

622 discovery of "the book of the law" (2K 23,25)

Religious reform

612 The prophet Nahum

609 Meggido

609 **Jehoahaz** (Eliakim 3 months)

Return of paganism

609 **Jehoiakim**

605 Carchemish

Prophecy of the 70 years of exile (Jr 25)

Jehoiakim vassal for 3 years (2K 24,1)

600 revolt of Jehoiakim

Prophet Habakkuk

598 **Jehoiachin** (3 months)

1st DEPORTATION

597 **Zedekiah**

Prophet Ezekiel

589/8 révolte de Zedekiah
Jerusalem besieged

586 Fall of Jerusalem

2nd DEPORTATION

586 Gedaliah

The life of Jeremiah

Ch 1 (Jeremiah's vocation)

Ch 2-6 (before Josiah's reforms)

Ch 30-31 (book of consolation,
New covenant 31,31)

Ch 11 (broken covenant)

Ch 7-9 (against the Temple)

Ch 26 (arrest of Jeremiah)

Ch 14-15 (dryness / rejection of Judah)

Ch 19-20 (broken jug and Pashehur, Jr constrained)

Ch 25 (prophecy of the 70 years)

Ch 36 (torn scroll)

Ch 13 (Jehoiachin menaced, the exile)

Ch 27 (take over Babylon)

Ch 28 (The false prophet Hananiah)

Ch 29 (letter to the exiled)

Ch 21-22 (reply to Zedekiah about Jerusalem's siege)

Ch 34 (Zedekiah's fate)

Ch 37-38 (Interruption of the siege in 588. Jr in the well)

Ch 32-33 (sieged again, promises of restoration)

Ch 39-40,6 (story of Jr at the falldown of Jérusalem)

Ch 40,7-45 (Gedaliah until the end of Jr)

Appendix to the study of Jeremiah

The 5 kings of the time of Jeremiah (Jr 1,2)
(2K 22 to 26 and 2Ch 34 to 36)

1. Josiah 640-609 B.C.(Great religious reforms + Book of the Law found)

In 609, Necho came up to help the Assyrians against the Babylonians; Josiah tried to prevent the junction between the Egyptians and the Assyrians. He wanted the final ruin of Assyria that still occupied a part of northern Israel. Its defeat thus gave advantage to the kingdom of Judah. But Necho killed Josiah at Megiddo in 609 B.C., and carried his way to Carchemish where Nebuchadnezzar overcame him in 605 B.C. (2K 23,29 and 2Ch 35,20-25). That put an end to the Assyrian empire.

2. Jehoahaz 609 B.C.

He remained three months on the throne after Josiah's death. After Assyria's defeat at Carchemish, Necho, 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 Judea (2K 23, 31-35 and 2Ch 36, 1-4). Jeremiah refers bitterly to Jehoahaz' exile to Egypt: "Do not weep for the dead king (*Josiah*). Weep rather for the one (*Jehoahaz*) who is exiled (*to Egypt*), since he will never come back, will never see his native land again... but will die in the place to which he has been taken captive..." (Jr 22,10-12).

3. Jehoiakim 609-598 B.C.

Jehoiakim, during his fourth year of reign (605 B.C.), therefore 4 years after Carchemish, noticing Nebuchadnezzar's strength, subjected himself to him. He felt safe, away from the Pharaoh's anger. Happy to feel secure, Jehoiakim wanted to kill Jeremiah after hearing him predict misfortune against his country. He tore the scroll that Jeremiah asked Baruch to write. He gave order to arrest both of them. But, Ahikam son from Shaphan, protected Jeremiah (Jr 26 and 36). Shaphan was close to the royal court, under Josiah's reign, and had helped the king with the reforms (2K 22,3-12). As Jeremiah was of a sacerdotal family, Shaphan knew him well, which explains his assistance to the prophet (Jr 26,24). Shaphan is also the grandfather of Gedaliah, son of Ahikam (2K 25,22), who also helped Jeremiah (Jr 40,5-6). (Shaphan, father of Ahikam, father of Gedaliah, are all Jeremiah's friends and protectors).

4. Jehoiachin 598 B.C.

First deportation includes the king along with all his royal court and all people of good condition (2K 24,15). Nebuchadnezzar establishes as king in his place Zedekiah, his uncle (2K 24,17 and 2Ch 36,9-10).

5. Zedekiah 598-586 B.C.

Zedekiah revolted against Nebuchadnezzar (2K 24,20). This latter therefore took over Jerusalem thus (2K 25,2). Wanting to escape, Nebuchadnezzar arrests, deports and judges him. The Babylonians entered Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and deported the rest of the Judeans, leaving the peasants to cultivate the land. They established Gedaliah as governor (2K 25 and 2Ch 36,11-21).

Baruch (Ba)

The book of Baruch is missing in the Hebrew Bible. It was written by Baruch in Babylon after the deportation: “This is the text of the book written in Babylon by Baruch” (Ba 1,1). The exiled assemblies read it “to Jeconiah, king of Judah (*exiled*), and to all people who had come to hear the reading, to the nobles... to all who lived in Babylon” (Ba 1,3-4). One notices in this book the great impression that Jeremiah’s message had made; an impression that lasted a very long time in the Jewish conscience (2M 2,1-7 & 15,14 / Mt 16,14). Baruch himself has interest only because he repeats and reminds the blazing words of his professor, words rejected by the Jews: “You have sent down your anger and your fury on us, as you threatened through your servants the prophets when they said, ‘Bend your necks and serve the king of Babylon’... But we would not listen to your voice and serve the king of Babylon” (Ba 2,20-24).

Baruch reminds of the New Covenant predicted by Jeremiah to encourage the exiled: “But in the country of their exile, they **will come to themselves** and acknowledge that I am the Lord their God... Then I shall bring them back to the country which I promised on oath to their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... And I shall make an **everlasting covenant** with them... And never again shall I drive my people Israel out of the country which I have given them” (Ba 2,30-35). This “country” is Eternal Life, a heavenly and not geographical entity.

The eternal Covenant in question is the one already proclaimed by Jeremiah (Jr 31,31) and achieved by Jesus. Notice that Baruch had already seized the spiritual interior dimension of this covenant: “They will come **to themselves**”. But he still believed in the promised land as a geographical reality, “the country promised to Abraham...”, and predicted the return to this land (Palestine) prophesying that God “**never again** shall drive my people Israel out of the country given to them” (Ba 2,35). However, the Jews were once again exiled by Titus in the year 70 A.D. and were scattered in the whole world. It is clear thus that God aimed at a non-geographical, psychological and spiritual stability, taking place **in the soul** of believers, “within themselves”.

Baruch considers the Jews as “the **widow’s** cherished sons” (Ba 4,16), because Israel, who is punished by God, is compared to a sad and abandoned widow. This topic of “the widow” is often evoked in the esoteric assemblies (*Freemasonry, Rosicrucian brotherhood*) and refers to Israel.

Retain the expression “put on the sackcloth” (Ba 4,20) which means being in mourning because of dramatic situations. You will see it again in the Book of Revelation related to the two witnesses of God persecuted by the Beast’s men (Ap 11,3).

Baruch ends up his book with an optimistic tone by pointing out the return from the exile: “Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress... See your children reassembled from west and east...” (Ba 5,1-9). The copy of Jeremiah’s letter to the exiled ends the book.

Thus, Baruch is a revision of Jeremiah, a testimony in his favour.

III. Ezekiel (Ez)

The prophet Ezekiel is a priest exiled since the first Judaeen deportation to Babylon (2K 24,10-17): “It was the fifth year of exile for king Jehoiachin (593-592 B.C.), the word of Yahweh was addressed to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi **in Chaldaea**” (Ez 1,1-3). The Temple of Solomon had not yet been destroyed when his mission began. Ezekiel is thus a

contemporary of Jeremiah. During exile, Ezekiel had visions concerning the second deportation and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, which occurred few years later (in 586 B.C.). God asked him to prophesy against the unsubdued Israelis, to announce this punishment against them: “Mountains of Israel... I am going to summon the sword against you... I shall fling your butchered inhabitants down...” (Ez 6, 1-7), however keeping a **remainder** to pursue the divine Messianic plan: “But I shall spare some of you to escape the sword... and your survivors will remember me” (Ez 6, 8-10).

Ezekiel’s most important visions and prophecies are:
(Read them progressively after my explanations)

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 Advent for the four corners of the country... **The end** is Advent, it is on the move towards **you**... I shall show neither pity nor mercy...” says the Lord (Ez 7,1-9).

With Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., it was the **first end** of Israel. Jesus too had spoken about the “end” of Israel (Mt 24,3-14). This took place in 70 A.D., when Titus burnt the second Temple. Most Israelis had escaped in diaspora. It was Israel’s **second end**. During the apocalyptic times we live in, Israel will know a **third and ultimate end** (Mt 24,14). This “Beast” of John’s Revelation chapter 13 is “never to be seen again” (Rv 18,21).

It is of this third and last end of Israel that Jesus speaks in the Gospels:
“This good news of the Kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world... And then the **end** will come ” (Mt 24,14).

The Gospel is already proclaimed in the whole world. Israel’s end of ends is very close.

2. Vision of the 4 living creatures (Ez 1,4-28)

“I looked; a stormy wind blew from the north... and in the middle what seemed to be four living creatures (Ez 1,5). They had **human hands** on all four sides corresponding to their four faces and four wings (Ez 1,8)... All four had a **human** face... a lion’s... a bull’s... an eagle’s... (Ez 1,10) Beyond the solid surface above their heads, there was... a throne. High above on the form of a throne was a form with the appearance of a **human** being... The sight was like the glory of Yahweh” (Ez 1,26-28).

As with the messianic prophecies, this great vision was misunderstood in its time. It is a prophecy on the four Gospels introducing Jesus the Messiah. God announces the Babylonian punishment that falls down on northern Israel like a stormy wind. Because God’s judgement falls down, as a storm, unexpectedly. “Stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour”, recommends Jesus in order not to be surprised like the foolish virgins (Mt 24,42 / 25,1-13). In this same vision, God reveals his plan of salvation through Jesus for the whole humanity: the 4 living creatures represent the 4 writers of the 4 Gospels. Their wings are symbol of their spiritual elevation; the hands under the wings indicate that they are writers, having written the 4 Gospels with their hands. The “solid surface” is the Heavens; the “Throne” is God’s seat to judge men by the Gospels. At the highest of the Throne, is the Messiah, who is both man and God, having “the appearance of a **human being**”, and “the sight like the **glory of Yahweh**” (Ez 1,26).

We are able to understand today that, in this vision, God announced the Messiah as being his own human incarnation; this Messiah having to be God Himself who will incarnate to save the believers and judge the non-believers: “The Word became flesh” says John in his Gospel, “we saw his **glory, the glory** that he has from the Father” (Jn 1,1-14). We are able to understand today, after the Messiah-God’s incarnation, that this divine glory seen by Ezekiel was fully in Jesus of Nazareth in his plenitude.

The four living creatures have “a human form. Each had four faces; each had four wings... They touched one another with their wings”. The 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 each one moved straight forward; they went where the spirit urged them, they did not turn as they moved”, because they are driven by the same spirit, that of God who is righteous. They deliver their Message as “the sower who went out to sow” (Mt 13,4), without looking behind. “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” (Lk 9,62).

“Between these living creatures were what looked like blazing coals, like torches” (Ez 1,13). These blazing coals and torches are the hearts of Apostles and believers who, like blazing coals, are burning of love for God and his Messiah and who, as torches, light this darkened world by their glare.

“The fire gave a brilliant light, and lightning flashed from the fire, and the living creatures kept disappearing and reappearing like flashes of lightning” (Ez 1,14). Jesus said: “The Advent of the Son of man will be like lightning striking in east and flashing far into the west” (Mt 24,27).

The Gospel and the Message of the book of Revelation are widespread through the whole earth, via Internet. It is spread in a wink, like the flash of lightning which leaves from the east to the west. And this, by the Apostles of the End of Times, small coals with burning hearts of love for the Messiah and his holy Mother.

In his book of Revelation, John also sees these 4 living creatures, always “in the middle of the throne and around it” (Rv 4,6), because being on the Throne, they take part of the Judgement by their Gospels. “Anyone who proves victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I have myself overcome and have taken my seat with my Father on his throne” says Jesus (Rv 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” (Mt 19,28)? Ezekiel by this vision announces the first Advent of the Messiah, and John’s Revelation announces his second Advent at the end of times, after the final end of the current State of Israel.

3. Vision of the eaten scroll (Ez 3,1-15)

“**Eat** this scroll... So I **ate** it, and it tasted sweet as honey... He then said, ‘Son of man, go to the House of Israel and tell what I have said... Do not be afraid of them, for they are a tribe of rebels... whether they listen or not’”.

Ezekiel is invited “**to eat**” the book of his prophecy i.e. to assume his mission against the Israelis: “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**”, said God to his prophet (Ez 3,5-6).

Ezekiel’s mission – at his time – was limited to the “house of Israel”, it was thus specific and did not extend to “big nations”.

The Book of Revelation repeats 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 testify, not only against Israel, as was the case for Ezekiel, but also “against many different nations and countries and languages and kings” who support it in its injustice: “Take that open scroll... eat it... I ate it (*the book*) and it tasted sweet as honey, 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 kings” (Rv 10,8-11). To be noted that the **sourness** of the book of Revelation’s prophesy is non-existent in that of Ezekiel, being more painful because it is universal, running up against more obstacles: Ezekiel’s prophecy was addressed only to the Jews to inform them of Christ’s first Advent. However that of the Book of Revelation, harder to carry, is intended to men of the whole world to warn them and prepare them to Jesus’ Return at the time of his near second Advent: “Look, he is Advent... everyone will see him, even those who pierced him (*the Jews*), and **all the races** of the earth will mourn over him” (Rv 1,7).

4. The New Covenant (Ez 11,19-20 & 36,25-27)

Here also the prophecy of the New Covenant insists on the heart and the spirit, and not on the possession of a geographical land: “I shall give them a single heart and I shall put a new spirit **in them**”. It is the Holy Spirit that Jesus speaks of (Lk 11,13), the one that his **true** subjects receive (Jn 14,15-26; 16,7-15).

5. Ezekiel’s widowhood and mourning (Ez 24,15-27)

God announces to Ezekiel the death of his wife, “the delight of his eyes” (Ez 24,16), asking him not to carry mourning of her: “You are not to lament... Groan in silence, do not go into mourning for the dead” (Ez 24,16-17).

This mourning was meant to symbolize the destruction of the Temple, which was to the Jews “the delight of their eyes” (Ez 24,21). Only after the Temple’s destruction would Ezekiel’s mission begin; with the accomplishment of his prophecy he will be listened to better. Then God will allow him to speak and untie his tongue: “You will no longer be dumb” (Ez 24,27), after silencing him because of the Jews’ impiousness: “You will be dumb, and no longer able to reprove them, for they are a tribe of rebels” (Ez 3,26).

The Revelation’s prophecy has also known a long period of silence: “Keep the words of the seven thunders secret and do not write them down” (Rv 10,4). This period - which lasted 20 centuries - was followed by the time of the message’s frank and open proclamation: “Do not keep the prophecies in this book a secret, because the Time (*of the Return of Christ*) is close” (Rv 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.

6. The resurrection (Ez 37,1-28)

Ezekiel sees in vision “dried bones” taking body again and returning to life: “I am now going to open your graves; I shall raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel” (Ez 37,12). Some interpret this resurrection 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 the spiritual life about which Jesus spoke (Jn 5,24-27). It is reserved for his **faithful** disciples. This is what the Book of Revelation calls “the First Resurrection” (Rv 20,6). It differs from the last resurrection at the end of times, called “Second Resurrection”, when the body will also be revived and renewed (Jn 5, 28-29).

7. Gog and Magog (Ez 38-39)

These names symbolize the pagans of the time. The elected, the “people of God”, will triumph over them. The book of Revelation explains that Gog and Magog of the 20th century are no other than the Israelis “who came swarming over the entire country (Palestine)” (Ap 20,7-9). The book of Revelation throws a divine light that helps us understanding God’s intention in Ezekiel’s prophecy.

8. Vision of the rebuilt Temple (Ez 40-48)

About fifteen years after the Temple’s ruin, “in the 25th year of our captivity” (Ez 40,1), Ezekiel had a vision of its rebuilding. He sees “a man, whose appearance was like brass. He had a flax cord and a measuring rod in his hand (*to measure the Temple*)... He measured the thickness of this construction...” (Ez 40,3-5)

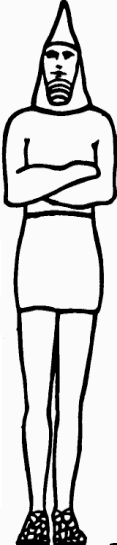
It is of course about the spiritual Temple, since God tells Ezekiel: “No alien, uncircumcised **in heart**, may enter my sanctuary” (the scribes readily add: “and **body**”) (Ez 44,6-9). The book of Revelation speaks also about the construction of the **spiritual** Temple at the end of times, a Temple also measured to admit exclusively the true believers (Rv 11,1). This eternal Temple is no other than God and Jesus-Christ (Rv 21,22), “Nothing unclean may come into it: no one who does what is loathsome or false” (Rv 21,27). This is the true dimension of the Temple of God that the Jews could not understand.

Ezekiel’s new Temple is the one described in the book of Revelation. It is spiritual. Compare “the water” of life that spreads out of the Temple’s sanctuary seen by Ezekiel (Ez 47,12), with the “river of life” of the book of Revelation (Rv 22,1-2). The Temple seen by Ezekiel is spiritual, this is a simple deduction owing to the fact that its measurements and its form do not correspond to the Temple built by Ezra after the return from exile. No river of life went out of that Temple’s sanctuary.

IV. Daniel (Dn)

Nebuchadnezzar had taken Daniel along in exile probably at the time of the first deportation of Judah (2K 24). He belonged to the Jewish nobility: “From the Israelites, the king ordered... to bring a certain number of boys of royal or noble descent... suitable for service at the royal court... Among them were the Judeans Daniel...” (Dn 1,3-6). The prophet was only a young child when he left Palestine. “Daniel remained there (*in exile*) until the first year of king Cyrus” (Dn 1,20).

Daniel became an important person in the court after having been the only one to reveal to the king his dream and its interpretation (*like Joseph with the Pharaoh*). Read chapter 2 then resume this course.

		KINGDOM	DATE
GOLD		BABYLON	606-539 B.C.
SILVER		MEDO-PERSIA	539-331 B.C.
BRONZE		GREECE	331-30 B.C.
IRON and CLAY		ROME	30-397 A.D.

The statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar represents 4 empires that follow each other historically: Babylonian, Mede-Persian, Greek and Roman. It was during the fourth of those empires - the Roman - that the Messiah had been announced, He is that “stone which broke away, untouched by any hand, and struck the statue... Then, iron and clay, bronze, silver and gold, all broke into pieces... the wind blew them away, leaving not

a trace behind. And the stone grew into a great mountain, filling the whole world” (Dn 2,34). The 4 empires are explained by Daniel (Dn 2,36-43). **“In the days of those kings**, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom (*that of Christ, whose Kingdom is not of this world: Jn 18,36*) which will never be destroyed” (Dn 2,44). Jesus came - in the days of those kings - under the Roman empire. His Kingdom still exists and will exist forever in the heart of his faithfuls.

The Roman empire passed; what do certain Jews still await to understand?!

Apart from Nebuchadnezzar's visions, Daniel, himself, had visions to warn him about the historical evolutions concerning the 4 empires. You will notice that all these visions disturbed and tired the prophet (Dn 7,28 / 8,27). The divine messages are often heavy to carry.

Here are Daniel's most important visions:

1. Chapter 7: Vision of the 4 “Animals”

The four “Animals” represent the 4 pagan empires that precede the arrival of Christ. This vision is similar to that of Nebuchadnezzar's statue (Dn 2). During the fourth empire will come the Messiah: it is Him “the Old one (*because His origins go back to the distant past, to the days of eternity: Mi 5,1*) took His seat on the Throne” in order to judge (Dn 7,9). The judgment is announced by the fact that “the books were open” (Dn 7,10). This expression is mentioned again in the book of Revelation (Rev 10,2 / 20,12). These open books are those of the Old Testament. They are “open” to show, by the prophecies therein, that Jesus is really the Messiah.

Thus, those who do not recognize that Jesus is the Messiah are staggered and condemned by the prophecies that had announced Him (see Lk 24,25-27 / Ac 17,2-11 & 18,28). Isaiah reprimands those who do not understand the prophetic visions, saying that these are for them like “a closed book” (Is 29,11).

Those 4 pagan “Beasts” are found again in the book of Revelation in the shape of “four horses” (Rev 6,1-8). They combine together in one unique “Beast” that represents them all (Rev 13). That Beast in the book of Revelation which appears at the end of times, differs from those seen by Daniel: it symbolizes the neo-paganism which appears with force as one unique nation, militarily and universally powerful, and whose centre is Palestine with its coveted capital: Jerusalem (Rev 13 & 20,7-9). The nation in question is Israel.

2. Chapter 8: Vision of the “Goat from the West”

Vision of the “Goat from the West” (Alexander the Great: “king of Greece”, Dn 8,5 & 21) who triumphs over the Persian Empire, the “Ram” (Dn 8,6 & 20). After his multiple victories, Alexander died at the age of 33: “The goat then 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 four generals of Alexander who divided his empire between them (Dn 8,8). Antiochus Epiphanes, whom you have known while reading the book of Maccabees (1M 1,10-44), followed one of these four generals and controlled the area of Palestine. His policy of hellenisation caused the revolt of Maccabees (in 167 B.C.: 1M 2). He is symbolized by the “horn which grew to great size towards south and the east and towards the Land of Splendor” (*Palestine*). That “Horn” soiled the Temple of Jerusalem by installing iniquity (*Zeus' statue*) and flung truth to the ground” (Dn 8,11-12).

Notice that Daniel did not understand the vision (Dn 8,27). This prophetic principle, already mentioned, should be retained: a prophecy concerning a historical event is only understood after the achievement of the predicted event. Then, the prophetic books that had announced it “open”. These books remain “closed” (*or sealed*) for those who refuse to admit the historical achievement of the prophecy. They will be blinded forever, their eyes closed to the divine truths.

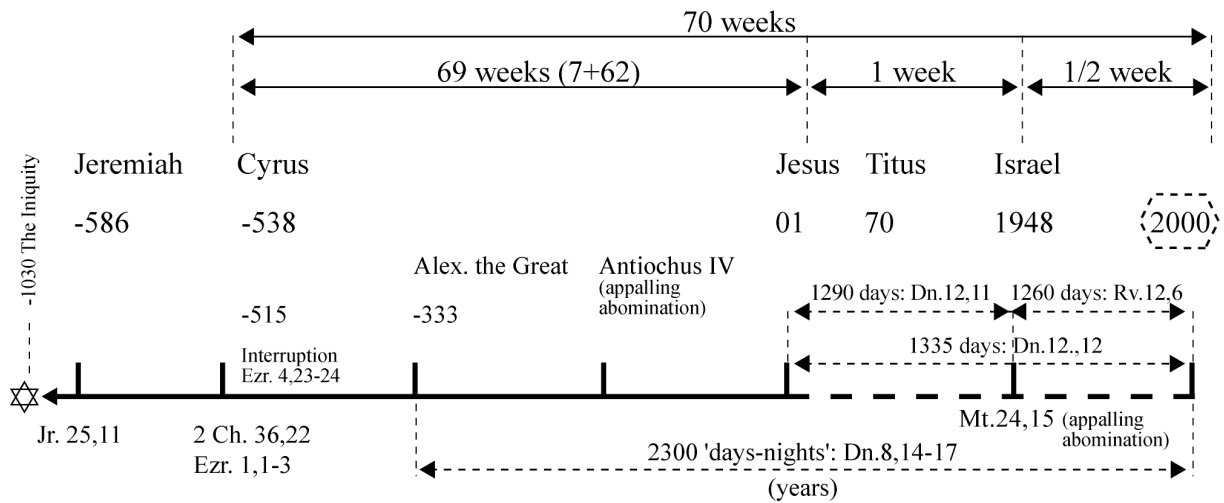
3. Chapter 9: End of the 70 years of deportation

Daniel “was studying the Scriptures” (*Jeremiah's*) and praying God to “know when the 70 years of exile, as revealed by God to Jeremiah the prophet, would come to an end” (Dn 9,2). Instead, God seized the opportunity to reveal to him his plan of salvation by sending the “Anointed Prince” (*Jesus*) who would be suppressed 69 weeks after the reconstruction of Jerusalem” (Dn 9,25-26). God invites Daniel not to limit himself to the 70 years of Jeremiah, but instead to look further and have a global vision: the 70 years are 70 “weeks” **of years**, therefore $70 \times 7 = 490$ years, approximate time of the Advent of Jesus.

Those “70 weeks **of years**” are divided into 3 periods: 62-7-1. “After 62 weeks, an Anointed One is put to death (*He, indeed, was rejected and crucified*) and... (*David's political Zionist throne*) will not be His” because His reign is spiritual. Therefore, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple will be again “ruined by a prince who is to come” (Dn 9,26). This prophecy was achieved by Titus who destroyed the sanctuary a second time, in the year 70 A.D. Such a prophecy, announcing the second destruction of the Temple, was not likely to comfort Daniel.

The period of time going from Daniel to the “Anointed Prince” is of $62+7=69$ 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 apocalyptic times in which we live. They are known as the end of times, when “the appalling abomination” will be seen in Jerusalem (Dn 9,27 / Mt 24,15). That abomination is the Zionist Antichrist in Jerusalem today: the enemy of Christ on the Holy Land with his successive crimes and destruction. The “70 weeks of years” will last “until the end, until the doom assigned to the devastator (Israel)” (Dn 9,27). According to Jesus' words: “Jerusalem will be trampled down by the gentiles (*the Zionists who reject Him*) until their time is complete (the time of the State of Israel)” (Lk 21,24).

Daniel 9,20-27



Daniel 9,24: From Cyrus until the fall of the Antichrist: 70 weeks (+1/2 week)

- 1st time : Dn. 9,25
 - 2nd time : Dn. 9,26-27a
 - 3rd time : Dn. 9,27b
- Compare the 70 weeks and a half to Rv.17,8-11

The Iniquity	Begins with Saul -1030	Dn. 8,14 = 2300 days
	IS. 8,4-19	Dn. 12,11-12 = 1290 - 1335 days
	IS. 11,14-15	Dn. 12,7 = 3 1/2 times
Its denunciation	IS. 12,19	Rv. 11,2-3 = 42 months / 1260 days / 3 1/2 years
	Hos. 8,4	Rv. 11,9-11 = 3 1/2 days
	Hos. 9,15	Rv. 12,6 & 14 = 1260 days / 3 1/2 times
	Hos. 13,10-11	Rv. 13,5 = 42 months

4. Chapter 12: Vision of the end of time

This last vision is about the apocalyptic period of time that precedes immediately the end of times. “That will be a time of great distress, **unparalleled** since nations first came into existence” (Dn 12,1)... “and such as will never be again”, confirmed Jesus later (Mt 24,21). This period is a sign of the end of times, a sign given so that the wise ones get prepared for the final Judgment, then “of those who are sleeping in the land of dust, many will awaken, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace” (Dn 12,2).

This vision is similar to the apocalyptic visions of John. It reveals a symbolical number of days (*1290 & 1335 days: Dn 12,11-12*), a complementary number revealed to John (*1260: Rev 11,3 & 12,6*). A comparison between the two texts will be essential in order to understand.

Nevertheless, it is only after the achievement of the apocalyptic events (*fall of Israel and 3rd world war*) that these figures “will be revealed” to our intelligence and their symbolism will become clear. This is why Daniel “listened **without understanding**” (Dn 12,8). These events will last “a time and two times, and half a time”, namely three times (*or periods*) and a half (Dn 12,7). Those are the “three - and - half times” and “three - and - a half days” of Rev 11,8-11. They correspond to the half week of Dn 9,27. No one can understand that prophecy before “all these things will come true, once the crushing of the holy peoples' power is over” (Dn 12,7). That concerns the destruction of the Israeli Antichrist who has seduced and weakened the believers. “Go, Daniel: these words **are to remain secret and sealed** until the time of the End” (Dn 12,9). It is only with the explanation of the book of Revelation that all these prophecies will be clarified.

In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Daniel ends at chapter 12. Chapters 13 and 14 are only found in the Greek Bible. They reveal Daniel's wisdom. They are easy to understand.

5. The synthesis

Here is a concise text in order to understand well Daniel's prophecies. I propose to read the first 12 chapters of his book and particularly chapters 1 / 2 / 3,1-23 / 4 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 12. The key to understand these prophecies is to realize that they aim to the time of the future Advent of the Messiah, which was impatiently awaited for, by the Jews of that time.

Jesus, on several occasions - more than 40 times in the Gospels - had said that He was the "Son of man" (Mt 8,20; 12,40; 24,30... Mk 9,12; 13,29 / Lk 12,8; 18,8; 21,36 / Jn 1,51; 6,27; 9,35 / Ac 7,56). The Jews did not understand and asked him: "Who is this Son of man?" (Jn 12,34). Jesus referred to Daniel's vision (Dn 7,13-14) which announced the Advent of the Messiah "Advent on the clouds of heaven as it were a **Son of man**... his kingship will never come to an end...". Notice that with his Advent "the court was in session and the **books lay open**" (Dn 7,10). Those books are the prophetic books which should be opened and consulted in order to demonstrate, by the Holy Scriptures, that Jesus is indeed the Messiah announced by the prophets (Ac 17,2; 17,11). This expression is found again in Rev 20,12 concerning the Second Advent of Jesus in order to demonstrate - again always by **opening** Holy Scriptures - and especially the Book of Revelation, this "other opened book" - that the Messiah, who came 2000 years ago, is back again spiritually.

To understand Daniel's prophecies, one should realize that everything in his book is centered on the Advent of the Messiah. This is the **core** of this book. All the other prophecies have a historical nature and relate to the empires preceding the Advent of the Messiah, the empires that followed one another, during and after Daniel: Babylonian, Mede, Persian, Greek then Roman. It is under the last empire, namely the Roman empire, that the book of Daniel announces the Advent of this "Son of man" (Dn 7,13-14), of this "Anointed One put to death" (Dn 9,26), of that "stone broken away from the mountain **untouched by any hand**" (Dn 2,33), that "corner stone" mentioned by Jesus (Mt 21,42) which crushed the human empires and whose spiritual kingdom will last forever (Dn 2,29-45).

Daniel's anguish was due to the Babylonian exile and to the destruction of the temple. Jeremiah had predicted that this exile would last 70 years (Jr 25,11-12 and 29,10). However, this period was exceeded. Daniel was not seeing the end of Israel's misfortunes. Because there were two exodus: the first one in 597 B.C. followed by a second one in 587 B.C.. After Cyrus' edict in 538 B.C., there has been a limited return from exile. Around 515 B.C., there has been an attempt to construct the temple followed by an interruption which lasted "until the **second year** of the reign of Darius" due to the opposition of the Samaritans (Ezr 4,24). Thus, we understand Daniel's anguish who was impatient to see the temple rebuilt: "**In the first year** of Darius' reign, I, Daniel, was studying the Scriptures, counting over the number of years - as revealed by Yahweh to the prophet Jeremiah - that were to pass before the desolation of Jerusalem would come to an end, namely 70 years" (Dn 9,1-2). Then, in the first year of Darius, the 70 years had passed but the temple was not yet rebuilt as Daniel's and all Jews' had expected.

Thus, the important point to understand is that Daniel languished to see the temple rebuilt and the Messiah Advent as an Almighty emperor to establish - finally - the Israeli empire in the whole world. Such is also the case of the Zionists Israelis nowadays.

This is why the prophet decided to make penance by fasting and acknowledging, in a well structured pleading, the multiple faults of his people, begging the Creator to forgive and rebuild the temple, not for the merits of the Israeli sinners, but for his own divine honor (Dn 9,3-19). He seeks to convince Him that His own divine reputation is at stake: “Let your face smile again on your desolate sanctuary... relying not on our upright deeds but on your great mercy, we pour out our plea to you. Listen, Lord... **for your own sake** since your city (*Jerusalem*) and your people alike bare your name” (Dn 9,17-19).

Due to this human insistence of good faith, an insistence due to the ignorance and the incomprehension of the divine plan by that “man of predilection” (Dn 10,11), Heaven answers Daniel's call - suddenly and with ardor - to stop this litany of vain words: “I was still speaking... when Gabriel, swooped on me in full flight...” (Dn 9,20). Gabriel's brutal interruption reminds us of Jesus' teaching: “In your prayers do not babble... your Father **knows what you need...**” (Mt 6,7). This angelical intervention was necessary to put an end to Daniel's avalanche of useless words. Because he acknowledges: “I was **still** speaking...” (Dn 9,20).

Gabriel tells him: “Grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision: 70 weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city, for putting an end to transgression, for placing the seal on sin, for expiating crime, for introducing everlasting uprightness, for setting the seal on vision and on prophecy, for anointing the holy of holies. Know this, then, and understand...on the wing of the Temple will be the appalling abomination until the end, until the doom assigned to the desolator” (Dn 9,24-27).

Daniel did not understand at all that vision although Gabriel had told him: “Grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision”. The prophet was in a hurry to see the achievement on the ground, 70 years after the exile, of the events announced by Jeremiah. However, Heaven announces to him that 70 weeks are assigned, namely 70 weeks of years, that is to say $70 \times 7 = 490$ years, still to come before the historical achievement of prophecies. All that, not for the reconstruction of Jerusalem's temple, according to Daniel's expectation, but “for anointing the holy of holies”, namely the Messiah who is the real Temple according to the divine conception. Thus, the temple of Jerusalem loses its importance. It is Jesus who clarified that prophecy when He announced, at the time of his Advent, approximately 490 years after (*70 weeks of years after Daniel*): “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... He was speaking of the Temple that was His body” (Jn 2,18-22). Later on, after Jesus' Resurrection, the apostles understood that the Temple of God is in every soul believing in Jesus (1Cor 3,16-17). The book of Revelation says even better: any material religious building - temple, church, mosque, pagoda etc - becomes null and void, because in the celestial Jerusalem there is no temple and no building of any kind (Rev 21,22). Daniel was very far from this divine conception, he was overwhelmed, confused by that cult in the spirit. Thus, we understand his exhaustion due to his states of mind (Dn 8,27; 10,9-10).

We are given the spirit of Jesus to understand the prophecies according to God's intention. That's why Daniel could not yet understand them. John the Baptist, himself, who came five centuries later, he who was the forerunner of the Messiah had not yet understood them. According to Jesus' testimony, "There has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Mt 11,11). Because even John the Baptist, like Daniel, expected a theocratic Israeli kingdom. However, “the least in the Kingdom of heaven” has understood well the spiritual and interior dimension of the divine Kingdom and of its eternal kingship. The psychological upheaval on Daniel, though

unconscious, resulted in the fact that Daniel “lost consciousness and was ill for several days” (Dn 8,27).

Daniel's visions do not only concern Jesus' first Advent; they even extend in time up to His Return in apocalyptic times: “A time of great distress, unparalleled since nations came into existence” (Dn 12,1). Jesus mentioned again this prophecy in Mathew 24,21 and referred to “the appalling abomination” of which the prophet Daniel spoke (Mt 24,15). With his first and second Advent, Jesus “opens the books”, namely the prophetic books which announce his Advent and his Return for judgment (Dn 7,10 and Rev 20,12). Thus, all Daniel's prophecies are accomplished with these two Advents. We are still awaiting the “doom assigned to the desolator” (Dn 9,27): namely the fall of the Beast. Then, and only then, shall we be able to understand what is still left to understand from the prophecies.

We should remember that the book of Daniel points mainly at the two Advents of Jesus who will explain, upon his return, Daniel's words who were divinely intended to remain “sealed until the time of the end” (Dn 12,4). And now is the time!

6. Supplement

Let's reflect on these 2 situations: Daniel in the past and us today, the Romans with the Israelis in the past and the USA with the Israelis today:

The second chapter of Daniel presents the dream of Nebuchadnezzar about the statue, the head of which “was of fine gold ... and its feet part iron, part clay”. This means, “that the two will be mixed together in **human seed**, but they will not hold together, any more than iron will blend with clay” (Dn 2, 43). This fragile **human** seed that occurred three centuries after Daniel, indicated a fragile alliance between the Romans and the Israelis of that time as revealed in the first book of Maccabees (1M 8,17 etc). This alliance “in human seed”, i.e. between Romans and Israelis, could only be fragile. Such a human mixture is as weak as the impossible amalgam between iron and clay. The Romans, at that time, had the reputation of being invincible, a reputation that the United States have today (1M 8,1-14 and especially verses 11-13). The unconditional Roman support to the Jews is seen in the letter revealed in 1M 15,15-24. Under the Roman Empire, Israel existed, then, already as a State. That is why it is not wrong to say that “this Beast” (Rev 17,8) was in the past supported by the Romans. All that prepared the Advent of the One whose Kingdom will not have an end and “will never be destroyed...” (Dn 2, 44), because this kingdom is present in the souls. In fact, it was under the Roman Empire that our blessed Savior came. In spite of the support of the Romans to the Israelis in the past, it was Titus, a Roman, who destroyed the Israeli kingdom in the year 70. Thus appeared the fragility of that alliance.

Today “again”, Israel, the first apocalyptic Beast, obtained the protection of the almighty American State, the second apocalyptic Beast. This also prepared, and still prepares the arrival of the One whose “Kingdom will not have an end...”. But nowadays, it concerns his **Second** Advent, his Return, in the soul. Those who do not sleep but remain faithful until the end, remaining awake with the weapon of discernment, “will open to Him **as soon as He knocks** on the door of the heart” (Lk 12,35-36; 24,33 / Rev 3,20).

Historical context of Daniel's prophecies

Assyrian Empire

612 Fall of Nineveh

1. Babylonian Empire

609 Battle of Armageddon

605 Battle of Carchemish

604 **Nebuchadnezzar** (604-562)

587 **Deportation** (Jr 25: the 70 years)

Deportation of Daniel (Dn 1)

545 **Balthazar** (son of Nabonide,
son of Nebuchadnezzar)

2a. Empire of Mede

555 **Cyrus** the Persian: revolt

against the Medes

539 Cyrus enters to Babylon:
death of Balthazar (Dn 5,30)

2b. Persian Empire

538 Edict of Cyrus (Dn 9)

530 Cambyse (son of Cyrus)
Interruption construction of the
Temple
Ezr 4 and 5

522 **Darius I:** (522-486) (Dn 6,1)
Resuming construction of
Temple
Ezr 6

3. Greek Empire

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336 **Alexander the Great**

333 Battle of Issos

331 Battle of Arbel

319 Four Seleucides

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175 **Antiochus IV Epiphanes**
(175-164) (Dn 7,8/8,9)

170 Appaling Abomination
(Dn 9,27/11,31/12,11
Mt 24,25)

4. Roman Empire

63 Pompeis conquers Jerusalem

1 Jesus: (Dn 9,25)

70 Titus destroys the 2nd Temple
(Dn 9,26)

Dn 1: Daniel in Babylon

Dn 2: Statue of the 4 empires (under Nebucha)
(Babylon - Mede-Persian - Greek - Roman)

Dn 3: Golden statue and canticle

Dn 4: The tree and the madness of
Nebuchadnezzar

Dn 5: Death of Balthazar

Dn 6: Daniel in lion's den

Dn 7: Vision of the 4 animals (year I of
Balthazar):

(Babylon - Mede - Persian - Greek)

Dn 8: The Ram and the Goat

(Persian-Greek: year III of Balthazar)

Dn 9: 70 weeks Announcement of the Messiah
(year I of Darius)

Dn 10-11: Persian and Greek (year III of Cyrus)
(Antiochus IV Epiphanes)

Dn 12: Time of the End

N.B.: To see:

1M 1; to compare with Dn 11,31-39

Mt 24 / Lk 19,41-44/Lk 21,20-24

Ezra and Nehemiah.

