



# Curiosities and Revelations

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# CURIOSITIES AND REVELATIONS



*Ministério Seara Ágape*  
*Estudo Bíblico Evangélico*

Pastor Tânia Cristina Giachetti  
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Thanks to the one who is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Lord and Creator of all things, who reveals His secrets and His purposes. To Him be the honor and praise for His constant work, making me grow every day and giving me the knowledge of His truth.

I dedicate this book to all those who are curious for knowing the truth of God for their lives and have sought answers to the questions existing in their souls. May the light of divine revelation reach them, quenching their thirst and their hunger for Him.

“I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them. They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame - those who trust in carved images, who say to cast images, ‘You are our gods.’” (Isa. 42: 16-17)

## Introduction

As I wrote on the introduction of the first book “*Curiosities and Revelations – Genesis*” ([https://www.searaagape.com.br/curiositiesandrevelations\\_genesis.pdf](https://www.searaagape.com.br/curiositiesandrevelations_genesis.pdf)), it arose in a different way in my life. All the other books were written after a physical, emotional or spiritual experience with the Lord, which made me reflect, learn and be treated by Him. This one, in fact, was a consequence of a silent work of the Holy Spirit within me. After I made a compilation of biblical verses already typed in other books, without knowing for sure why I was doing that, only following the spiritual direction, I realized that some of them still had hidden revelations of great value to satisfy my curiosity in certain areas. This book initially included a study about Genesis, but because the subject took on a greater proportion of knowledge, I decided to separate it from this one, “*Curiosities and Revelations*”, with other kind of biblical subjects.

“*Curiosities and Revelations*” (both books) is not designed to put us at odds with God, with science or any other line of thought that exists. It has only the humble purpose of sharing with the reader some revelations I received from Him about several questions existing in my curious soul. This work covers some issues scattered in the biblical books where certain brothers in Christ find some difficulty, especially when they need to go to the pulpit with answers to their sheep. Even if you do not agree with some explanations, read it to the end. What is true, the Holy Spirit Himself will testify with your spirit. We all know that the true answers we’ll get only in the eternity. The Word of God tells us that “The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them” (*Ps. 25: 14*). It also says:

- *Matt. 18: 2-3*: “He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

- *Dan. 4: 17*: “The sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers, the decision is given by order of the holy ones, in order that all who live may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdom of mortals; he gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of human beings.”

- *Deut. 29: 29*: “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this law.”

- *Isa. 55: 8-9*: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Based on all these verses we can say that, however much we try, we’ll never know the fullness of God, for His thoughts and ways are much larger and higher than ours and He has dominion over everything. However, He gives His kingdom to anyone He wills and to those who accept Him with the humility and spontaneity of a child. This means that when we read the bible we must put aside our adult and mature reasoning so that we can enter the spiritual reasoning, what the child attains easier. Innocence is the key that opens the spiritual world and eternity for us. In the book of Deuteronomy it is written that the secret things belong to the Lord, but the revealed things belong to us. Why? In the book of the Law it was answered, “to observe all the words of this law.” Nevertheless, for us who live under the grace manifested through Jesus Christ, the things that are revealed to us are not just to walk the path of justice, but that we really come to know the power and majesty of our God, being His instruments and improving the lives of our fellow men. In other words, His teaching breaks the chains of slavery of the devil that keep people trapped in ignorance, pain, sin and death.

In most cases, the Hebrew bible first describes the most important events, then the less important, besides to repeat them many times; hence we have not only the impression of a loss of temporal sequence in certain narratives, but also a pleonasm, an exaggerated and unnecessary repetition. For them, however, it is a learning strategy and reaffirmation of the work of God.

I hope that the Spirit of the Lord be with you and open your understanding to many things, above all, to know Him better. I love you in Christ Jesus.

Tânia Cristina

Notes:

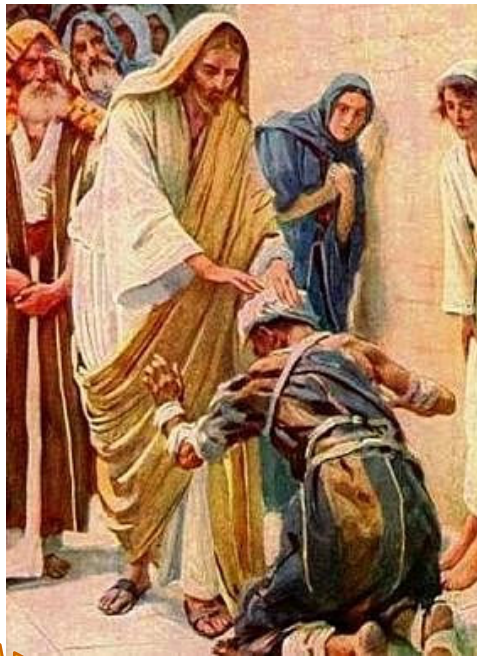
- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [ ] or parenthesis ( ), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (will be used in brackets in some verses to make it easier for readers to understand).

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## 1<sup>st</sup> PART



Laws on leprosy

## Lev. 13

### Laws on leprosy

<sup>1</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

<sup>2</sup> When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.

<sup>3</sup> The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous disease; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean.

<sup>4</sup> But if the spot is white in the skin of his body, and appears no deeper than the skin, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest shall confine the diseased person for seven days.

<sup>5</sup> The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and if he sees that the disease is checked and the disease has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall confine him seven days more.

<sup>6</sup> The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day, and if the disease has abated and the disease has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only an eruption; and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean.

<sup>7</sup> But if the eruption spreads in the skin after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall appear again before the priest.

<sup>8</sup> The priest shall make an examination, and if the eruption has spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is a leprous disease.

<sup>9</sup> When a person contracts a leprous disease, he shall be brought to the priest.

<sup>10</sup> The priest shall make an examination, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and there is quick raw flesh in the swelling,

<sup>11</sup> it is a chronic leprous disease in the skin of his body. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; he shall not confine him, for he is unclean.

<sup>12</sup> But if the disease breaks out in the skin, so that it covers all the skin of the diseased person from head to foot, so far as the priest can see,

<sup>13</sup> then the priest shall make an examination, and if the disease has covered all his body, he shall pronounce him clean of the disease; since it has all turned white, he is clean.

<sup>14</sup> But if raw flesh ever appears on him, he shall be unclean;

<sup>15</sup> the priest shall examine the raw flesh and pronounce him unclean. Raw flesh is unclean, for it is a leprous disease.

<sup>16</sup> But if the raw flesh again turns white, he shall come to the priest;

<sup>17</sup> the priest shall examine him, and if the disease has turned white, the priest shall pronounce the diseased person clean. He is clean.

<sup>18</sup> When there is on the skin of one's body a boil that has healed,

<sup>19</sup> and in the place of the boil there appears a white swelling or a reddish-white spot, it shall be shown to the priest.

<sup>20</sup> The priest shall make an examination, and if it appears deeper than the skin and its hair has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; this is a leprous disease, broken out in the boil.

<sup>21</sup> But if the priest examines it and the hair on it is not white, nor is it deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days.

<sup>22</sup> If it spreads in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is diseased.

<sup>23</sup> But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread, it is the scar of the boil; the priest shall pronounce him clean.

<sup>24</sup> Or, when the body has a burn on the skin and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a spot, reddish-white or white,

<sup>25</sup> the priest shall examine it. If the hair in the spot has turned white and it appears deeper than the skin, it is a leprous disease; it has broken out in the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous disease.

<sup>26</sup> But if the priest examines it and the hair in the spot is not white, and it is no deeper than the skin but has abated, the priest shall confine him seven days.

<sup>27</sup> The priest shall examine him the seventh day; if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. This is a leprous disease.

<sup>28</sup> But if the spot remains in one place and does not spread in the skin but has abated, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar of the burn.

<sup>29</sup> When a man or woman has a disease on the head or in the beard,

<sup>30</sup> the priest shall examine the disease. If it appears deeper than the skin and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an itch, a leprous disease of the head or the beard.

<sup>31</sup> If the priest examines the itching disease, and it appears no deeper than the skin and there is no black hair in it, the priest shall confine the person with the itching disease for seven days.

<sup>32</sup> On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the itch appears to be no deeper than the skin,

<sup>33</sup> he shall shave, but the itch he shall not shave. The priest shall confine the person with the itch for seven days more.

<sup>34</sup> On the seventh day the priest shall examine the itch; if the itch has not spread in the skin and it appears to be no deeper than the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes and be clean.

<sup>35</sup> But if the itch spreads in the skin after he was pronounced clean,

<sup>36</sup> the priest shall examine him. If the itch has spread in the skin, the priest need not seek for the yellow hair; he is unclean.

<sup>37</sup> But if in his eyes the itch is checked, and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed, he is clean; and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

<sup>38</sup> When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots,

<sup>39</sup> the priest shall make an examination, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is a rash [*inaccurate description common to several skin diseases*] that has broken out on the skin; he is clean.

<sup>40</sup> If anyone loses the hair from his head, he is bald but he is clean.

<sup>41</sup> If he loses the hair from his forehead and temples, he has baldness of the forehead but he is clean.

<sup>42</sup> But if there is on the bald head or the bald forehead a reddish-white diseased spot, it is a leprous disease breaking out on his bald head or his bald forehead.

<sup>43</sup> The priest shall examine him; if the diseased swelling is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, which resembles a leprous disease in the skin of the body,

<sup>44</sup> he is leprous, he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; the disease is on his head.

<sup>45</sup> The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean'.

<sup>46</sup> He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

<sup>47</sup> Concerning clothing: when a leprous disease appears in it, in woolen or linen cloth,

<sup>48</sup> in warp [*Threads along the length, where the woof passes*] or woof of linen or wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin,

<sup>49</sup> if the disease shows greenish or reddish in the garment, whether in warp or woof or in skin or in anything made of skin, it is a leprous disease and shall be shown to the priest.

<sup>50</sup> The priest shall examine the disease, and put the diseased article aside for seven days.

<sup>51</sup> He shall examine the disease on the seventh day. If the disease has spread in the cloth, in warp or woof, or in the skin, whatever be the use of the skin, this is a spreading leprous disease; it is unclean.

<sup>52</sup> He shall burn the clothing, whether diseased in warp or woof, woolen or linen, or anything of skin, for it is a spreading leprous disease; it shall be burned in fire.

<sup>53</sup> If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has not spread in the clothing, in warp or woof or in anything of skin,

<sup>54</sup> the priest shall command them to wash the article in which the disease appears, and he shall put it aside seven days more.

<sup>55</sup> The priest shall examine the diseased article after it has been washed. If the diseased spot has not changed color, though the disease has not spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in fire, whether the leprous spot is on the inside or on the outside.

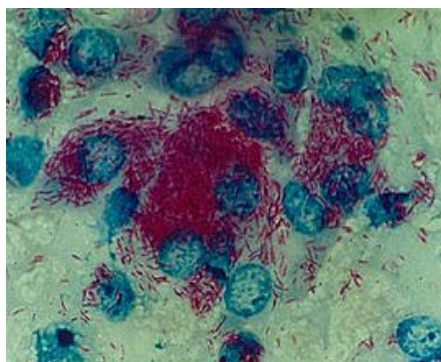
<sup>56</sup> If the priest makes an examination, and the disease has abated after it is washed, he shall tear the spot out of the cloth, in warp or woof, or out of skin.

<sup>57</sup> If it appears again in the garment, in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading; you shall burn with fire that in which the disease appears.

<sup>58</sup> But the cloth, warp or woof, or anything of skin from which the disease disappears when you have washed it, shall then be washed a second time, and it shall be clean.

<sup>59</sup> This is the ritual for a leprous disease in a cloth of wool or linen, either in warp or woof, or in anything of skin, to decide whether it is clean or unclean.

## MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT LEPROSY

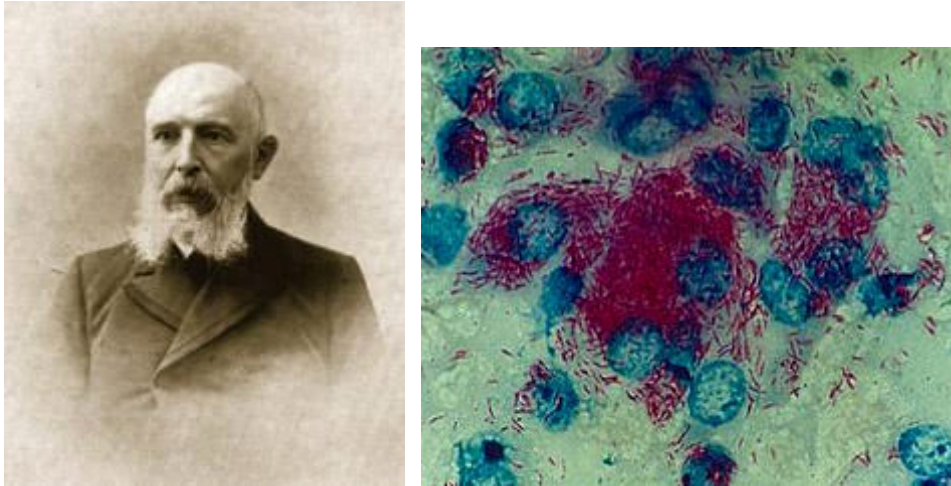


Since writing exists, there is record of how leprosy represented a threat and the lepers were isolated from society. In ancient Egypt, there are some references to leprosy with over three thousand years in hieroglyphics. However, there are not many indications that the disease was common in Ancient times. Some scholars suggest that Leviticus, Chapter 13, included different diseases under the general term: *leprosy*.

Besides man, other animals we know that are susceptible to leprosy are some species of monkeys, rabbits, rats and armadillos. The latter can serve as a reservoir and there are proven cases in the South of USA of transmission by it. However, most of the transmission occurs among humans.

The disease is endemic (i.e., a disease that exists constantly in one place and attacks larger or smaller number of individuals) in certain tropical countries, particularly in Asia. Brazil is included among the countries in the world where leprosy is highly endemic. This means more than one case per thousand inhabitants. The disease attacks today still more than eleven million people around the world and about two million have been severely mutilated by it. There are seven hundred thousand new cases per year on the planet. However in developed countries it is almost nonexistent. Brazil, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal represent then 90% of cases of leprosy. Contamination occurs by the respiratory tract, by the saliva or nasal secretions, but is unlikely to each contact. The incubation period after infection is long, from two to twenty years, which explains why the disease develops most commonly in adults although children can also be contaminated (high prevalence of leprosy in children is indicative of a high rate of disease in a region). 90% of the population is resistant to Hansen's bacillus, which causes leprosy, and manages to control the infection. The infectious forms (contagious) are Virchowian (lepromatous) and Dimorph.

Leprosy (or Hansen's disease, from the name *Gerhard Hansen*, who identified the disease agent) is an infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* (or Hansen's bacillus) that affects the nerves and skin and causes severe damage. *Mycobacterium leprae* such as *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Tuberculosis, belonging to the same species), is of extremely slow growth, when compared with other bacteria. Both the bacilli have cell wall rich in lipids (fat). The *Mycobacterium* is like a parasite to the macrophages (immune cells) and the *Schwann cells*, which form the myelin of peripheral nerves (a white and fibrous sheath that protects our peripheral nerves emerging from the spinal cord). The destruction of myelin leads to dysfunction of the nerves. The type of immune reaction to *M. leprae* is extremely important in the progression of leprosy.



Dr. Gerhard Hansen / A microscopic view: in blue, macrophages (defense cells) and in red, leprosy bacilli



Dr. Rudolf Virchow, a pathologist who participated in the study of forms of leprosy

So there are different forms of manifestation of the disease:

#### *Indeterminate*

One of the first effects of leprosy, due to involvement of the nerves, is the suppression of thermal sensation, i.e., the ability to differentiate between cold and warmth at the affected site. Later, the disease can progress to decreased sensation of pain at that part of the body. Indeterminate leprosy is the early form of the disease and in most cases consists of spots of lighter color than the surrounding skin and may be slightly red, with change of sensitivity to temperature, and eventually, decreasing of sweating on the stain.

From the initial state, leprosy can then remain stable (which happens in most cases) or may progress to Tuberculoid or Lepromatous leprosy, depending on the particular genetic predisposition of each patient. Leprosy can also take several intermediate forms between these two types of leprosy, then being called Dimorph leprosy.

### *Tuberculoid leprosy*

This form of leprosy occurs in patients who have good immune response to *Hansen's bacillus*. The immune system can stop the spread of the bacillus through the formation of clusters of macrophages (defense cells) and these groups are called *granulomas*. In this type of leprosy, the spots are very limited and asymmetric, and are usually found only a few lesions on the body.

*Lepromatous leprosy* (or *Virchowian leprosy*, in honor of Rudolf Virchow, a pathologist who participated in the study of forms of leprosy) is the most insidious and slow form of the disease and occurs in cases where patients have little immune defense against the bacillus. The skin lesions are lepromas or hansenomas (infiltrated nodules), numerous, affecting the whole body, particularly the face, with the nose presenting coryza and nasal congestion.

Today, leprosy is treated with antibiotics. Although not deadly, leprosy can cause severe disability and/or permanent if not treated in time. The treatment comprises a number of antibiotics in order to avoid selecting resistant bacteria. The WHO recommends since 1981 a treatment that consists of three drugs: Dapsone, Rifampicin and Clofazimine. This association destroys the bacillus. Treatment time varies between six and twenty-four months, according to the severity of the disease. When the lesions are already established, treatment is based, in addition to antibiotics, on prostheses, orthopedic interventions, special shoes, etc. In addition, a great contribution to the prevention and treatment of disabilities caused by leprosy is physiotherapy.

Source: wikipedia.org.



Leprosy



Leprosy / Physical deformity of leprosy



Leprosy / Physical deformity – Inability to life

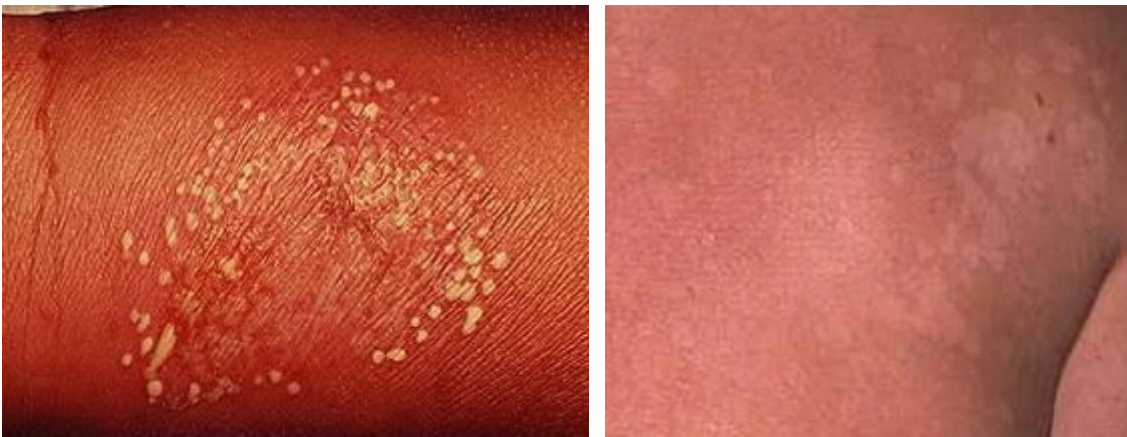
**Other diseases commonly confused with leprosy:**



Vitiligo and Psoriasis



Keloid (a thick scar) or acute eczema



Pustules (vesicles with pus) and Pityriasis versicolor (a kind of ringworm)



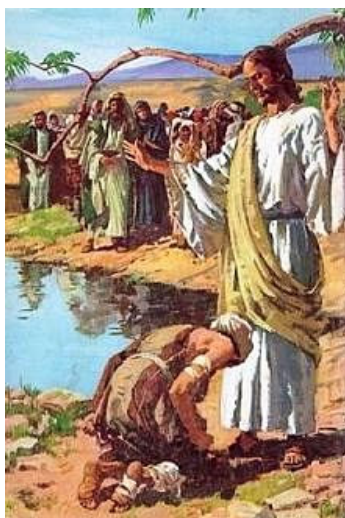
Tinea (Sycosis barbae) – ringworm on the beard

## Conclusion

We can say it's a shame there be still today certain diseases in our midst (leprosy is an example) because perpetuating them is a proof of the dirty way to keep our own lives, paying little attention to hygiene and sanitation guidelines, which were more

present and more active in a nomadic people of the desert than today, with so much technology. Those people, who walked under the command of Moses and led by God, had very few cases of infectious diseases, despite everything that happened to them (Except in the cases where they were sent by God as punishment – Num. 12: 10; Num. 14: 12; 37; Num. 16: 46; 48). If we read the bible carefully we can notice the description overly detailed of God given to Moses and, consequently, to His people. It was full of detail to leave no doubt as to what to do or to eat. Today we dispose of bathtubs, showers, condoms, sanitary napkins and disposable diapers, freezer, refrigerator, microwave, antibiotics, autoclaves, hyperbaric centers, hospitals and trained surgical teams. Those days, they only had poor food, difficult to storage if it passed one or two days under the desert sun, scarce water, but a big and strong presence of God, forbidding or allowing things in His omniscience so that man was not harmed, things that we found out centuries later. Worse than that, we found out the causes; however, we break the divine rules to facilitate their eradication.

## LEPROSY AND PHYSICAL ILLNESS IN THE BIBLE



Since writing exists, there is record of how leprosy represented a threat and the lepers were isolated from society. In ancient Egypt, there are some references to leprosy with over three thousand years in hieroglyphics.

Leprosy (in Hebrew, *tzaraat*, *tsaraath* or *ṣāra'ath* – Strong #6883, צרעת) was a word used for various skin diseases. In other cases, the same word spoke of stains on clothing or on walls, which we would call today *fungus* or *mould*, in short, something that was ceremonially unclean. According to the Law, a leper was considered unclean: “The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: ‘When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption [NIV, rash] or a spot [NIV, bright spot], and it turns into a leprous disease on the skin of his body, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. The priest shall examine the disease on the skin of his body, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous disease; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean’” (*Lev. 13: 1-3*). Some scholars suggest that Leviticus Chapter 13 included different diseases under the general term leprosy, because there are few indications that the disease was common in Ancient times. Some of the symptoms described resemble *psoriasis*, *eczema*, *pustules* (*vesicles containing pus*), *vitiligo*, *burn scars* (or *keloids* = *thick scars*), *mycosis* (*tinea*, *ringworm* or *sycosis*) on the skin or beard, and *leprosy* itself. The diagnosis was entrusted to the priest. As mentioned above, the criteria used for diagnosis of the disease were: swelling (or some kind of tumor), eruption or bright spot, where the hair turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of the body (*Lev. 13: 1-3*); if the diagnosis was not made immediately, a further examination was done after seven days of isolation. If there were doubts yet, another test was done seven days later. But anesthesia [the suppression of thermal sensation and decreased sensation of pain, as well as decreased sweating over the stain, in some cases] is not mentioned nor thickening of superficial nerves, which are the key points for diagnosis of the disease, so that the priestly evaluation necessarily involved a certain degree of inaccuracy. Contamination occurs by the respiratory tract, by the saliva or nasal secretions, but is unlikely to each contact. The incubation period after infection is long, from two to twenty years, which explains why the disease develops most commonly in adults, although children can also be contaminated.

When a leper was ‘purified’ and this way pronounced by the priest it is likely that the condition was self-limiting, not really leprosy (Hansen disease). Being considered clean (*Lev. 14: 1-32*), the man or the woman returned to the priest and were sprinkled seven times with the blood of a clean bird wet on a branch of hyssop or cedar wood. Another bird was loose in the open field. The hair was shaved, his body and his clothes washed, and after eight days he took to the priest a male lamb without blemish as a guilt offering, about three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, one log of oil [That is, probably about 11 1/2 pints (about 6.5 liters)] of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log [That is, probably about 1/2 pint (about 0.3 liter)]; also in verses 12, 15, 21 and 24] of oil. The other male lamb was a burnt offering. One ewe lamb one year old, without defect, was a sin offering. The blood of the guilt offering was placed on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, and on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot. Some portion of the log of oil, the priest poured it into the palm of his own left hand, and dipped his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand and sprinkled some oil with his finger seven times before the Lord. Some of the oil that remained in the hand of the priest he should put on the lobe of the right ear of the former leper, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of the right foot, where the blood of the guilt offering was placed. What was left of the oil, the priest sprinkled on the head of the person. One male lamb one year old, without blemish, was offered as burnt offering to the Lord, along with three-tenths of an ephah (one ephah = 17.62 liters; therefore, 30% = 5.280 liters; some say about 6.5 liters) of choice flour (the purest and finest flour) mixed with oil, which resulted in bread, representing the grain offering. But if the former leper was poor, he should take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be elevated (wave offering), to make atonement on his behalf, and one-tenth of an ephah (1 ephah = 17.62 or 22 liters) of choice flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, in addition of a log of oil (about 0.3 liters) and two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. *The right ear* meant that from that moment, the person was willing to obey God and hear His voice carefully. *The right thumb* meant a commitment to act according to the commandments, and *the right big toe*, the correct walking on the Word.

For this to be understood, let's put some necessary information about the sacrifices in the Old Testament:

- Unintentional sins are also known as sins of ignorance. The original word translated as *ignorance* means: *to wander*, like a sheep that strays from the flock. It refers to the sin originated from the weakness of human character, not an ill-disguised rebellion or a premeditated evil. We associate guilt with intention, but the ancients associated it to its effects.

- Leaven (Yeast) was not used for cooking not to remember the pagan cult. Leaven symbolizes the flesh, human wickedness and malice in opposition to the holiness of the Spirit (*1 Cor. 5: 6-8*).

- When more than one type of offering was presented (*Num. 7: 13-17*), the procedure was usually the following: 1) the sin offering, 2) the burnt offering, 3) peace (or fellowship) offering and grain offering (along with a libation). This sequence shows part of the spiritual importance of the sacrificial system. *First*, sin had to be treated (sin offering or guilt offering). *Second*, the worshiper was fully committed to God (burnt offering and grain offering). *Third*, it was established the fellowship or friendship between the Lord, the priest and the worshiper (peace offering or fellowship offering). In the sacrifice of peace, the breast and right thigh were the priest's portion determined by God (*Lev. 7: 29-34*).

• *Lev. 22: 17-33*: The offering must be flawless (without blemish). Defective animals were not accepted, so our offering before the Lord should be with the best we have, with the firstfruits, not with what's left, with the remains. *Verse 19* says: "to be acceptable in your behalf it shall be a male without blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or the goats." The offering should be given liberally and with integrity of heart. In this case of the leper, the reference is in *Lev. 14: 10*.

• The wave offering or elevation offering (*'othâm tenuphâh* or *ath-m thnuphe* – *Lev. 7: 30; Lev. 14: 12*) of meat or grain received this name, perhaps, to be moved before the Lord before being presented to Him. In Hebrew, the verb '*eniph*' means '*to move the offering, to wave the offering, to elevate the offering.*'

Sacrifice	Biblical reference	Elements	Purpose
Burnt Offering	Leviticus 1: 1-17	A male animal: bull, lamb or bird (turtledove or pigeon), in the case of poor person. Totally consumed. Without blemish.	Voluntary act of worship. Atonement for unintentional sin. Expression of devotion, commitment and complete surrender to God.
Grain Offering	Leviticus 2: 1-16	Choice flour (Fine flour), olive oil, incense, cakes or wafers (boiled, baked or fried) with salt. No yeast or honey. It accompanied the burnt offerings and peace offerings (along with a libation). Note: Wafer: folder mass that is made the unleavened bread.	Voluntary act of worship. Recognition of the goodness and providence of God. Dedication to God. The oil symbolizes joy.
Fellowship Offering or peace offering (symbolizes the supper with the Lord)	Leviticus 3: 1-17	Any animal without flaw from the flock. Variety of bread.	Voluntary act of worship. Thanksgiving and Communion (it was accompanied by a communal meal).
Guilt Offering	Leviticus 7: 1-10	Sheep or Lamb	Obligatory atonement for unintentional sins that require restitution. Purification of taints. Restitution in full,

			adding a fifth of the value of what made him guilty.
Sin Offering	Leviticus 4; 5; 6; Leviticus 16: 1-34	1. Young bull: in the case of the high priest and the congregation. 2. Goat: for the prince. 3. Female goat or lamb: for ordinary people. 4. Turtledove or pigeon: the case of the poor. Tenth of an Ephah of fine flour: the case of the very poor.  1 Ephah = 22 liters = 3/5 bushels	Obligatory atonement for certain unintentional sins. Confession of sin. Forgiveness of sin. Purification of taints.

- Aaron and his sons were consecrated priests. The Hebrew word translated as *consecration or ordination* (millu) or *consecrations or ordinations* (millu'iyim – Strong #4394 – Lev 7: 37; Lev 8: 22; 28-29; 31; 33; Ex 29: 22; Ex 29: 26-27; Ex 29: 34) means, literally, to 'fill the hand'; 'hands full', and perhaps it referred to the offerings that were put on the priest's hands or to the oil that was spilled on them in some cases (the leper after being healed – Lev. 14: 15). The ritual of consecration of the priests (Lev. 8: 1-36) symbolized the responsibilities and the privileges of the priesthood, notifying the Levites that they were set apart for God's service. According to Lexicon Strong's Concordance, the word millu'iyim, מלאים, comes from mâlê' – מלא (Strong #4390), a primitive root that means: to fill or to be full of, to accomplish, to confirm, to fulfill, to be or to become full, to overflow, fullness, furnish (evidence or a house), to gather (alone or together), to replenish, to satisfy, to take with a hand full, to presume, to dare, as in Esther 7: 5 ('who has dared' – NIV; 'who has presumed' – NRSV; 'where is he, that durst presume' – KJV).

- Jesus' sacrifice on the cross replaced all these sacrifices, having Jesus given of Himself as a lamb without blemish in our place to redeem us from sin and the curse of the Law.

- If impurity was found, its carrier should be removed from the fellowship with other citizens. The Old Testament gave explicit instructions for those who had leprosy diagnosed by the priest:

- Lev. 13: 45-46: "The person who has the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be disheveled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp."

- Num. 5: 1-4: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Command the Israelites to put out of the camp everyone who is leprous, or has a discharge, and everyone who is unclean through contact with a corpse; you shall put out both male and female, putting them outside the camp; they must not defile their camp, where I dwell among them.'

The Israelites did so, putting them outside the camp; as the Lord had spoken to Moses, so the Israelites did.”

- *Num. 12: 9-15*: “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous. Then Aaron said to Moses, ‘Oh, my lord, do not punish us for a sin that we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like one stillborn, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother’s womb.’ And Moses cried to the Lord, ‘O God, please heal her.’ But the Lord said to Moses, ‘If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her shame for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and after that she may be brought in again.’ So Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days; and the people did not set out on the march until Miriam had been brought in again.”

- *2 Kin. 7: 3*: “Now there were four leprous men outside the city gate, who said to one another, ‘Why should we sit here until we die?’”

- *2 Kin. 15: 5*: “The Lord struck the king [*Azariah, also called Uzziah*], so that he was leprous to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house. Jotham the king’s son was in charge of the palace, governing the people of the land.”



In the picture above you can see a mutilated leper (without the left hand and the right foot) with a bell (the lepers should announce that they were passing, so that people could know and move away). The British Library, Pontifical (c.1400), Lansdowne Manuscript 451, folio 127 (source: <https://www.ricardocosta.com/artigo/lepra-medieval-e-medicina-metaforica-de-ramon-llull-1232-1316>).

Thus, the leper was expelled from home and society and forbidden to enter any city. He should wear torn clothes, let his hair be disheveled and cry “unclean, unclean!” if someone approached. Apparently, these conventions were still in effect at the time of Jesus. The ten lepers who met Jesus on the surroundings of a village remained at a distance and shouted to Him, “As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’” (*Lk. 17: 12-13*). But the leper in *Mk. 1: 40* came directly to Jesus and begged Him on his knees to be cleansed, “A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’” If the disease appeared in the clothes, they should be burned (*Lev. 13: 47-52*).

In the Middle Ages, the use of a bell was mandatory for the lepers, as a way to warn people that they were coming.

In the High Middle Ages (or Late Antiquity – from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD – 476-999 AD), with the advent of Christianity and its aid to the sick (not only the lepers) and the weaker ones, occurred the institution of hospitals, formally acknowledged by the Emperor Justinian (525-565 AD). The hospital diagnosed the disease and performed the treatment, starting practically with the diagnosis and therapy of ophthalmological diseases. Even known since the Ancient Times, leprosy spread through the West from the Crusades (The Crusades in the Holy Land – 1095-1272, traditionally counted as nine; the first from 1095 to 1099, and the ninth from 1271 to 1272). From the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, at least 320 leprosaria (plural of leprosarium) were built in England, where the humanitarian attitude of the Church can be seen, since the leper faced the denial of care on the part of society. The leprosarium (succeeded by specific hospitals for lepers and so-called ‘lazaretos’) were still instituted on the basis that the leper was an impure person.

I’d like to make a parenthesis here to talk a little about *disease* in general:

- The disease, sometimes in the bible, was described *as a form of punishment or penalty for sin or as a consequence of sin itself*:

- *Num. 12: 10*: “When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous.”

- *Deut. 28: 21-22*: “The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until it has consumed you off the land that you are entering to possess. The Lord will afflict you with consumption, fever, inflammation, with fiery heat and drought, and with blight and mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish.” [NIV: “The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish.”]

- *Deut. 28: 27-28*: “The Lord will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed. The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind.”

- *Deut. 28: 59-61*: “then the Lord will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies. He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you. Every other malady and affliction, even though not recorded in the book of this law, the Lord will inflict on you until you are destroyed.”

- *2 Kin. 5: 27*: “Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you, and to your descendants forever. So he left his presence leprous, as white as snow.”

- *2 Chr. 21: 14a-15*: “see, the Lord will bring a great plague on your people, your children, your wives, and all your possessions, and you yourself will have a severe

sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out, day after day, because of the disease” [*Cancer of rectum or rectal prolapse, in relation to King Jehoram*].

•• 2 Chr. 26: 19b: “and when he became angry with the priests a leprous disease broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense.” *Related to King Uzziah*.

•• Mk. 2: 5: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”

• *Other times, was to manifest the glory of God.* The illnesses here were not directly related to the sin of the person or the ancestors, but He allowed them so that through them His power could be manifested:

•• Lk. 8: 42: “for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went, the crowds pressed in on him” (*Jesus resurrects the daughter of Jairus*).

•• Jn. 9: 3: “Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him’” (*Jesus heals the born blind man*).

•• Jn. 11: 4: “But when Jesus heard it, he said, ‘This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’” (*Lazarus*).

In these cases, as well as the case of the woman cured of hemorrhage twelve years ago (Mk. 5: 25-34), the very fragility and human imperfection favored the onset of the disease, because Adam’s sin brought imperfection to the human body and its genetics and at birth these deformities are established, even if there is no sin of the ancestors. Thus the glory of God was able to show itself to men as a way to express His divine perfection that heals us and frees us from all deformity and imperfection.

• *Other times, it was described as generated by unclean spirit:*

•• Mk. 5: 5: “Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones.” The wounds were done by unclean spirits.

•• Mk. 9: 17-18: “Someone from the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so.’” (*The boy with an evil spirit*).

•• Lk. 13: 11-12: “And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, ‘Woman, you are set free from your ailment.’”

• *Other times, the physical illness can be generated by a depression of soul and spirit* (Prov. 17: 22: “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones”) *or be sent by God with a purpose* (sterility, in the case of some women in the OT and NT) *and this one lead to emotional illness* (sadness, bitterness), *which in turn may aggravate the initial physical illness or cause another.* That’s what we can see, for example, in 1 Sam. 1: 5-8, in the case of Hannah: “but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the Lord had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the Lord had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the Lord, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, ‘Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?’” The bible does not say that sterility was a curse for her sin or her ancestors’ (unlike the case of Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel because they were descendants of idolatry), but had been allowed by the Lord to accomplish His purpose in the life of Hanna, through Samuel (1 Sam. 1: 19b-20: “and the Lord remembered her.

In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked him of the Lord’). The fact of Hannah be sad and embittered by the sterility and refuse to eat because of it, this could aggravate her sterility or take her to another type of illness, for example, anemia or inanition. Another sterile woman was Samson’s mother and, through her, God exercised His purpose to give Samson to Israel as judge and deliverer and show to His people that He still continued to do miracles (*Judg. 13: 2-5*). In the NT, also Elizabeth was sterile (*Lk. 1: 5-7; 36*) and through the miracle of God, she gave birth to John the Baptist to fulfill the divine purpose as a forerunner of the Messiah.

*It is worth commenting on the difference between the words “disease” or “illness” and “sickness”, sometimes used in the NT by Jesus:*

- *Matt. 4: 23*: “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: sickness] and every sickness [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: disease] among the people.”

- *Matt. 9: 35*: “Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: sickness] and every sickness [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: disease].”

- *Matt. 10: 1*: “Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: sickness] and every sickness [NIV uses this word; KJV uses: disease].”

“Disease”, in Greek, νοσος, nosos – Strong #G3554 means: a disease, malady, infirmity, sickness. And “sickness”, μαλακίαν, malakia – Strong #G3119 means: weakness, illness, sickness, bodily weakness. It comes from ‘malakos’, meaning: softness, i.e. enervation (debility): a feeling of being drained of energy or vitality; fatigue.

Cassell (An American physician and bioethicist, Eric Jonathan Goldstein, who changed their name to Eric Jonathan Cassell – 1928-2021; in his work ‘Illness and disease’ – published in 1976) defines ‘illness’ (the bible writes, ‘sickness’) as ‘what the patient feels when he goes to the doctor’ and ‘disease’ as ‘what the patient has when he leaves the doctor.’ ‘Disease, then, is something that an organ has; sickness is something that a man has.’ Sickness is the patient’s subjective response to the fact that he is not well, the experience and the feeling of poor health; change in a person’s health status. The disease refers to abnormalities in the structure and function of body organs and systems (Eisenberg 1977), such as diabetes, tuberculosis, etc.

In other words, illness means that a person is not or does not feel in full health. On the other hand, disease is a disorder of structure or function that produces specific signs or symptoms or that affects a specific location of the body and is not simply a direct result of physical injury. Leon Eisenberg (1922-2009), an American child psychiatrist, established the usefulness of distinguishing ‘disease’ from ‘illness.’ For him, the term illness refers specifically to the patient’s personal experience of his or her disease. A person can have a disease without being ill, that is, he (she) can have an objectively definable medical condition, but not feel sick or distressed by it; or then, to be ill without being diseased (a person feels unwell without having a physical sickness, and feels embarrassed for not being in total vigor and interprets this feeling as sickness rather than normal emotions).

Whatever the cause of disease or infirmity, Jesus’ sacrifice came to rescue us from it:

•• *Isa. 53: 4-5*: “Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.”

•• *1 Pet. 2: 24*: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

To conclude this topic, we can say that the illnesses have many causes but only one and true treatment: the faith in God. Medicine treats, God heals. Our attitude towards life occupies a large portion in the infirmities, for he who loves himself takes care of himself. Who feels loved by God, also feels the desire to love and preserve what He created. Men can isolate and segregate each other because of illness or any other cause; God however calls us to Him so that we can have a healthy coexistence with our brothers.

## THE SPIRITUAL LEPROSY



It's worth recalling that in biblical times, various skin disorders were grouped under the name of leprosy; however, many were evident, causing the person to start to lose sensitivity in some parts of the body due to the disease, leading to formation of wounds that, infected and treated improperly, made him (her) progressively lose members. Therefore, when a person was diagnosed with leprosy, he was labeled as ceremonially unclean, besides being a danger to society. Thus, the diagnosis of leprosy brought to the person a complete spiritual and social isolation, affecting greatly his physical, emotional and family life. When, however, by some miracle of God they were cured, they should return to the temple and show the wound to the priest and offer sacrifices for their purification. So, both in body and soul and spirit, leprosy left marks, so the leper was expelled of home and society and forbidden to enter any city. He should live alone (*Lev. 13: 45-46*), wear torn clothes, let his hair disheveled and cry 'unclean, unclean!' if someone approached. When Jesus came and began to perform miracles, people affected by this evil came to Him for healing, because if they were healed, everything else would be restored in their lives. Two keywords written in the text below are important to us:

- *Num. 12: 9-15*: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was leprous. Then Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord, do not punish us for a *sin* that we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like one stillborn, whose flesh is half consumed when it comes out of its mother's womb.' And Moses cried to the Lord, 'O God, please heal her.' But the Lord said to Moses, 'If her father had but spit in her face, would she not bear her *shame* for seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp for seven days, and after that she may be brought in again.' So Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days; and the people did not set out on the march until Miriam had been brought in again."

For us, leprosy has the biblical meaning of emotional wounds ("*to bear her shame*") that isolate us from normal living with our similar, or *sin (spiritual leprosy)*, which leaves terrible spiritual marks, creating separation between the person and God. That's why Jesus came to heal us from the scars left by the leprosy of sin. The sinner that seeks Jesus is aware of his uselessness as a human being, because it becomes

impossible to live that way any longer; the person feels rejected and impure. This is what his spirit and soul feel when are faced with their own error. However, the person must dare to approach the Lord praying for healing. The *first teaching* here is: when we recognize our sin and submit to God's will asking Him for forgiveness, *He touches us with healing*. The *second teaching is*: even though many people feel disgusted of us or repulse by the evil that befell us, *Jesus will never reject us*, because He does not have fear or disgust of wounds; He came to save us from them. Leprosy affects thin nerve roots, which makes that the person has no more sensitivity in that region of the body that is affected. This is what sin does to those who are its captives: they become insensitive to the truth; they no longer feel the presence of God. So *the third teaching is*: when the Lord touches us with deliverance, the 'scabs of the wound' fall and *we come back to be sensitive to His voice and His presence*. Thus, we are able to resume our companionship not only with Him, but with our brothers, for we return to love and feel compassion for others. We begin to feel helpful because the experience that we had enables us now with anointing to treat those with the same problem.

To conclude this topic, we can repeat the learning written above:

- When we recognize our sin and submit to God's will asking Him for forgiveness, He touches us with healing.
- Even though many people feel disgusted of us or repulse by the evil that befell us, Jesus will never reject us, because He does not have fear or disgust of wounds; He came to save us from them.
- When the Lord touches us with deliverance, the 'scabs of the wound' fall and we come back to be sensitive to His voice and His presence.
- Leprosy, in the bible, can have the meaning of leprosy (Hansen's disease), other skin diseases and emotional wounds or sin (Spiritual leprosy).

## LEPROSY IN THE HOUSE



### Leviticus 14

#### Regulations about mildew in the house

<sup>33</sup> The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

<sup>34</sup> ‘When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession,

<sup>35</sup> the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest, saying’, ‘There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house’.

<sup>36</sup> ‘The priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, or all that is in the house will become unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house.

<sup>37</sup> He shall examine the disease; if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface,

<sup>38</sup> the priest shall go outside to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days.

<sup>39</sup> The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house,

<sup>40</sup> the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city.

<sup>41</sup> He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city.

<sup>42</sup> They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

<sup>43</sup> If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it,

<sup>44</sup> the priest shall go and make inspection; if the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous disease in the house; it is unclean.

<sup>45</sup> He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place.

<sup>46</sup> All who enter the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening;

<sup>47</sup> and all who sleep in the house shall wash their clothes; and all who eat in the house shall wash their clothes.

<sup>48</sup> If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed.

<sup>49</sup> For the cleansing of the house he shall take two birds, with cedar wood and crimson yarn and hyssop,

<sup>50</sup> and shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in an earthen vessel,

<sup>51</sup> and shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times.



Hyssop



Lintels of the doors with blood  
(To sprinkle the house)

<sup>52</sup> Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the fresh water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood and hyssop and crimson yarn;

<sup>53</sup> and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.

<sup>54</sup> This is the ritual for any leprous disease: for an itch,

<sup>55</sup> for leprous diseases in clothing and houses,

<sup>56</sup> and for a swelling or an eruption or a spot,

<sup>57</sup> to determine when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the ritual for leprous diseases.'

We can see then that in the Old Testament, the disease was seen as a plague, even in houses. When the attempts to purify them were not successful, the whole houses were knocked down not to spread the plague (*Lev. 14: 43-45*). In the previous chapters, we saw the attack of the body, soul and spirit by leprosy. Besides *house, temple or sanctuary* being symbols of our body, as the Apostle Paul says (*1 Cor. 3: 16-17; 1 Cor. 6: 19-20; 2 Cor. 6: 16b-18*), the word *house* is also used in the bible as a synonym of *family, offspring*:

- *1 Chr. 17: 7-10*: "Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies before you; and I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover I declare to you that the Lord will build you a *house*.'"

• *1 Chr. 17: 16-17; 23*: “Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, ‘Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my *house*, that you have brought me thus far? And even this was a small thing in your sight, O God; you have also spoken of *your servant’s house* for a great while to come. You regard me as someone of high rank, O Lord God!’... ‘And now, O Lord, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and *concerning his house*, let it be established forever, and do as you have promised.’”

Thus, what the Lord wants to say is that when someone in the family committed a grave sin, either now or in the past, the evil tends to spread and to perpetuate itself throughout progeny. This is what happens with the hereditary curses, in which one often repeats the same sins of one member for generations, causing death and destruction to all descendants of that ‘leper’. And when someone is called by Jesus to the truth, he must make an effort to purify himself, lest to repeat the mistakes of the past and to start all over again of God’s holy way. Then great struggles arise and great barriers to be faced appear because the old structures need to be plucked out of the way of acting of that whole house. Such work is necessary and urgent so that the offspring is not compromised and also lose its salvation. So it is written in this chapter of *Lev. 14: 33-57*:... “*the owner of the house shall come and tell the priest*, saying’, ‘There seems to me to be some sort of disease in my house’... *The priest... He shall examine the disease*; if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, the priest shall go outside to the door of the house *and shut up the house seven days. The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house, the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out* and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city. They shall *take other stones* and put them in the place of those stones, *and take other plaster and plaster the house*. If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, the priest shall go and make inspection; *if the disease has spread in the house*, it is a spreading leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. *He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place*. All who enter the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening; and all who sleep in the house shall wash their clothes; and all who eat in the house shall wash their clothes. If the priest comes and makes an inspection, and the disease has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, the priest shall pronounce the house clean; the disease is healed. For *the cleansing of the house* he shall take two birds, with cedar wood and crimson yarn and hyssop, and shall slaughter one of the birds over fresh water in an earthen vessel, and *shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop* and the crimson yarn, along with the living bird, and *dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water*, and sprinkle the house seven times. Thus *he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird*, and with the fresh water, and with the living bird, and with the cedar wood and hyssop and crimson yarn; and he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field; so he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean.”

In the words in *italics* are the keys to our interpretation:

• *The owner of the house shall come and tell the priest*: Jesus is our priest, and the ‘The owner of the house’ is who was separated by the Lord as the spiritual leader of that clan, either father or son. The spiritual responsible for that family shall come to the priest (Jesus) and will confess the sin of that family so that there is forgiveness and

cleansing. It means to acknowledge that there is a wrong thing being repeated in several members of that house.

- *The priest... He shall examine the disease... and shut up the house seven days.* This means that the Lord is already aware of the situation, but takes some time before starting to act until other people in that family also realize there is sin.

- *The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection;* if the disease has spread in the walls of the house, the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. This means that in God's perfect time, He will return to start working there. He then commands that they take out the stones responsible for the plague and the plaster of the house and throw everything into an unclean place. The stones are the spiritual and moral structures present in a generation, which are firm and motionless for years, as well as the outward appearance before the world (the 'plaster', the 'coating', or 'mortar', mentioned in the bible). It is like a trademark present in the family, which both the natural and the spiritual world recognize. Everything needs to be changed in a new structure to save the rest.

- Afterwards they shall *take other stones* and put them in the place of those stones, *and take other plaster and plaster the house.* A new standard needs to be introduced, which is God's truth. This pattern should be both externally and internally (in body, soul and spirit). After the new foundation being placed, the priest would reassess the situation ("If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, the priest shall go and make inspection").

- *If the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place.* This means that when something truly evil is detected, one cannot feel sorry; the whole structure must be torn down to the dust so that it can be raised again. Sin must be plucked out by the root.

- *For the cleansing of the house... and shall take the cedar wood and the hyssop... and dip them in the blood of the slaughtered bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times... Thus he shall cleanse the house with the blood* – for us, it means that to purge the sin, whether our own or our family ('house'), only the blood of Jesus can do it; not only His blood, but the constant action of His Spirit ('running water' or 'fresh water'), until everything is truly freed from evil ('seven times'). In Egypt, by passing the *Destroyer* (the 'angel of the abyss' or 'the angel of death'), in houses where he saw the mark of the lamb's blood on the lintels of the doors, he passed, but did not touch, because they were protected and had an 'owner.' So the family who has the seal of Jesus' blood upon its members is freed from sin and saved from destruction.

*Hyssop* is a symbol of *purification*, so David said in *Ps. 51: 7*: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

There is an interesting passage about the cleansing power of hyssop. In the final moments of Jesus' life, when He was on the cross, in an extreme degree of dehydration, He said: 'I thirst!' So, someone dipped a sponge in vinegar, setting it on a branch of hyssop and gave Him to drink. It was actually an act of mercy because the body of Jesus in the face of dehydration and the vinegar would die. By receiving the sponge on a branch of hyssop and drink it, Jesus expired, meaning that the cleansing of mankind was accomplished. His sacrifice was finished and the *leprosy (sin) of the world* was cleansed. The text says: "After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty!' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his

mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished'. Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (*Jn. 19: 28-30*).

In relation to cedar:

*The cedar of Lebanon (Cedrus libani)* is a majestic conifer of durable wood, so David built his house with cedar, and Solomon the temple, just as the second temple of Ezra was also rebuilt with this wood. The cedar can reach forty meters in height and the ancient writers used it as a symbol of the stature of a man (*Ezek. 31: 3; Am. 2: 9*), also of strength, majesty and power (*Songs 3: 9*), haughtiness, hardness, inflexibility (*Ps. 29: 5*).

In the case of the leper, the use of the cedar might be related to God's power, strength, and majesty present in the miracle of healing, breaking the pride and haughtiness of spirit of the person who became sick ('leprosy', sin), and reminding him (her) of the importance of humility, how Jesus humbled Himself on the cross, giving His blood as the propitiation for our sins, making him (her) recognize that God is sovereign and the only one who can forgive sins.

Finally, I would like to put a comment that I find relevant in relation to whoever is converted to Jesus. This comment is based on the above items that say:

- The priest shall come again on the seventh day and make an inspection; if the disease has spread in the walls of the house, the priest shall command that the stones in which the disease appears be taken out and thrown into an unclean place outside the city. He shall have the inside of the house scraped thoroughly, and the plaster that is scraped off shall be dumped in an unclean place outside the city.

- They shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and take other plaster and plaster the house.

- If the disease breaks out again in the house, after he has taken out the stones and scraped the house and plastered it, the priest shall go and make inspection; if the disease has spread in the house, it is a spreading leprous disease in the house; it is unclean. He shall have the house torn down, its stones and timber and all the plaster of the house, and taken outside the city to an unclean place.

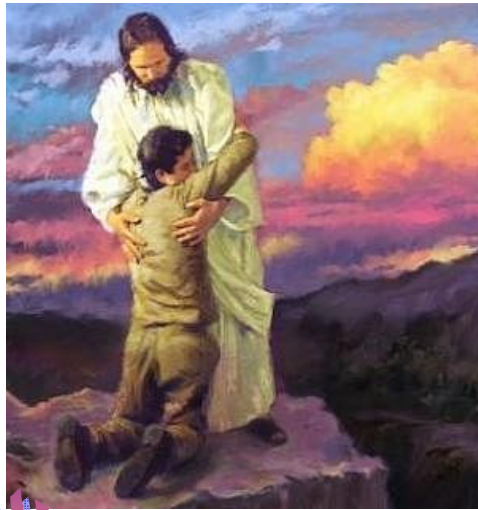
When the apostles were called by Jesus at the Sea of Galilee, the bible says that they *immediately left everything* and followed Him. This has to do with *the leprosy of the world* that needs to be put down powerfully in the lives of those who want to be truly a disciple. The person who comes to the Lord brings his sin and his family's (hereditary curses). By surrendering to Jesus, his spirit is rebuilt and he is transformed into a *new creature*. However, his flesh (the part of his soul that tends to sin) brings its old habits and heredity, and must also surrender completely to the Lord so that there is a real change of behavior. This depends on the person's effort to recognize his sins and his weaknesses and be willing to be cleansed from them through a tangible positioning, real, not just by a momentary prayer. Concrete attitudes, material ones, often radical and painful, need to be taken so that neither he nor his family come back to sin. That's what I said before: 1) God commands that the stones responsible for the plague be taken out as well the plaster of the house and everything be thrown out in an unclean place. As we saw, the stones are the spiritual and moral structures present in a generation, which are firm and motionless for years, as well as the outward appearance before the world (the 'plaster', the 'coating', or 'mortar', mentioned in the bible). It is like a trademark present in the family, which both the natural and the spiritual world recognize. Everything needs to be changed in a new structure to save the rest. In short: *not to make again the same mistakes as before*. 2) A new standard needs to be introduced, which is God's truth. This pattern should be both externally and internally (in body, soul and spirit). After the new foundation being placed, the priest (Jesus) will come back to

reassess the situation. He will know if it is necessary to pull down definitely the stones responsible for the plague and the 'plaster' of the house. *Everything needs to be changed totally into a new structure to save the rest.*

I am saying all this because some people think that only their emotional, spiritual and moral standards need to be renovated, forgetting that other important areas of their lives are at stake and it is exactly those areas that make them perpetuate in the slavery of *leprosy of the world*. We're talking about, for example, the profession that this person had before meeting Jesus. To the world it was fully acceptable; however, is no longer compatible with a true servant of God. It refers to make things that are in clear conflict with biblical guidelines in relation to the spiritual life, sexual life, the laws of true citizenship and money. All this, sooner or later, will bring some inner conflict and will require a drastic decision to remain a believer. God gives the free will to the person, but will remain the holder of all authority and power. If he (she) insists on error and this comes to compromise or mislead other lives, He will intervene for His will to prevail. Therefore, reassess your professional situation today before God. If it is a constant oppression over your carnal weakness, leave it definitely in the hands of the Lord, without pity. Do the same with the heritage and harmful family customs.

The conclusion of this topic is: evil must be uprooted by the root, even if it's necessary to involve the whole family and the depth of our being. This means to overthrow the former altars.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> PART



**Fasting and prayer**

## Mk. 90

<sup>14</sup> When they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them.

<sup>15</sup> When the whole crowd saw him, they were immediately overcome with awe, and they ran forward to greet him.

<sup>16</sup> He asked them, 'What are you arguing about with them?'

<sup>17</sup> Someone from the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought you my son; he has a spirit that makes him unable to speak [*Matt. 17: 15: "he is an epileptic"; NIV, "he has seizures"; in Greek, "he is lunatic"*];

<sup>18</sup> and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they could not do so'.

<sup>19</sup> He answered them, 'You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me'.

<sup>20</sup> And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood.

<sup>22</sup> It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us'.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to him, 'If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes'.

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out, 'I believe; help my unbelief!' [NIV: 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief']

<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!'

<sup>26</sup> After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, 'He is dead'.

<sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand.

<sup>28</sup> When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?'

<sup>29</sup> He said to them, 'This kind [*He mean: this kind of thing, the behavior of the flesh, not devil*] can come out only through prayer'...



... In *Matt. 17: 20-21* it is written, “He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith. For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain’, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” [Some manuscripts bring this phrase: ‘But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting’ – NIV, KJV, ASV].

Many people are much confused about this text for they do not understand what was happening behind the boy’s possession and what prevented him from being truly cured. We can see that Jesus didn’t heal the boy immediately, but He took a while chatting with the father because in him was the impediment to the healing, which was his lack of faith. So by crying and saying, “I believe! Help my unbelief!” (Or, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”), he received the healing and released the child to be healed as well. The son was healed by the word of authority of Jesus rebuking the unclean spirit, and the flesh of the father would be cured by fasting and prayer because he needed to bow before the power of God and let himself be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Thus, *the devil is not driven out with prayer and fasting, but in the name of Jesus*, which has authority and is above all name: “And these signs will accompany those who believe: *by using my name they will cast out demons*; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover” (*Mk. 16: 17-18*).

*Fasting is to sanctify the flesh and put it under the dominion of the Holy Spirit*; only so, the person becomes spiritually stronger; in other words, fasting is to break the barriers of the flesh: “Then they said to him, ‘John’s disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.’ Jesus said to them, ‘You cannot make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days” (*Lk. 5: 33-35*). Hence, Jesus told the Pharisees that His disciples did not need to fast as the others while He was personally with them because the *Light* of the Spirit was there overcoming the flesh, but when He was gone, they would have to seek it by themselves through the Counselor He would leave with them.

Types of fasting:

- a) Partial fasting: abstaining from only certain foods.
- b) Normal fasting: abstaining from food, but drinking water (in regular fasts, like one-day fasting); as was the case of Daniel in *Dan. 9: 3*, when he confessed the sins of the nation.
- c) Total fasting: abstinence from everything, including water. In the case of Esther, it was a maximum of three days (*Est. 4: 16*). Also, for Paul (*Acts 9: 9*), when he converted on the road to Damascus. Medicine confirms that a period of more than three days without water is harmful.

Examples of fasting in the bible:

Many servants of God in the bible fasted in difficult times of their lives to receive God’s direction, revelation, and deliverance: Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai to receive the commandments of God (*Ex. 24: 18* – the first tablets of the Law, *Ex. 34: 28* – the second tablets of the Law). Elijah walked forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb, where he hid in a cave and heard the voice of God (*1 Kin. 19: 8-9*). Esther fasted for three days before going to the presence of King Ahasuerus to plead for her life and that of her people (*Est. 4: 16-17; Est. 5: 1*). Nehemiah also fasted for some days and prayed to God when he learned of the destruction of Jerusalem (*Neh. 1: 4*). Ezra fasted at the River Ahava asking for God’s help on his journey to Jerusalem to minister in the temple that had been built (*Ezra 8:*

21-23). Daniel fasted for twenty-one days until he received the revelation of a vision which he had had and which involved great conflict (*Dan. 10: 1-3; 13*), for it spoke of far-off times and mighty kingdoms to come. Jesus was the greatest example, when He stayed in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights fasting and being tempted by Satan.

The Bible gives several examples of fasts of different durations:

1 day – The fast of the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 23: 27; Jer. 36: 6; Acts 27: 9*). This was probably the case of Daniel when he confessed the sins of the nation (*Dan. 9: 3*); probably that of Ezra (*Ezr. 8: 21-23*).

3 days – Esther's fast (*Est. 4: 16*) and Paul's fast (*Acts 9: 9*).

7 days – David's fast in mourning for the death of Saul (*1 Sam 31:13*) and for Bathsheba's son (*2 Sam. 12: 16-23*).

14 days – The involuntary fast of Paul and those with him on the ship (*Acts 27: 33*).

21 days – Daniel's fast seeking revelation (*Dan. 10: 3*).

40 days – The fasting of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness (*Lk. 4: 1-2*) and of Moses (*Ex. 34: 28*) and Elijah (*1 Kin. 19: 8*). They were under the supernatural power of God, Moses being enveloped by divine glory and Elijah in the strength of the food that the angel brought him.

In Isaiah and Zechariah we also have an interesting comment about the fasting that pleases and that does not please God, showing us that, indeed, the purpose of fasting is not to mortify the flesh to gain blessings, much less to demand something from God, but to approach Him and enliven Him in us:

• *Isa. 58: 2-7*: "Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God [NIV: They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them]. 'Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?' [KJV: Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?] Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers [NIV: Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers]. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?"

The people in question seemed to take pleasure in going to the temple, offering sacrifices, hearing the word of God and seeking to know His will, but they did not put into practice the guidelines that were given through the prophets. Thus, we may think that the phrase above, 'Yet day after day they seek me', means: 'Even though they continue in sin, with double religious practice, they still seek me all day, day after day' (the Lord was speaking). They went up to the hills ('the high places') to render idolatrous worship and offer sacrifices under the terebinths or oaks.

• *Zech. 7: 3-5*: "... and to ask the priests of the house of the Lord of hosts and the prophets, 'Should I mourn and practice abstinence in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?' Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me: Say to all the people of

the land and the priests: ‘When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted?’”

In *Zech. 8: 9* we can see four months of fasting observed by the Jews and instituted post-exile, which marked the disasters of Jewish story. The bible says, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah: therefore love truth and peace.”

Let’s explain what situation God was referring to:

Four month (2 *Kin. 25: 3* – the city of Jerusalem was taken by the Babylonians)

Fifth month (2 *Kin. 25: 8* – the temple was burned)

Seventh month (*Jer. 41: 1* – Gedaliah was killed). Gedaliah (*Jer. 40: 5*), son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, was whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah. This fasting is not to be confused with the fasting of Atonement (*Ex. 30: 10; Lev. 16: 29-34; Lev. 23: 26-32*), ‘Yom Kippur’.

Tenth month (2 *Kin. 25: 1; Ezek. 24: 1* – when Babylonian army besieged the city)

Now I ask you, concerning to the text of Isaiah written above (*Isa. 58: 2-7*):

Where are the wickedness (or impiety = not believing in the things of God), the servitude to the devil, oppression and yoke, greed, indifference, lack of compassion and solidarity and selfishness?

Aren’t they in the flesh giving gap for Satan to act?

Therefore, it must be cleansed from all this through fasting.

Fasting should not be done as a religious act, but spiritual. Fasting breaks down barriers that prevent us from hearing the voice of the Spirit. We also need to be attentive to His voice to know when to fast.

When we think of fasting, we soon remember of food. However, fasting is an abstinence from something we like, and apparently we feel greatly missed. This is the case of chocolate, ice cream, pasta, barbecue and other little things that we think cannot be lacking in our nutrition as well as certain habits that are harmful to our life (a nice habit that *serves as food for our flesh*): slander, gossip, envy, consumerism, cigarettes, beverages, certain radio and television programs, sex etc.

It concerns to the abstinence of something that has already become a habit, especially food, and that moves us away from communion with the Lord. During the period in which we abstain from anything, we should read the Word, pray, seek spiritual revelation and set us apart of the worldly things in order to be at the throne. It is not the time of fasting that brings results but the correct posture. Even because when we fast (especially from food) we must know the limit of our body. This practice requires some corporal and spiritual training that does not come quickly, but develops itself as we submit to the dominion of the Holy Spirit. When we truly walk with Him, we know perfectly the right moment to do a fast. The basic rule is: if the flesh is prevailing and we do not even remember that we have a spirit that also needs to be fed through prayer and daily conversation with the Creator, this is a good time to fast. Jesus says something interesting in *Matt. 6: 16-18*: “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” This means that nobody needs to know that we are fasting.

As to the matter on our metabolism during fasting, I would like to say first that when we speak of breaking down spiritual barriers or to get in touch with the spiritual world, we are actually referring to what happens in our mind with all this process

because it is through our mind that we enter and relate to the spiritual world. When someone intends to do a fast abstaining from food the sugar level in the blood begins to fall and he begins to experience symptoms of it: somnolence, tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), irritability or state of alertness more pronounced, dizziness, ringing in the ears, profuse sweating (“cold sweating”, as people say), fine tremor of the extremities, mental confusion and even feeling of fainting. If he has any pre-existing condition that aggravates a reduction of sugar or it drops to below 45 mg/dl, it can occur, including, seizures or coma; they are sign that the brain sends to say that it’s missing food (glucose). Here is when the person becomes more vulnerable to the spiritual world, because his organic defenses fall. Other physical and emotional sensations begin to appear due to the ‘spiritual gap’ that was opened. That’s why fasting reveals what was in the bottom of a situation because the protective barrier of the conscious to the unconscious falls and what was hidden comes up.

At this stage is that the discernment of the Spirit helps us to distinguish what comes from the flesh of the person (his mental and emotional content) and what is due to external spiritual action. Thus, fasting comes breaking the barriers of the flesh so that the person himself may know what is going on inside him and starts to pray about it conveniently. From then on, God begins to work.

Once, the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation and an interesting experience with fasting. At the time I had a cell group (a group of study of the bible) in my home and that week we had heard many sermons about fasting. When the sisters arrived at night, the doubts began on the subject and then the Holy Spirit made me open the bible randomly. Guess where I opened the bible! Exactly in *Isa. 58: 1-14*, mentioned at the beginning of the explanation. Now guess what the fast that He proposed to us! Stay one week (until the next meeting) without speaking anything of anyone, neither good nor bad; a fast of ‘tongue’. He knew what He was doing. Again, try to guess the result of experience. Failure! Have you ever seen so many women together without speaking anything of anyone for a whole week? It is a challenge. This taught us a lot about fasting and made us go a little deeper in the text of the prophet Isaiah. The Lord was healing our flesh, breaking some barriers of thought that were preventing His stronger move in us and freeing us from religiosity, formalities, conventions and works of the flesh; more than that, He opened our minds to what it means to make a true fast, as it was said: to abstain from what is a nice habit to us, not necessarily food, but everything that serves as food for the flesh: slander, gossip, envy, consumerism, certain radio and television programs, sex etc.

How Jesus, Moses, Elijah and other servants of God were able to spend so many days in complete fast? The bible speaks of forty days.

They succeeded because they were already accustomed to the practice of fasting and their flesh was already more worked by God, so the power of the Spirit came surpassing the body’s need. Moses (*Ex. 34: 28*) and Elijah (*1 Kin. 19: 8*) were under the supernatural power of God, Moses being enveloped in the divine glory and Elijah in the strength of the food which the angel brought him. This procedure is not recommended, unless it is spiritually guided by God to strengthen the person to a possible future fight with the darkness. While the body seems to faint, his spirit is strengthened in contact with the Holy Spirit, but is also subject to the spiritual forces around him, as I said above. Remember the state of Daniel after twenty-one days of fasting before receiving the revelation that he needed through the mouth of the angel Gabriel. The bible says that he had no more strength (*Dan. 10: 17*). What sustains the person in these moments is prayer. The biggest proof that fasting opens the door to the spiritual battle is Jesus. The bible says that He was without eating anything in the desert for forty days at the end of

which He was hungry (*Lk. 4: 1-2*). When He was almost fainting is that the devil appeared in fact. This was the greatest moment of temptation to the Son of God, for His physical strength had been already exhausted. Only the Holy Spirit's presence with Him gave Him victory.



Let us remember the text:

- *Matt. 4: 1-11 (Lk. 4: 1-13)*: “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But he answered, ‘It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him [NIV, Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him].” In *Lk. 4: 13* is written: “When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time”, *that is, the cross* – NRSV. KJV writes, “And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” NIV writes, “When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.” The word “all” or “every” in the versions above, in Greek is *πᾶς* or *παντα*, *pas* or *panta*, Strong #3956, which means: all, any, the whole, every kind of.

After Jesus' baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove and the Father's voice said from heaven, “You are my beloved Son with you I am well pleased” (*Mk. 1: 11; Lk. 3: 22*). He was taken by the same Spirit to the Desert of Judea (*Matt. 3: 1; 13*), where He would be tempted by the devil for forty days. Luke says (*Lk. 4: 13*) that the Lord was tempted in various ways (‘When the devil had finished every

test...'), which makes us think that it was not just these three presented by the devil, at the end of Jesus' strength. We can imagine that during the forty days, the Lord was tempted from the smallest things to culminating in the final clash between Him and Satan. Jesus was there as a man and did not use His divine power to get rid of the tests. But let's talk a little about the three situations presented by Matthew and Luke. Satan used with Jesus the strategies he still uses today, distorting the very Word of God for his benefit and the dirty arguments to weaken the believers even more in their foibles, in order to undermine their faith in God and in what He tells them.

The first sentence he said was: "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Here he wanted to question the true identity and divinity of Jesus. After forty days without eating, the Lord was weakened and, of course, He would like to satiate His hunger by turning those stones into bread. The proposal was tempting. But the enemy's intention went a little further than seeing Jesus perform miracles; he wanted to question the divinity of Jesus: "If you are the Son of God," he said. He used the conditional conjunction 'if' to see if Jesus was still convinced that He was the Son of God; because if He were really, He could end that hard test right there. The sophistry was intended to confuse Jesus so that He began to question the Father. But Jesus knew, was sure that He was the Son of God, and that it was not necessary to turn to the Father to satisfy His hunger at that time. He would deliver Him from that test. Then, realizing the trap, He replied, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (*Matt. 4: 4*) And here we have an interesting comment: He could give any answer, but responded with the words of the Scriptures, that is, "It is written"; to leave no doubt that the Word of God was sovereign and had life in it, it was alive within Him. The Greek term used for "word" in this text ("One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God") is *rhēmati* (ῥήματι).

In Greek there are two terms for "word." One of them is *Logos*, which means any type of formatted word, the written word, as it is used to designate the message of the Christian gospel (*Jn. 1: 1; 10; Phil. 2: 16; Eph. 1: 13; Acts 13: 26; 2 Cor. 5: 19; 1 Cor. 1: 18*). In the Septuagint – the Greek version of the OT – the term 'Logos' is used to translate the Hebrew word *dābār*. In *John 1: 1; 10; 14*, the evangelist says that Jesus is the 'Word' among men. Therefore, *Logos* (Strong #g3056 – Λόγος) means "reason, speech, discourse, the word as the expression of a thought, a saying, expressing the thoughts of the Father through the Spirit, 'reasoning expressed by words.'" The second term, which was used by Jesus in this text, is *rhēma* (Strong #g4487 – ῥήμα), which means: every word pronounced, spoken by mouth; a thing spoken, a word or saying of any kind, as command, report, promise; the special word that God utters from His own mouth. This is what Jesus wanted to convey: He had not only a word within Him that He had read or that told Him that He was the Messiah, the Son of God; on the contrary, He had heard a word from the Father's own mouth that said who He was, "You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased." This gave Him the strength to resist the doubts that the devil tried to put in His mind. Besides, He replied using the word of the Scriptures (*Deut 8: 3; Matt. 4: 4*): "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Thus, failing to defeat Him with this stratagem, the devil tried the second: to shake Jesus in the religious realm, with the prophecies of the Scriptures regarding His authority as Messiah. Therefore, the devil took Him to Jerusalem, and placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written', 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you', and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your

foot against a stone” (*Matt. 4: 6 cf. Ps 91: 11-12*). Jesus answered him again with the word of the Scriptures, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (*Matt. 4: 7 cf. Deut. 6: 16*).

An ancient Jewish tradition said that when the Messiah came, He would put his feet on the pinnacle of the temple. Some say that the pinnacle is the highest point of the wall on the southeast side, facing the Kidron Valley, 50 meters high above the rock; others think that the pinnacle was a little higher, on the roof of the so-called Royal Portico (the Royal Stoa, the Royal Colonnade), a portico with four rows of columns, within the southern walls. In this case, the enemy’s words were as if they were leading Jesus to fulfill the prophecies, but showing Him that He was not dressed appropriately for this, neither as a priest nor as a king, in glory, but as an ordinary man, hungry and dirty, and as such could desecrate the sanctuary by being there like that. He tried to put guilt on Jesus, the guilt of displeasing God; and even suggested to Him to jump from up there. But the Lord replied, “‘It is said’, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, He quoted the Scriptures.

Finally, failing in his attempt to put doubts in Jesus’ heart regarding His divine identity and failing in making Him feel unworthy and guilty spiritually before God and unworthy as the Messiah, Satan tried to buy Him in relation to the authority that Jesus could have over material things and the king’s power over the world.



Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” (*Matt. 4: 9*). Luke writes: “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours” (*Lk. 4: 6-7*). Adam, by sinning, gave what he had received from God to the devil, so Jesus said that Satan is the prince of this world (*Jn. 12: 31; Jn. 14: 30*). And so, this one proposed to Him the restitution of the authority in exchange for the worship of his person, as if he were the owner of all things instead of the Father. Once again, he played with the Word of God that says, “The Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (*Dan. 4: 32b*) or “The Most High God is sovereign over the

kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes" (*Dan. 5: 21b*). Jesus then commanded him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him'" (*Matt. 4: 10 cf. Deut. 6: 13*). Then the devil left Him, and angels came and attended Him. In *Lk. 4: 13* is written: "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time", that is, the cross.

Back to the father of the epileptic boy, he lived in the flesh, not even with the awareness that it was his lack of faith that hindered the healing of the child. The sick emotional and unconscious ties should speak louder there than the conscious will to see the healing of the boy. In other words, *the old struggle between flesh and Spirit*, so Jesus did not cast out any demon of him, because it was his flesh that needed treatment. He himself made his son spiritually unprotected by his unbelief, giving gap to the demon. When he believed, both were cured. To remind us of the "old struggle between flesh and Spirit", we will read again the texts written by Paul, what complements our reasoning that only the Holy Spirit in us can actually transform us and lead us to do God's will:

- *Rom. 7: 15-25*: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self [*his spirit*], but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members [*his flesh*]. Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin."

- *Gal. 5: 16-21*: "Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (*1 Sam. 15: 22-23; 1 Cor. 6: 8-10; Eph. 5: 3-7; Col. 3: 5*). It is these nuances of our flesh that come to light during the fast to be treated, and so that the will of our spirit, which is our true *self* in Christ, prevails.

- *Phil. 2: 13-16a*: "for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. It is by your holding fast to the word of life."

One last comment about fasting: many brothers, with the desire to help the other, propose themselves to do a fasting so that the problem with this one is resolved. However, if we say that fasting is to break down barriers of the flesh, it is no use fasting for someone else because his own barriers need to be brought down. It is he who needs to fast.

We also said that *the devil is cast out in Jesus' name* and that *the flesh is vanquished by fasting*. Finally, we'll see that *the world*, i.e., everything that has to do

with time, with people and the natural things of human existence, *is overcome by faith*: “for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 Jn. 5: 4-5).

Conclusion of all we said:

- Devil is expelled in Jesus’ name.
- The flesh is vanquished by fasting.
- The world is overcome by faith.
- Fasting should be an act determined the Holy Spirit with focus on our spiritual improvement.
- Our sanctification is progressive and necessary; it is achieved when our will is aligned with the Holy Spirit’s.
- It’s no use to fast for someone else.

## A COMMENTARY ON DANIEL'S FAST



The Bible describes three distinct episodes where Daniel abstained from certain foods:

- “Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.” (NRSV; *Dan. 1: 12*).

“Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink” (KJV).

“Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink” (NIV).

- “I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks.” (NRSV; *Dan. 10: 3*)

“I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” (KJV)

“I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.” (NIV)

- “Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” (*Dan. 9: 3*), when he prayed for the people, he was in a complete fast. Prayer, supplications, fasting, sackcloth and ashes were common when it came to special prayer for deliverance (*2 Kin. 19: 1-2; Dan. 9: 3; Jon. 3: 5-8*).

The first episode above (*Dan. 1: 12*) was not exactly a fast for a spiritual purpose, but a matter of not defiling himself with the pagan food of Babylon, for Daniel and his friends had just arrived there and had made a covenant to consecrate themselves to God, to be faithful to Him no matter what happened to them. And of course, the Jews were not allowed to eat pork or any food consecrated to other gods, nor to drink the wine from libations made to them. The Bible says: “But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself.” (*Dan. 1: 8*). So I don’t exactly call this a fast, it was a diet that began with a ten-day trial and continued for three years, the time of his training to stand before the king (*Dan. 1: 16, 18 cf. v. 5*). We could call this “*Daniel’s Diet*.” The Bible does not mention the word “fasting” here.

The Hebrew expression ‘pulse’ or ‘vegetables’ referred to grains, legumes, and the fruits of all seeds. The Hebrew word used in this text is zeroa or zerason – Strong’s

#2235, זָרְעִים, which literally means: pulsate, pulse, beat, cadence, palpitation, life, vibrate, beat, rhythmic movement, have pulsations. It comes from the Hebrew root zara, which means: something sown (only in the plural, zero'im or zar'im), that is, a vegetable (as food); seeds (that is, food that comes from a seed). He drank water and ate vegetables, fruits, legumes, and grains, probably barley or roasted wheat, which was customary among the Jews.

In the second text (*Dan. 10: 3*) there was already a more specific purpose on Daniel's part to seek God's revelation about a vision that troubled him. *Here we can actually call it Daniel's fast.* In v. 4, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the first month fell right after the feasts of Passover (14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan) and Unleavened Bread (from 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> day), with which his fast may have been associated. The Bible says that he did not eat bread or any food made with leavened wheat or that seemed more appetizing: "I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks" (*Dan. 10: 3*). KJV writes: "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." And NIV says, "I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." Daniel abstained from eating certain foods and from anointing himself, which was common on days of mourning, not feasting. He was mourning because he wanted to understand the vision (v. 12).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (the day after Passover) and for seven days unleavened bread was eaten (*Lev. 23: 6*), which included bread made from barley, wheat, or spelt (a lower quality wheat). The first and last days of the festival were holy assemblies and sacrifices were offered (*Num. 9: 1-5; Num. 28: 16-25; Deut. 16: 1-8*). Jews continue to do this today: they eat unleavened bread (matzah), and during these days, all leavened products are removed from the house: oat, bread, crackers, cakes, cookies, pasta, and anything made with a leavening agent or flour. Their diet consists of rice, which falls into the category of legumes (kitniyot), and which includes beans, peas, lentils, and various types of seeds. Although kosher wine is an important part of the Jewish Passover meal celebration, other types of alcohol are prohibited (at least for traditional Jews. Some Jews drink tequila, a Mexican liquor made from an agave). They use mayonnaise in their meals, and sometimes season it with garlic. They also eat beef or lamb. This makes us think that the Feast of Unleavened Bread had the spiritual purpose of sanctification (= unleavened bread), for leaven symbolizes the flesh, human wickedness and malice in opposition to the holiness of the Spirit. In *1 Cor. 5: 6-8*, the apostle Paul writes: "Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

In fact, in the law of Moses the Jews had only one day designated for fasting: the fast of the Day of Atonement (*Lev. 23: 27*), which was also known as "Day of Fasting" or "a fast day" or simply "the Fast" (*Jer. 36: 6; Acts 27: 9*), that is, Yom Kippur. Servants of God voluntarily fasted to draw near to Him in certain situations where His anointing was needed.

Returning to Daniel, he abstained from foods such as meat or wine and abstained from ointments that made life more comfortable in a dry, desert climate: "I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks" (*Dan. 10: 3 – NRSV*). KJV writes: "I ate no pleasant bread,

neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled”. And NIV says, “I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.” In fact, he began his fast on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, but took advantage of the Passover and Unleavened Bread festivals, ending it on the 21<sup>st</sup> day, when the Passover celebration also ended. If he stopped eating meat and drinking wine, it is because these were not forbidden to be eaten at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, even because it was a feast and not an ordinance of mourning.

When analyzing the text of *Dan. 10: 3*, using the KJV with Strong’s Concordance, we can notice the following: “I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” “Pleasant bread” in Hebrew it is *lechem* לֶחֶם, Strong’s #3899, which means: food (for man or beast), especially bread, or grain (for making it); shewbread, bread, eat, food, fruit, loaf, meat, victuals. This speaks in favor of leavened bread and other tasty things, including meats and wine.

Given the weakened condition in which he found himself after the 21 days (*Dan. 10: 8-10; 16-19*), we can imagine that he would have eaten much less than the vegetables described in *Dan. 1:12*. It must have been water and, at most, the unleavened bread of the Passover, for generally the Jews fasted much more intensely when it was a matter of humbling themselves before God, asking for revelation or deliverance (see *Est. 4: 16*; she went on a total fast). In other words, this fast was a period of mourning for Daniel and also part of his willingness to gain understanding and humble himself before his God (*Dan. 10:12*). Daniel fasted because of a more difficult revelation. The angel declared to him that from the first day of prayer the prophet had been heard (*Dan. 10: 12*), but that a battle was being fought in the spiritual realm, trying to prevent the revelation (*v. 13*) and that it would continue against the Principalities of Persia and Greece (*v. 20-21*).

It was also common during mourning fasts for people not to anoint their hair and not to take much care of their appearance. Perhaps this is why Jesus taught us the right way to fast, to be seen by God, not by men: “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” (*Matt. 6: 16-18*).

The OT shows different purposes for fasting: mourning (*1 Sam. 31: 13; 2 Sam. 1: 12; 2 Sam. 3: 35*), repentance of sins (*1 Sam. 7: 6; Neh. 9: 11; Dan. 9: 3*), affliction and sickness (*2 Sam. 12: 16-23; 2 Chr. 20: 3; Ps. 35:13*), seeking protection (*Ezr. 8: 21-23; Est. 4: 16*); intercession (*Dan. 9: 3, Dan. 10: 2-3*); consecration (the Nazarites – *Num. 6: 3-4*); in times of spiritual warfare, where strengthening and revelation from God are needed (*Dan. 10: 1-3; 12; 13; 20-21*).

### *What can we eat when we do the Daniel fast? What do we need to remove?*

Today, when observing a Daniel fast, you must keep in mind that it is an act of penance that lasts 21 days, in which you must abstain from certain foods, with the aim of getting closer to God and purifying yourself from the worldly contamination that you live in, leaving the desires of your flesh in the background. Thus, you should abstain from meat and animal products (beef, chicken, fish, eggs and dairy products), sweets and natural sweeteners such as honey (includes fruits such as dates, plums, and others

prepared with sugar, grapes, etc.), bread and tasty foods (with fats), yeast, alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, caffeine, additives and processed foods.

It is allowed to eat:

Vegetables, legumes, fruits and whole grains (oat, soy, toasted wheat), nuts and seeds.

Mineral water and coconut water; fennel, chamomile, mint and lemon balm teas.

Seasonings such as garlic, onion, salt, paprika, bell pepper, olive oil, pepper, cinnamon, oregano, basil, olives and linseed meal.

As I said in the initial guidelines on fasting, it is good to ‘disconnect’ from other things that can distract the mind from the focus of seeking God: the internet (store websites, for example, which encourage consumerism; games, such as video games, soccer; and everything that brings distractions), secular music, WhatsApp, social networks, TV (cut out all consumption of useless information: world news, TV series), sex, etc., that is, what you ‘ingest’ with your eyes and ears. And, logically, dedicate yourself more to prayer, reading and meditating on the word of God; listen to praise and messages that edify the soul and strengthen the spirit; read books with Christian content. In short: keep your mind connected with God (your spirit in constant conversation with Him).

Depending on the person’s profession, certain choices should be made, taking into account the specific reason for the fast and the weakness of the flesh that is being tried to eradicate. The person will only access information from this world that is truly necessary for work and study. These are days when the person disconnects from the world and detoxifies from useless information, connecting more with God to hear His voice.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> PART



Meeting in Galilee

## Jn. 21

<sup>1</sup> After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way.

<sup>2</sup> Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael [*also called Bartholomew*] of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee [*James and John*], and two others of his disciples [*My comment: probably Philip and Andrew, the first for being a great friend of Nathanael and the second, because he was Peter's brother*].

<sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, 'I am going fishing.' They said to him, 'We will go with you.' They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Children, you have no fish, have you?' They answered him, 'No.'

<sup>6</sup> He said to them, 'Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.' So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

<sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord!' When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea.

<sup>8</sup> But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

<sup>9</sup> When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.'

<sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.' Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.



## REMEMBERING THE CALL



*Galilee* means *circle*. In the second part of the chapter (*Jn. 21: 15-23*), we see that Jesus arranged this meeting not only to heal Peter's soul for having denied Him and, giving him now the mission of leading His Church, but also to treat and strengthen the others, reminding them of the initial call that they had with Him by the sea at the beginning of His ministry. It is interesting in this text of *Jn. 21: 1-14*, that in verse 2 the bible says they were together: Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John (sons of Zebedee) and two of His disciples, probably Andrew and Philip, because Andrew was the brother of Peter, and Philip, Nathanael's companion, who introduced him to the Master when he began to be His disciple. If we pay attention, they were the same six first disciples chosen by Jesus, except Thomas: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip and Nathanael.

- *Mk.1: 16-20*: "As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people'. And immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him."

- *Jn. 1: 40-51*: "One of the two who heard John [*the Baptist*] speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother [*probably the other was John, son of Zebedee*]. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed ). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter ). The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael [*also called Bartholomew*] and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'"

Explaining this statement by Jesus to His new disciple, it is likely that Nathanael was meditating on the story of Jacob's ladder (*Gen. 28:12*), which is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the only access to heaven. Nathanael had seen only very small demonstrations of His Messiahship (which was the fact that the Lord saw him under the fig tree and was able to express what was in His heart). The Son of Man is a title indicating a supernatural and heavenly figure (*Dan. 7:13*), who enters the earthly kingdom, but whose real dwelling is always in heaven. This is how Jesus defined Himself in the gospels. Nathanael would have clearer revelations of the person of Christ immediately (Jesus' first miracle was in Cana of Galilee and comes soon after in the narrative. Nathanael was from Cana) and of the grace of God through His ministry, and such miracles would be performed by Him as if confirming the participation of the heavenly hosts in these miracles, ascending and descending from heaven to serve Jesus.

Through this meeting with the disciples in Galilee by the sea, the Master reminded them that His call to them was being renewed. This meeting was to show them that they had matured and make clear what they would have to do; they were able to understand the design of the Lord, very different from what occurred at the beginning. The interesting thing about this whole story is that Thomas, who was part of the 'second group' chosen by Jesus, now was part of the 'first group', because he also had had a remarkable experience with the Lord overcoming the unbelief of his own soul, therefore, gained the right to participate in a work a bit greater.

As I said, *Galilee* means *circle*. They returned to the origin to give value to the transformation that occurred in their lives in those three years with the Master. They could see more clearly what would happen to them from now on; not so clear yet, as after Pentecost; however, clearer than in the past, when they were simple fishermen. That experience could also be for them a farewell of the old life to start something totally new. In the bible it is written: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (*Mk. 13: 31*). The initial call was being reaffirmed; God had not changed His mind.

In conclusion, the idea is: God makes us return to the beginning of our walk with Him so that we have the certainty that His word and His call for our lives are immutable and that there was a growing and a maturing at this time that the Holy Spirit worked with us. As "*Thomas*", when we overcome the challenges, bringing down the barriers of our own flesh, we gain the right to participate in the construction of the dream of God as pioneers of His work.

## GLORIFIED BODY



This text (*Jn. 21: 4-14*) leads us to a question that many of us have done and it is about the appearance of Jesus after His resurrection. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus showed His disciples His glorified body. In other words, they saw Him as He is now in glory at the right hand of the Father:

- *Lk. 9: 28-36*: “Now about eight days after these sayings [*The revelation that Peter had about Jesus being the Son of God and the Messiah*] Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray [*Probably the Hermon to the north of Israel*]. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!’ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen” [*in Mk. 9: 9 and Matt. 17: 9 the bible says that Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until He resurrected: “As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, ‘Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead’”*].

Thus, we can think that Jesus was already preparing His disciples for many things to come, not only related to Him but also to all others who were with Him. It was also a way to predict what would happen to us after we ‘sleep’ (as the bible refers to the dead in Christ). In *1 Cor. 15: 35-58*, Paul says that the resurrected at the second coming of Christ will have body, and he is in fact describing our glorified body, as it was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and as it was after His resurrection. He emphasizes that the spiritual body that we will have will be a different body, with atoms and molecules ‘reorganized’; therefore, another kind of matter. The spiritual body he refers to is not only spirit; it is our soul saved and purified that will be there too. The bible says God is the Spirit (*2 Cor. 3: 17*) and that the angels are also spirits, they have

no body to inhabit; but in reference to man, since his creation, he was always connected to a body. As for the glorified body of Jesus after His resurrection, which was transformed to the point that neither Mary Magdalene nor the disciples themselves for several times did not recognize Him immediately, it was a body that went through the walls; however, He ate and maintained His human form:

- *Jn. 20: 14-17*: “When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?’ Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, ‘Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew [NIV, Aramaic], ‘Rabboni!’ (Which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them,’ ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

- *Jn. 20: 19-23*: “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

- *Jn. 20: 26*: “A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’”

- *Lk. 24: 36-43*: “While they were talking about this [*It refers to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who had met with the Lord*], Jesus himself stood among them [*He materialized inside there, He didn’t knock at the door*], and said to them ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.”

See now:

- *1 Cor. 15: 35-58*: “But someone will ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?’ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies [*a twig of wheat is not born if a seed does not die on earth, that’s what it means*]. And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain [*we must first sow the grain or seed to have the plant or the entire tree*]. But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed, its own body. Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies [*angels, stars and planets*] and earthly bodies [*we and the animals*], but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; indeed, star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable [*we sow here in life, living in an unclean and imperfect body*], what is raised is imperishable [*we sow in the spiritual things in order to have a spiritual body of glory and splendor and it differs from person to person, depending on their sowing on earth*]. It is sown in

dishonor [*human imperfection*], it is raised in glory [*spiritual perfection*]. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living being’; the last Adam [*Jesus*], became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual [*We need to sow here while we are alive what we want to be in the future. If we sow only in the material and the worldly things, we cannot be saved in the soul, nor have a spiritual body, because we did not think of it on earth, when we had a chance*]. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust [*our material body that was generated in the womb*]; the second man is from heaven [*our spirit generated from God’s Spirit in the new birth*]. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven. What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed [*cf. Phil. 3: 21 – he means that when Jesus returns a second time, many who are alive will be caught up in a spiritual body, glorified, as happened with Jesus when Mary Magdalene saw Him and therefore did not recognize Him immediately, for His appearance was different*], in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet [*an angel will sound a trumpet, summoning those who belong to Christ, for having His seal on their forehead – Rev. 7: 3; 9: 4; 14: 1; 22: 4*]. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable [*with a body clean of impurities and different from that they had in life on earth*], and we will be changed [*we’ll be caught up to heaven in our new body*]. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality [*we need to take care of our salvation and our holiness here on earth so that we can arrive purified in heaven*]. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’ [*incitement, stimulus*] The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law [*Law is government and authority over sin and that brings punishment*]. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

We will also have a glorified body like Jesus’.

## Jn. 21

<sup>4</sup> Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No’.

<sup>6</sup> He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some’. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

<sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea.

...

<sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Come and have breakfast’. Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ because they knew it was the Lord.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

<sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

After all these verses, we can say that Jesus had a different appearance than before. The only questions that remain to us to do are:

If the bible says in this text of *Jn. 21: 4-14* that it was the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples, how they didn't recognize Him? Is it because of the fog at sunrise? What about His voice? Was it different too? What prevented them from recognizing Him? Why John was the first to recognize Him? Why, then, the bible says that *"none of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord?"*

These are difficult questions to answer, but we can imagine that the closer was the day of Jesus to leave earth and ascend to the Father, the divine glory over Him became greater, i.e., the light of the divine presence in this 'new body' made Him different from His previous appearance; that's why the disciples had difficulty of recognizing Him immediately. John, the disciple whose heart was more open to Him, could perceive His presence more quickly, and besides, by hearing the order to cast the net to the right side of the boat, he remembered that he had already had an experience like this and who gave the order was the Lord, so he told Peter that the man who was on the beach was the Master.

In conclusion, we can say that just as Jesus had a glorified body after His resurrection, we will have a body too at the time of His second coming, different than that we have now, for the immortality, as Paul says, will clothe us.

## RECALLING THE MIRACULOUS FISHING



### Jn. 21

<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No’.

<sup>6</sup> He said to them, ‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some’. So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish.

<sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, ‘It is the Lord!’ When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea...

We said that John recognized Jesus when He commanded the disciples to cast the net to the right side of the boat. He remembered an experience he had had three years ago; now it had a special meaning because his soul and spirit were already prepared to understand it. The first experience, described in *Lk. 5: 1-11* says, “Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!’ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.’ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.”

Here it is important to meditate a little on the meaning of fish and net. In many passages of the Old Testament, the bible describes *the net* as a *symbol of God’s judgment*, and in the NT, it says that the net is *similar to His kingdom*. This means *the power and dominion of the kingdom of God over men and nations*, catching them and herding them to Him, separating them from the children of darkness. *The right side*, in

the bible, is symbol of *blessing, power, privilege, honor, strength and authority* (Ps. 110: 1-2). When the Lord commanded them to cast the nets to the right side of the boat it's as if He said to them, "In the nations (here symbolized by the sea) are the fish (the souls) that you need to accomplishing your mission, but you have to cast your nets to the right side so that they (the souls, the fish) jump into it, did you understand it? Cast your nets to the right side of the boat, where I am present with my power, my blessing, strength, privilege, honor and authority. Those who follow me always know that they are casting their nets to the right side of the boat; they have no doubt where the right side is. All fish you catch will be a source of help and strengthening to you, for you are doing my work".

The teaching that the Lord would like to give His disciples is that at the first time, He was in the boat with them to give them the security of His presence. Henceforth, He would no longer be physically with them, but His word, because His order was immutable. They would be fishers of men from now on.

To conclude this topic, we can say that by remembering the successful experiences of the past, the Lord not only renews in us the hope of new victories, as He also gives us greater and deeper revelations of His plan for our lives.

## NEW SOULS ADDED TO THE LORD



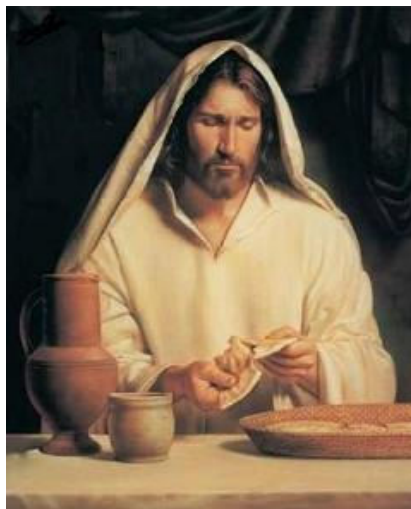
### John 21

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.'

In a simple sentence, the disciples could have another lesson: by joining their fish to the ones that Jesus already had on the coals, this symbolized that new souls would be brought into the kingdom of God through them. Jesus had set them the example of how to do this; from that moment, they would be His fishermen. He had begun a work and they would continue it.

Conclusion of this topic: we are responsible for continuing the work of Jesus, that is, to add souls to His kingdom.

## TEACHING TO SHARE THE FOOD



### Jo 21

<sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.

It is interesting to note the similarity of this fact with the two multiplications of loaves and fish occurred during the ministry of Jesus. After the first multiplication, when Jesus sent back the crowds and went up the mount alone to pray, there was the episode of walking on the water and the meeting with the disciples in the fourth watch of the night (*Mk. 6: 45-52*). In the last verse of this passage (*Mk. 6: 52*) it is written: “for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” Later, in *Mk. 8: 10-10*, the second multiplication of bread and fish occurs, and it seems that some time has passed between that and the first, since the disciples asked once again (*Mk. 8: 4b*), “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?,” as if they had forgotten that Jesus could repeat the miracle of the multiplication again. In the first, they gathered twelve baskets full, the bible says; this second time, seven baskets, but here they had forgotten to put the bread on the boat. When Jesus tells them to watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees (their hypocritical doctrine) and Herod’s (sin and rebellion against God’s will, desecration of holy things), they soon remember that they had forgotten the bread. That’s when Jesus said to them: “Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” *Mk. 8: 17b*). The same repeated phrase, “Have a hardened heart to the miracles of God.”

Now, in *Jn. 21: 13* the bible says, “Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.”

The same way that Jesus reminded them of the wonderful fishing, He reminded them of the two multiplications of loaves and fish, with one difference: this experience was like a private supper with Him because they were prepared to understand what they had not understood before. The *bread* was the strongest article of the Israelites diet and was called ‘living’ or ‘livelihood.’ Symbolically, bread speaks of *covenant communion and intimacy with God*, besides it is also a symbol of *the body of Jesus slain on the cross* for our sins. *Fish* symbolize *souls, lives for the kingdom of God*. This means that the Lord fed them with His own life, reviving within them the communion with Him and teaching them that He is enough to feed all who seek Him, not letting anyone to get

hungry. By multiplying the fish, He taught His disciples that, if they were willing to surrender to Him and His work, He would turn them into food for other lives also dry and in need of His word and the fellowship with the Father. Moreover, this experience at the beach was to them alone, as disciples and apostles, where there was no crowd, only His chosen.

Conclusion of this topic: to His disciples, He speaks in particular and teaches the secrets of His kingdom. He also teaches them how to give of themselves, to surrender and to reap the fruit of what they planted.

## ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE FISH



### Jn. 21

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught'.

<sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn.

Here we address another topic that may raise doubts in the minds of certain people. Why John made a point of writing this about one hundred and fifty-three fish and the other evangelists did not? Did he count the fish? Or did the Lord have a spiritual revelation to us through this? He may even have counted, for fishermen used to count the good fish they had caught. And the fact of numbering them here was to show how big the fishing was.

Let's go back to the old way of thinking of the Jews of that time. The numbers 5 and 10 had a meaning within the decimal system used in Palestine. The number 1 conveys the concept of unity and the unparalleled character of God, the unity between Christ and the Father, the unity between believers and God, and the unity that exists among believers. The zero is added to give an idea of how many times the other number represents. The number 10 may also mean the first number of a major beginning, something complete or fidelity; for us, it is the number of the Church.

The number 5 has the spiritual meaning of the faithful fulfillment of the promises of God referring to the five books of the Pentateuch (Torah), that is, the events that occurred as divine predestination.

Thus, we can think that *the symbol represented by that number would be God's plan for His children, His chosen ones:*

100: the great unity between believers and God, as well as the unity among the brothers, the same way that is the unity between Christ and the Father. He was warning His Church to watch over, not to sleep and always remain faithful in order to be complete.

50: the faithful fulfillment of the promises of God in the lives of His children more than they can ask or think, as He Himself says in His word. The full pouring out of His Spirit, as it was at Pentecost.

3: The participation of the Trinity as the perfect number, showing God's holiness.

Putting all together, Jesus was showing His disciples and us that He had come to give us the example of unity with the Father and men, to encourage us to believe in His promises and to remind us to live a life of holiness. This would be the rule for all children of God.

The bible says that, although with so many fish, the net was not torn. This means that *the kingdom of God has power and dominion* over everything, and no matter how many participate in it; it does not break with no human threat or the darkness'. Who 'jump into the net' of the Lord is no longer a slave of the world or the devil, but an honored servant of the Lord. In *1 Cor. 7: 23* it's written, "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of human masters." We can also say that there's room for everybody.

Other words draw our attention in the verses of John: "*large fish*." This means that we are great for God, our life is precious and it cost a high price which was the life of His own Son.

Conclusion of this topic: the kingdom of God is big enough to supply all of His children, besides that the work that was started will remain intact until the second coming of Jesus. The project of the Lord for His Church will continue to be the desire for unity among believers and between them and the Father, holiness and the active faith in His promises.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> PART



No one has ever seen God

## Jn. 1

<sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

<sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

## THEOLOGICAL EXPLANATION



Who said this (“No one has ever seen God”) was John the Baptist when he bore witness to Jesus. So, many may ask, “If John the Baptist said that no one has ever seen God, how then did Moses see the glory of God, and Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John and other servants had visions of the throne?”

Let’s first make a comment on the statement of John the Baptist and then ‘stroll’ a little by the theological information.

The meaning of John the Baptist’s words is much more comprehensive than we might think because he was not referring to the gift of vision given by God to some of His children (“*ecstasy*”) or *the word of knowledge*, which brings a clear inner revelation of what the Lord wants and it’s almost a vision itself, where the mind is able to describe what God is revealing to the spirit as if it was seeing with the eyes of the soul. He was referring to the *knowledge and true understanding of who God is*. The Creator is full, complete, transcends our human understanding, therefore, not even Moses, who the bible describes as the man who most saw God, knew Him in His fullness and totality. John the Baptist goes on saying that was Jesus who revealed the Father to us, that is, through His attitudes and His character, the men might have a glimpse of God. It would be more correct to say that each of us has a partial view of Him, according to His will and the spiritual gift that was bestowed on us. So Paul said in *1 Cor. 13: 9; 12*: “For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part... For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” The day will come to see Him in His entirety. We can also say that we know Him through His power at work in our lives: “Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see [*to see the power of God in*

action] the Righteous One [reference to Jesus – Acts 7: 52; 1 Jn. 2: 1] and to hear his own voice” (Acts 22: 14).

- Acts 7: 52: “Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers.”

- 1 Jn. 2: 1: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

The gift of vision and revelation from the Lord, whatever the intensity and the expression given by the Spirit, is of His total will and dominion and is not a reason for many people brag by seeing things that others do not see. Each of us knows the Lord through our own gift.

In 1 Cor. 12: 1-31 when Paul talks about the spiritual gifts and on its use as an instrument of edification to the Body of Christ, he even says that the Lord gave honor to the members who had less: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect” (1 Cor. 12: 1; 4-7; 22-23).

Within the prophetic ministry there are various manifestations of the Spirit, because some are gifted with clairvoyance (prediction of the future), others not. Some are more used by God to the exhortation, others for instruction and revelation of the word and so on.

Let us now turn to the theological information.

The dividing line between the vision and dream or ecstasy [contemplation of the supernatural things in a rapture of the spirit] is difficult to draw, if not even impossible to determine. This is reflected even by the vocabulary that the Scriptures use to indicate ‘vision.’ The Hebrew word *hāzôn* comes from a root used to describe the *contemplation* of a vision for a seer when he was in a state of ecstasy, while the term *mar’â*, derived from the most common root for ‘to see’ indicates vision as a means of *revelation*:

- Num. 12: 6-8: “And he said, ‘Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in *visions (mar’â or marah)*; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’”

- 1 Sam. 3: 1: “Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; *visions* were not widespread.”

The NT uses two words to vision: *horama* and *optasia*.

I) *Horama* (contemplation):

- Acts 9: 10-12: “Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a *vision*, ‘Ananias.’ He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ The Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a *vision* a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’”

- Acts 10: 3: “One afternoon at about three o’clock he had a *vision* in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’”

- *Acts 10: 9-20*: “About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a *trance*. He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Then he heard a voice saying, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.’ The voice said to him again, a second time, ‘What God has made clean, you must not call profane.’ This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven. Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the *vision* that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon’s house and were standing by the gate. They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the *vision*, the Spirit said to him, ‘Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.’”

- *Acts 16: 9*: “During the night Paul had a *vision*: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”

## II) *Optasia (revelation)*:

- *Lk. 1: 22*: “When he [*Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist*] did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a *vision* in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak.”

- *Acts 26: 19*: “After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly *vision*.”

- *2 Cor. 12: 1*: “It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to *visions* and revelations of the Lord.”

The experiences above:

**A)** Emphasize the *special awareness of the presence of God* shared by the prophets:

- *Jer. 1: 11; 13*: “The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Jeremiah, what do you see?’ And I said, ‘I see a branch of an almond tree’... The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, ‘What do you see?’ And I said, ‘I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.’”

- *Dan. 2: 19*: “Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and Daniel blessed the God of heaven.”

**B)** They highlight *the readiness of God to make Him known by men*:

- *Ps. 89: 19*: “Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said: ‘I have set the crown on one who is mighty, I have exalted one chosen from the people.’”

- *Acts 10: 3*: “One afternoon at about three o’clock he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming in and saying to him, ‘Cornelius!’”

**C. 1)** The visions may relate to *immediate situations*:

- *Gen. 15: 1*: “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’”

- *Acts 12: 9*: “Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel’s help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision” [*Peter’s miraculous escape from prison*].

**C. 2)** Also can refer to *distant divine events* concerning to the kingdom of God (Isaiah, Daniel, John).

In the **OT**, the recipients of the visions were the prophets (*Isa. 1: 1; Obad. 1: 1; Nah. 1: 1; 2 Sam. 7: 17 [Nathan]; 1 Kin. 22: 17-19 [Micaiah: the vision of the throne of God and the defeat of Israel]; 2 Chr. 9: 29 [Iddo, the seer]*). However, the most notable examples were Ezekiel and Daniel.

In the **NT**, Luke is he who shows more interest in the visions of God. He reports the visions of Zechariah (*Lk. 1: 22*), Ananias (*Acts 9: 10*), Cornelius (*Acts 10: 3*), Peter (*Acts 10: 10*), as were described above, and Paul: “One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people’” (*Acts 18: 9-10*).

As a conclusion of this topic, we can say that the visions are given by God to some people, especially the prophets, for the purpose of revelation, both of His own person and of the events that He wants to perform. Because it is a spiritual gift, there are several manifestations of the same. For most of God’s children, the most common way to see Him, that is, to understand Him, is what Jesus said in *Jn. 14: 9-10*: “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.’” This means: Jesus is the image of the Father and who knows Him sees the Father. And the easiest way to know Him is through the experiences with His word.

## MOSES



### Ex. 33

- <sup>15</sup> And he said to him, ‘If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here.
- <sup>16</sup> For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.’
- <sup>17</sup> The Lord said to Moses, ‘I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.’
- <sup>18</sup> Moses said, ‘Show me your glory, I pray’.
- <sup>19</sup> And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, ‘The Lord’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy’ (*Rom. 9: 15*).
- <sup>20</sup> ‘But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.’
- <sup>21</sup> And the Lord continued, ‘See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;
- <sup>22</sup> and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;
- <sup>23</sup> then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.’

The biblical word for the *glory of the Lord* is *kābhôdh* (Heb.) or *doxa* (Septuagint, the Greek version of the OT) = *weight or dignity*, and which can be understood as *the manifestation of God’s power where it is needed, victory, protection, abundance, wealth, dignity, reputation*. It is the Jewish equivalent of the Holy Spirit. The known word *Shekinah*, often translated as ‘*brightness, presence of God dwelling among His people*’, doesn’t appear in the OT or the NT. It derives from the verb *Shakhan* (שָׁכַן = to dwell, abide, continue, have habitation, inhabit – Strong #7931), which appears in verses such as *Gen. 9: 27*; *Gen. 14: 13*; *Jer. 33: 16*. Also appears in *Ex. 40: 35*: “Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it [*Shakhan*], and the glory of the Lord [*kābhôdh*] filled the tabernacle.” *Shekinah* (*Shekinah, Shekinâ*), in fact, is a Kabbalistic concept, mystic, which considers this word as the

female face of the Divine Presence. According to Kabbalah, *Shekinah* is a powerful cosmic energy, which dwells within the universe, vivifying it and being its soul or spirit. The writers of Targumim created the word '*Shekinah*' to indicate God Himself, removing the concept of God with a form and feelings, something that the traditional Judaism preached and didn't let be removed. This new standpoint, actually, brought an abstract concept of God, colder and distant (a simple 'cosmic energy', rather than a being with its own identity).

As I said previously, the Hebrew word for '*vision*', *hâzôn*, comes from a root used to describe the *contemplation* of a vision for a seer when he was in a state of ecstasy, while the term *mar'â*, derived from the most common root to '*see*', indicates vision as a means of *revelation*. Let's remember what the Lord said: "And he said, 'Hear my words: When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams [*That is, common dreams of normal sleep or visions as divine revelation*]. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he *beholds* the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"' (Num. 12: 6-8). We can say that the relationship with Moses was more intense than with any prophet up to there [*Miriam, for example*] because the contemplation of the image of God and His power, as well as the revelation of His character through the vision he had, put him in a deep intimacy with the Creator and nothing was hidden from him.

This means that Moses had *the vision of the glory and of God's character when he was in a state of ecstasy or "spiritual rapture."* This was different from the experiences of seeing His power in action, as in the deliverance from Egypt, in the Red Sea and in the desert. There, in the cleft of the rock, he could behold the entire splendor of the divine presence. But what the Lord wanted him to know, more than His glory, was His way of being, His character, His goodness, His 'inmost', so much that it is written, "The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression [NIV: rebellion] and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.' And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped. He said, 'If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance'" (Ex. 34: 6-9).

Conclusion: To know more about God, we must have courage to draw near Him and have the willingness to be servants.

## ISAIAH



### Isa. 6

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

<sup>2</sup> Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.

<sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.'

<sup>4</sup> The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

<sup>7</sup> The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.'

<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'

Isaiah had the experience of *contemplating* the image of God and His throne, and then receiving His *revelation* about his calling. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the dividing line, as we saw in theological explanation, between *contemplation* of the vision given by the Lord and the *revelation* itself of the character of God or of His will. A prophet may have divine visions on a given topic or situation, along with it the revelation and the interpretation of what the vision means (as happened with Peter, seeing the animals in the sheet) or to have only a special vision of the Lord with the purpose of gaining greater intimacy with Him and start to understand how to communicate properly with his God. We can see that with every prophet, He showed Himself in one way, that is, He gave him a different manifestation of the spiritual gift.

The great majority of men of God after Moses (for example, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John) had very similar visions in relation to the image of the Lord as King; all of them saw the throne room of a very similar manner, using words like jewelry and metals to

describe the brightness of the divine presence. It seems that they lacked the correct vocabulary to describe Him let alone to understand Him in His grandiosity and fullness! Even after thousand years, the human being still remains unaware of the true character and image of the Lord due the very limitation and impurity of his mind. Therefore, theological studies seem so limited and so empty of real answers because although they seek the explanation of facts and divine attitudes, they still use much of rationality and human interpretation. Only who had an authentic spiritual experience with the Holy Spirit can say that he knew a 'drop' of Him. The prophets of the past described the best they could of what they have witnessed, but I'm sure that the written words 'do not reach even the foot' of the emotional and spiritual experience that they lived.

Returning to Isaiah, he not only saw the Lord (vision), but also the seraphim around the throne and, the most important of all, he had the conviction of what God wanted of him (revelation).

Conclusion: to be sure of the calling, a prophet must have at least one striking spiritual experience with the Lord.

## EZEKIEL



## Ezek. 1

<sup>1</sup> In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

<sup>2</sup> On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin),

<sup>3</sup> the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was on him there.

<sup>4</sup> As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber [*NIV, glowing metal*].

<sup>5</sup> In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form.

<sup>6</sup> Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.

<sup>7</sup> Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze.

<sup>8</sup> Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus:

<sup>9</sup> their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved.

<sup>10</sup> As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle;

<sup>11</sup> such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies.

<sup>12</sup> Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went.

<sup>13</sup> In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire.

<sup>14</sup> The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

<sup>15</sup> As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.

<sup>16</sup> As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl [*NIV, chrysolite*]; and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel.

<sup>17</sup> When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved.

<sup>18</sup> Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around.

<sup>19</sup> When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.

<sup>20</sup> Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

<sup>21</sup> When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

<sup>22</sup> Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal [*NIV, ice*], spread out above their heads.

<sup>23</sup> Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body.

<sup>24</sup> When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings.

<sup>25</sup> And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings.

## THE VISION OF THE CHERUBIM AND THE FOUR WHEELS

Because we have lost over the centuries the symbolism used in Ancient times by these men of God, we often fail to understand exactly what they meant. But let us try to understand a bit this Ezekiel's vision of four living creatures, namely, the cherubim that were at the throne. The cherubim and seraphim were an order of angelic beings responsible for certain functions of *watchfulness* and *worship*. *Seraphim* were *agents of purification by fire*, according to Hebrew scholars who seek to link the name *seraphim* to the root *sāraph* = *to burn, consume with fire*. They lead worship in heaven and protect the holiness of God. Similarly, the *cherubim* (*kērūbhīm*, plural of 'cherub' = *heavenly, celestial*) are also celestial beings and in the book of Genesis it is written that they had the responsibility to guard the way to the tree of life [symbol of Jesus] in the garden of Eden (*Gen. 3: 24*), and were placed over the Ark of the Covenant (*Ex. 25: 18-22; Heb. 9: 5*) to protect the sacred objects stored in it (*1 Sam. 4: 4; 2 Sam. 6: 2; 2 Kin. 19: 15; Ps. 80: 1; Ps. 99: 1*). In other words, they are guardians of the throne of God. Perhaps, therefore, Ezekiel describes them in the midst of so much fire (= power and holiness of God).

It's interesting that he first had the vision of the cherubim; then, he saw the Lord and knew His plan for him (he had the revelation). Another curious point is the way how the spiritual world presents itself to each of the prophets, which makes us think that

their personality as well as their mental and emotional contents were also factors able to interfere in the appearance of the visions. That's what Paul wrote in *1 Cor. 14: 32*: "And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets." For example, Jesus can be seen by someone like a lamb, a lion, a meek and gentle man and a warrior, as described by John in *Rev. 19: 11-16*. This not only depends on what the Lord wants to give as a revelation at the moment, but also a way of respecting the way of being of each one, his spiritual growth and his emotional capacity to bear certain images or anointing. Other examples are: Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) when he heard from the Archangel Gabriel that he was to be father, and Mary, when she knew that the Messiah would be born from her. Although the bible describes that both were disturbed by the apparition of the angels, none of them saw what Ezekiel saw, for example. Mary and Zechariah saw angels more similar to human form than those who were seen by Ezekiel, because they were angels who played different functions in the spiritual world.

To understand the vision of Ezekiel we need, first of all, to understand the context of the author. Ezekiel was a priest who lived during the time when the Jews were exiled to Babylon. Being a priest, his main concern was with the temple, with the presence of God and the observance of the Law. Therefore, the content of his mind was focused on the spiritual images related to sacred things stored in the temple. He was also giving a word of encouragement to the people of the Old Covenant, now in captivity.

The prophet begins talking about a stormy wind that came from the north and a great cloud with fire, through which came the likeness of four living creatures. The stormy wind, the cloud and the fire were figures known to the Israelites since the time of Moses, for YHWH often manifested in the form of events of nature, as was with the cloud that covered them at the day and the pillar of fire that protected them at night. The important is that the wind described symbolized the Holy Spirit's presence emanating from the throne, from the North (for the *North* in the bible refers to God's throne), with power and holiness (fire). At Pentecost, His presence was described as a violent wind (*Acts 2: 2*).

He also says that the angels had a human appearance, for he mentions hands and face of man, however, their faces were not only of a man; they looked like on one side with a lion, on another with an eagle and on another with an ox. Their glow was described as the color of burnished brass or as hot coal, like torches; the fire ran brightly through them and from the midst of the fire went forth lightning, something much like the divine manifestation on Mount Sinai. This meant a God of power, a fearsome (awesome) and feared God, who had the ability to purify the souls of men as fire purifies gold and that was worthy of respect. Before studying the meaning of the animals, there is still important information about the cherubim. The name *cherubim* (*k'ruhīm*, plural of '*cherub*' = *celestial, heavenly, in Hebrew*, as we saw before) indicates a class of angels with great strength of knowledge, wisdom and divine light and that reflect the beauty of the Creator. Therefore, it is said that they are knowledgeable of the divine mysteries ("*full of eyes*", as the prophet said). The fact that they look in four directions at once means omniscience, complete awareness.

The word *cherub* or *cherubim*, in Assyrian, is *kirubu*, an expression designating a *winged bull* (symbol of Adad, 'the thunderer', an Assyrian deity equivalent to Baal, the god of the storms) or a *winged lion* (symbol of Ishtar), which not only served as decoration on the walls and doors of the temples, but were found in pairs (of winged lions or bulls), also serving as guards at the entrance of Mesopotamian temples. Because he was in captivity in Babylon, Mesopotamia, Ezekiel also may have seen the cherubim that way due to the influence of local culture. On the other hand, as a priest, the

Levitical education inside him allowed him a greater knowledge and more focused on the root of his own people than to idolatry.



These images of bulls and winged lions were found at the entrance to the palaces of the kings of Assyria. The first: An Assyrian winged bull; The second: A winged bull in the northern palace of Ashurbanipal in Nimrod (Nimrud; the name of the ancient Calah), one of the main four archaeological mounds of the city of Nineveh – Wikipedia.

Sennacherib's palace, for instance, had on each side of the main gates huge figures of stones weighing about 30 tons, including winged lions or winged bulls with a man's head, which not only served as adornment on the walls and doors, but as sentinels. In

some writings, these lions or bulls are portrayed to represent a female deity ('lamassu'). A name less used is shedu (Sumerian: dalad; Akkadian, šēdu) which refers to the male counterpart of a lamassu. Large lamassu figures up to six meters high can be seen in Assyrian sculpture. Artistically, lamassus were portrayed as hybrids, with bodies of winged bulls or lions and human male heads as symbol of power. They were initially household protecting spirits of the common people of Assyria and Babylon, later becoming protectors of kings; so they were placed as sentinels at the entrance of the palaces.



Images above: Curtains of the Outer Court of the Tabernacle and The Holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple.

When we look at the curtains of the Tabernacle of Moses (Ex. 26: 1-2; 31; 1 Kin. 6: 23-28; 2 Chr. 3: 10-13) and the walls of the temple of Solomon in some images, we can notice cherubim with shapes similar to that of a lion (at least the body). Coincidence or not, we can at least imagine that since ancient times, these animals had an important symbolism for humanity.

One side of the faces of the cherubim was the *face of man*, symbolizing the *intelligence* and the *free will*, given by God to man; on the other side of their face appeared the image of a *lion*, symbolizing *royalty*, *authority*, *strength*, *leadership*, *spiritual power*. The *ox* symbolized *the physical strength*, *the supply*, *provision*, *wealth* and *abundance*, in addition to be an animal used in the worship of God. It is interesting to remember that when Moses tarried on Mount Sinai, the people asked Aaron to build for them the image of a god they could see. Then, he made a golden calf (Ex. 32: 1-10; 18-24). Here, we'll make a stop for a comment. The people who left Egypt did not yet know the "God of Sinai", nor did they have His laws; they were more acquainted with the Egyptian gods. Therefore, we can think that the golden calf made by Aaron was related to the Egyptian idolatry. Captive for four hundred and thirty years, they barely remembered the legacy left by the patriarchs, except the land promised by God to them.



So there are two possibilities regarding the golden calf: a) The god Apis (Hapi-anku), the personification of the earth and reincarnation of Osiris. He was associated with Ptah, the god who built the city; he symbolized the power of the king (Pharaoh). b) The goddess Hathor, goddess of women, of heaven, love, joy, wine, dance, fertility and of the Necropolis of Thebes, for she welcomed the dead and watched over the tombs. As a sky goddess, she was the mother or consort of the sky god Horus and the sun god

Ra, both of whom were connected with royalty, so she was the symbolic mother of their earthly representatives, the pharaohs. She was represented as a cow with the sun disk between the horns or as a woman with the head or ears of a cow, or else, as a woman of ancient Egyptian clothing, who has yellow skin and bears on her head a pair of cow horns, between which is a red disk encircled by a cobra. She holds a forked staff (the Was-scepter) in one hand and an Ankh sign in the other. The Ankh, (the thoracic vertebra of a bull, seen in cross section) was for the Egyptians the symbol of life, also as a symbol of eternal life, life after death.

Despite its Egyptian origin, throughout history Ankh has been adopted by different cultures. For example, it was maintained even after the Christianization of the Egyptian people from the third century onwards, when converted Christians came to be called Coptics. Coptic means 'Egyptian' and refers to Egyptians whose ancestors embraced Christianity in the first century. Because of its similarity to the Christian cross, the Ankh has remained one of the main Coptic symbols, being called the Coptic Cross or 'crux ansata', where the upper part was adapted to a circular shape instead of the original oval shape of ancient Egypt (a pagan syncretism with the cross of Christ).



Based on the reaction of the Israelites described in the bible (like an orgy), it is more likely they were worshipping Hathor or the two gods (see Ex. 32: 4, where it is written 'your gods': "He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'" ). "Your gods", in Hebrew, "elohim" (Strong #430), plural of elowahh, can mean "gods" (in the ordinary sense) or be used (in the plural thus, especially with the article) of the supreme God.

The last animal seen by Ezekiel was the *eagle*, symbolizing *the majesty, the ability to see far, to have free movements to dominate the space, to achieve great heights, therefore, to reach the spiritual heights (spirituality)*. Another interesting feature of the eagle is that it experiences a process of physical *renewal* after attaining the age of forty, very similar to the work of *renovation of the Holy Spirit* in us. It's a bird that has the most *longevity*, coming to live seventy years. However, around forty years old, if it wants to continue living, it has to go through a renewal process. It begins to feel that its feathers are getting older; its beak is no longer as sharp and strong as before, that its claws are already weakening, and then it decides to take a drastic action. This process begins with the disruption of its routine activities as its flights, its hunting and adventures. So it flies high to the cliffs. There, alone and isolated, it begins by itself, the renovation work, traumatic, and that requires much courage, but finally will give it back the power and grandeur that seemed to be lost. The eagle begins to pluck its feathers with its beak, one by one, until it is fully plucked and disfigured. After that, realizing its beak is weak, powerless and full of scabs, it rubs it hard on the rock until it is raw. Finally, are the claws; it does the same process it did with the beak, hitting its nails with violence upon the rock repeatedly until that callous and aged layer is ripped out and stays also raw. However, after this process of self-flagellation, new, beautiful and bright feathers begin to emerge. A new beak grows, claws begin to sprout with all force and it is completely renewed and revitalized. It gets a new look and descends from the heights to continue its existence.

Ezekiel also says that the legs of the cherubim were straight, the sole of their feet was like a calf's foot. This means the correct walking ('right leg'), with authority, power and privilege given to them by being in obedience and service to the Creator and by having the aim to protect the sanctity and glory of God through their constant worship to Him. The soles of the feet were like a calf, symbolizing not only the worship, because the calf was a clean animal to be used in sacrifices to the Lord, because it has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed (*Lev. 11: 2-3*). This meant not to come into direct contact with earthly things.

Let's walk further on the word of God. When the Jews camped in the desert after leaving Egypt, they were instructed to set up four camps, one for each cardinal point, with the tabernacle in the center. Four tribes – Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan – were acknowledged as tribal leaders (*Num. 2: 1-34*). Each had its own banner identifying them as head of the tribes, while the others had their ensign, a smaller flag (*Num. 2: 2*: "The Israelites shall camp each in their respective regiments, under ensigns by their ancestral houses; they shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side"). In the tabernacle or tent of meeting were the sacred objects and the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God among men. There, the Lord spoke to Moses.

The first was called the camp of *Judah* and included Issachar and Zebulun and was located to the *east* (*Num. 2: 3*).

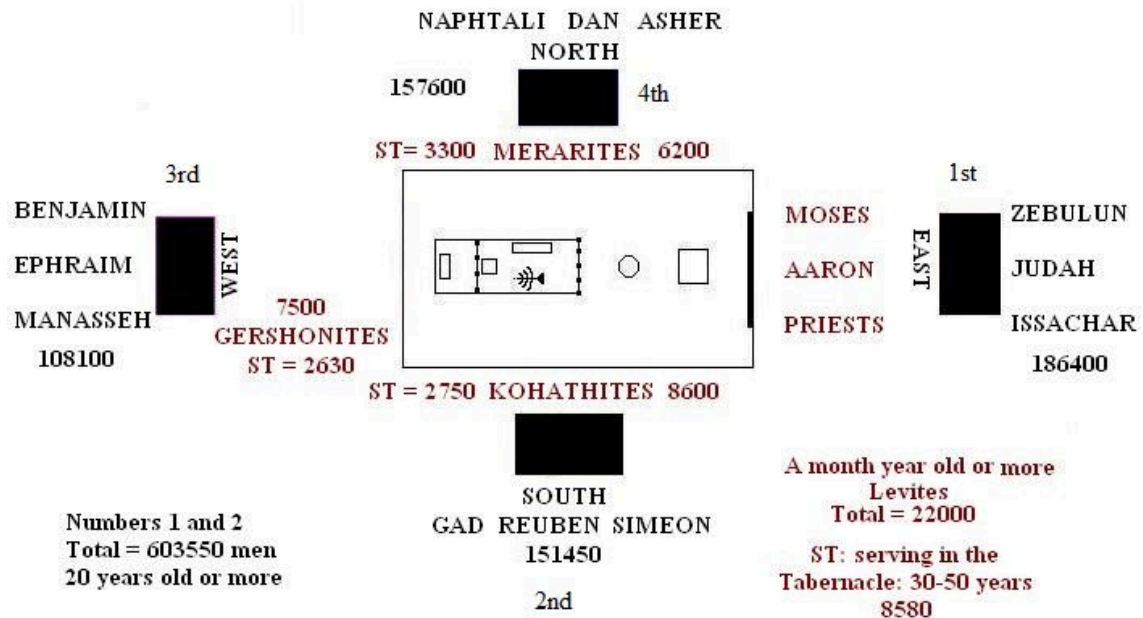
The second camp was headed by *Reuben* and included Simeon and Gad. They were located to the *south* of the tabernacle (*Num. 2: 10*).

The third camp was called *Ephraim* and included Manasseh and Benjamin. It was positioned to the *west* (*Num. 3: 18*).

The fourth was the camp of *Dan* with Asher and Naphtali included, and was located to the *north* (*Num. 2: 25*).

According to this line of thought, when God looked down He would see the camp of Israel with the tabernacle in the center and the four sub-camps around it like the cherubim around Him.

But what kind of similarity Ezekiel was seeing between the faces of the cherubim and the tribes? Did it have something to do with the banners of the tribes? Except for Judah that showed a lion on its flag, all the others were different from the animals presented by the prophet.



When researching the original image of these banners, what we find is the following:



Levi



Israel



Judah



Zebulun



Issachar



Reuben



Simeon



Gad



(Joseph) Ephraim



Manasseh



Benjamin



Dan



Naphtali



Asher

Now, let's remember the blessings of Jacob, specifically about these four tribes:

- *Gen. 49: 1-28 (Jacob's blessing on his children)*: "Then Jacob called his sons, and said: 'Gather around, that I may tell you what will happen to you in days to come. Assemble and hear, O sons of Jacob; listen to Israel your father. **Reuben**, you are my firstborn, my might and the first fruits of my vigor, excelling in rank and excelling in power. Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel because **you went up onto your father's bed**; then you defiled it—you went up onto my couch! [*He referred to the fact that Reuben lay down with his father's concubine*]. **Simeon** and **Levi** are brothers; weapons of violence are their **swords**. May I never come into their council; may I not be joined to their company—for in their anger they killed men, and at their whim they hamstringed oxen [*he referred to the betrayal of Simeon and Levi, killing the men of Hamor, father of Shechem, who married Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Hamor's people had made a pact to unite with Jacob and, therefore, they circumcised all males; however, while they were being healed of their wounds in the camp, Simeon and Levi came and killed them all – Gen. 34: 1-31*]. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel. **Judah**, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He crouches down, he stretches out like a **lion**, like a lioness—who dares rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him [NIV, 'until he comes to whom it belongs'; in Hebrew, 'until Shiloh comes' or 'until he comes to whom tribute belongs'\*; and the obedience of the peoples is his. Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes; his eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk. **Zebulun** shall settle at the shore of the sea; he shall be a **haven for ships**, and his border shall be at Sidon. **Issachar** is a strong **donkey**, lying down between the sheepfolds; he saw that a resting place was good, and that the land was pleasant; so he bowed his shoulder to the burden, and became a slave at forced labor. **Dan** shall **judge** his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a **snake** by the roadside, a **viper** along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider falls backward. I wait for your salvation, O Lord. **Gad** shall be raided by **raiders**, but he shall raid at their heels. **Asher's food** shall be rich, and he shall provide royal delicacies. **Naphtali** is a **doe** let loose that bears lovely fawns. **Joseph** is a **fruitful bough**, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. The archers fiercely attacked him; they shot at him and pressed him hard. Yet his bow remained taut, and his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of

Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above [*spiritual blessings*], blessings of the deep [*emotional blessings*] that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb [*material blessings*]. The blessings of your father are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers. **Benjamin** is a ravenous **wolf**, in the morning devouring the prey, and at evening dividing the spoil'. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, blessing each one of them with a suitable blessing."

(\*) "*Until Shiloh comes or until he comes to whom tribute belongs*" – It was in Shiloh that the tent of meeting was set up on the first days after the conquest of the Promised Land (*Josh. 18: 1*), and this was the main sanctuary of the Israelites during the time of the Judges (*Judg. 18: 31*). By the time of Eli (the priest) and his sons, the sanctuary had become a well-established structure of centered worship. The phrase used by Jacob, in "*until Shiloh comes or until he comes to whom tribute belongs*" in reference to Judah, in Hebrew is: '*adh kī-yābhō' shīlōh*', and can be translated in several ways. The two most reasonable in my opinion are: 1) "*until he [in reference to Judah] comes to Shiloh*", fulfilling what is written in *Josh. 18: 1*, when at a meeting, the tribe nobly rejected the prominence they had enjoyed previously (in the pilgrimage through the desert). 2) Amending *shīlōh* to *shellōh* and translating the phrase as does the Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT), '*until he comes to whom it belongs*' or '*until he comes to whom tribute belongs*', namely, '*the things in store for him*', maybe here is a reference to David or a messianic reference [he = Jesus].

- *1 Chr. 5: 1-2*: "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)."

- *Jer. 31: 9 b*: "for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

We can notice that the so-called *blessings of Jacob on the sons*, are, in fact, a description of the personality of each one of them already being undertaken, some by the very meaning of their names, for they was received after a situation between Jacob, Leah and Rachel; other sons acquired the above behavior described by Jacob because of the need they faced, not necessarily by the bad nature in their hearts, as the case of Simeon and Levi. In fact, they were taking an attitude of precaution to protect the family. We can even imagine they felt through their spirit that was not God's will the union with those uncircumcised (*Gen. 34: 14; 31*). Simeon *heard* the voice of God within himself [*Simeon* in Hebrew means, '*hearing, who hears, God heard*'. The Hebrew word is *Shim'ôn*, which derives from *Shâma'* (*to hear*)], and Levi [which means, *attached, joined, united, connected, adhered, set apart for the Lord, holy to the Lord*], for being united and adhered to the laws he knew through Abraham, also did not agree with that agreement, neither with the cowardly and selfish attitude of Jacob, thinking more about himself than the family or Dinah, the raped daughter: "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have brought trouble on *me* by making *me* odious to the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; *my* numbers are few, and if they gather themselves against *me* and attack *me*, *I* shall be destroyed, both *I* and *my* household'" (*Gen. 34: 30*). Although he mentioned his house, the pronouns were placed in first person of singular: *I, me and my*.

The meanings of the names are as follows:

*Reuben*, 1<sup>st</sup> – *Re'ubhen*, in the Masoretic, or *Rā'â b'e'onÿi*, in Hebrew, which means: 'He has seen my misery', Lord has looked upon my affliction' or 'see, a son', 'behold a son'. Biblical text: *Gen. 29: 32 b*: "Because the Lord has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." Leah said.

*Simeon*, 2<sup>nd</sup> – *Shim'ôn* = *hearing, who hears, God heard*. Biblical text: *Gen. 29: 33 b*: "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also"; and she (*Leah*) named him Simeon."

*Levi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> – *lewi*, of the root *lāwâ* = *to join, so, Levi = attached, joined, united, connected, adhered, set apart for the Lord, holy to the Lord*. Biblical text: *Gen. 29: 34 b*: "Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore he was named Levi." Leah said.

*Judah*, 4<sup>th</sup> – *Y'hüdâ* = *praised, celebrated in praise (ydh) to the Lord*. Biblical text: *Gen. 29: 35 b*: "This time I will praise the Lord"; therefore she (*Leah*) named him Judah; then she ceased bearing."

*Dan*, 5<sup>th</sup> – *He has vindicated, God judged me, God is judge*. Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 6*: "Then Rachel said, 'God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son'; therefore she named him Dan." Dan was son of Bilhah, Rachel's servant.

*Naphtali*, 6<sup>th</sup> – from Hebrew, *Naphtālî* = *fighter, my struggle*, as Rachel said, 'with great fights have competed with my sister and have prevailed.' Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 8*: "Then Rachel said, 'With mighty wrestling I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed'; so she named him Naphtali." Naphtali was son of Bilhah, Rachel's servant.

*Gad*, 7<sup>th</sup> – *good luck, fortunate or a troop is coming*. Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 11*: "And Leah said, 'Good fortune!' so she named him Gad." Gad was son of Zilpah, Leah's servant.

*Asher*, 8<sup>th</sup> – *'āsher, happy, blissful, treasure*. Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 13*: "And Leah said, 'Happy am I! For the women will call me happy'; so she named him Asher." Asher was son of Zilpah, Leah's servant.

*Issachar*, 9<sup>th</sup> – *'ish = man and sākḥār = reward, wage, hired worker*, for Leah bought from Rachel the right to sleep with Jacob for a handful of mandrakes (*Gen. 30: 14-16*). Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 18*: "Leah said, 'God has given me my hire because I gave my maid [in the case of the former son, Asher, for Issachar was legitimate son of Leah] to my husband'; so she named him Issachar."

*Zebulun*, 10<sup>th</sup> = *to honor, to exalt*. Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 20*: "Then Leah said, 'God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons'; so she named him Zebulun."

*Dinah* was daughter of Leah: Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 21*: "Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah." Dinah means, *innocent, acquitted, judged*.

*Joseph*, 11<sup>th</sup> – originated from the verb *Yāsaph = to add*, so *yōseph = may be added, may God add* (children), because Rachel asked God to give her another child. Biblical text: *Gen. 30: 23-24*: "She (*Rachel*) conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach'; and she named him Joseph, saying, 'May the Lord add to me another son!'"

*Benjamin*, 12<sup>th</sup>, *Binyāmîn = son of my right hand or son of happiness*. Biblical text: *Gen. 35: 18*: "As her soul was departing (for she died), she (*Rachel*) named him Ben-Oni (*son of my affliction or son of my trouble*); but his father called him Benjamin."



רֵאוּבֵן

Reuben



שִׁמְעוֹן

Simeon



לֵוִי

Levi



יְהוּדָה

Judah



דָּן

Dan



נַפְתָּלִי

Naphtali



גָּד

Gad



אַשֶׁר

Asher



יִשָּׁשכָר

Issachar



זְבֻלֹּן

Zebulun



יוֹסֵף

Joseph



בְּנִימִין

Benjamin

### Symbols of the tribes

Tribes	Symbols
Judah	<b>lion</b>
Zebulun	ship harbor
Issachar	donkey between the sheepfolds
Reuben	<b>mandrake and face of man</b>
Simeon	sword
Gad	troop of horses (horse = war)
Ephraim (Joseph)	<b>fruitful bough</b>
Benjamin	wolf
Dan	<b>snake</b>
Naphtali	doe
Asher	food / olive tree ( <i>Deut. 33: 24-25</i> )
Levi	Ark of the Covenant ( <i>Deut. 33: 8</i> )

According to what we read above, the symbols (ensigns) of the tribes are not exactly what we see in the banners, but come along with the blessings of Jacob, the meaning of names or, then, in the case of Levi, the separation that was given him by God to take care of sacred things (hence the Ark of the Covenant on the banner – see blessings of Moses – *Deut. 33: 8*); in the case of Dan, the characteristic was that of the serpent (on the symbol) and the scales (on the banner). Another comment: the mandrake was considered an aphrodisiac plant, so Rachel asked the mandrakes that were in the hands of Reuben, son of Leah, to see if she could conceive a child of Jacob. Thus, the symbol of Reuben is the mandrake and the face of man (*Gen. 30: 14-16*), because its root resembles the trunk of a human body (without the members). However, we don't see this either on the banner or on the ensign, which leads us to the next reasoning. For example: when Jacob refers to Simeon, he speaks of sword. We can see this in the banner, but there is no explanation for what we see in the symbol. As for Issachar, Jacob says that he is a strong donkey, lying down between the sheepfolds, but we don't see this either on the banner or on the symbol. Another example: about Gad we said that, according to the words of Jacob, his symbol would be a troop of horses, but it's difficult to identify this on the ensign (symbol). What we see on the banner is more likely an image of the meaning of his name: '*good luck, fortunate*', for this tribe enjoyed well-being and abundance. As for Asher, Jacob speaks of food, which makes us think that it was about a prosperous tribe. His name means '*happy, blissful, treasure*'. What we see in the symbol has more a resemblance with a branch of olive tree, reminding Moses' blessing in *Deut. 33: 24-25*: "And of Asher he said: Most blessed of sons be Asher; may he be the favorite of his brothers, and may he dip his foot in oil. Your bars are iron and bronze; and as your days, so is your strength." In relation to Manasseh, the only thing we can see in the banner is an animal similar to an ox seen from the back, what also talks about abundance, supply, provision and worship, as we saw by the position of this tribe to the west of the camp.

All this can lead us to the following question, "With these seeming contradictions of symbolism, what came to us as information would be exactly what it was in the times of Moses or all this became corrupted over the centuries? Were these the real images of the banners and the symbols or they came later, created by men, influenced by the mysticism of Kabbalah (The mystical aspect of Judaism)?"

I'm saying this because we can note in all symbols (ensigns) the presence of the hexagram, known as 'the Star of David', which has nothing to do with the bible. The explanation concerning the Star of David does not come from any biblical report related to David. In fact, the hexagram was not initially an exclusively Jewish symbol. But the biblical symbol of Israel given by God has always been the Menorah (the lampstand of seven lamps). It is interesting that some research sources say that the Star of David has existed since Sumerian times and has always been present in various religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, New Age, Freemasonry and all arts of witchcraft and occultism; also in the Bahá'í Faith, a monotheistic religion founded by Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian nobleman who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His teachings assert that there is only one God and that all major world religions have the same divine origin.

The adoption of the Star of David as a distinctive symbol for the Jewish people and Judaism began in the Middle Ages. In 1354, King of Bohemia Charles IV allowed the Jewish community of Prague to have its own flag. The Jews then made the Star of David in gold on a red background. The flag began to be used both in synagogues and on the official seal of the community and in printed books.

After the Battle of Prague in 1648 against the siege of the city by Swedish Protestant troops (during the 30 Years' War – 1618-1648), some Viennese Jesuits at the request of Ferdinand III, Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria (1637-1657), offered a flag of honor with the same symbol to the Jews of Prague (capital of the Czech Republic), in recognition of their contribution to the defense of the city. This flag showed a golden hexagram on a red background.

The hexagram (without the circle) was adopted by the Zionist Organization as a symbol for the flag of Israel in 1897, prior to its use in Freemasonry. Some occultists claim that the symbol with the two interlocking triangles is one of the most powerful in the practice of magic. The hexagram when encircled increases its power and meaning. It is also known as the 'Seal of Solomon' in Kabbalistic mysticism.

*Yes, the symbols (ensigns) come from Kabbalah and other branches of philosophy.* What can we say before all this? Wouldn't be better to stay in the simplicity of the word of God written in the Scriptures? The attitude of the sons of Jacob would not be enough, as I said in the beginning, to explain the symbolism of the animals seen by Ezekiel?

Let's proceed with our reasoning:

- **Judah** received the right to lead all his brothers (*1 Chr. 5: 1-2*), because from this tribe the Messiah would come, and Jacob called him *Lion*, not only in reference to the Lion of Judah, Jesus, but because to lead a people and to be in God's presence it's necessary *the authority, strength and spiritual power*, represented by the figure of the **lion**.

- The second tribe was **Reuben's**, exactly who defiled Jacob's bed by lying down with his concubine (*Gen. 35: 22*: "While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve"), even at the risk of losing the birthright because of this, as indeed he lost. Bilhah was servant of Rachel, Jacob's wife and from her the other brothers of Reuben (Dan and Naphtali) were born. So we can say that Reuben is the symbol of **man's face** seen in the cherubim, for the free will that was given to man in Eden was there, and Reuben exercised it, letting his carnal *nature prevail*; he misused the intelligence he received from the Lord. In addition, there is the reference above to the mandrake.

- The third tribe that was separated was **Ephraim's**. The same way as Joseph was not the firstborn of Jacob, but received the birthright (*1 Chr. 5: 1-2; Jer. 31: 9b*, as seen above), Ephraim was not the firstborn of Joseph, but Manasseh; however, he had from his grandfather the blessing of the firstborn, namely, the double portion of his brother's

blessing (*Gen. 48: 11-22*). So Jacob said in *Gen. 49: 22-26*: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring; his branches run over the wall. The archers fiercely attacked him; they shot at him and pressed him hard. Yet his bow remained taut, and his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father are stronger than the blessings of the eternal mountains, the bounties of the everlasting hills; may they be on the head of Joseph, on the brow of him who was set apart from his brothers.” When Jacob mentions the blessings of heaven above, he refers to spiritual blessings. When he talks about the blessings of the deep, he refers to the emotional blessings, and when he says ‘blessings of the breasts and womb’ he is referring to the material blessings (breast = milk = food, and womb, which generates the physical life; fertility and abundance). Combining this information we can say that its symbol seen by Ezekiel is the **ox** because the ox (or bull) symbolizes *physical strength, supply, provision, wealth and abundance*, in addition to be an animal used in the *worship* of God; in other words, obedience and service to Him. About the prosperity of Ephraim, it was one of the most populous tribes (*Gen. 48: 19*) and with great military power (*Num. 2: 18-19*, “On the west side shall be the regimental encampment of Ephraim by companies. The leader of the people of Ephraim shall be Elishama son of Ammihud, with a company as enrolled of *forty thousand five hundred*”).

- Finally comes the tribe of **Dan** [*He has vindicated, God judged me, God is judge*’, *Gen. 30: 6*: “Then Rachel said, ‘God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son’; therefore she named him Dan.” Dan was son of Bilhah, Rachel’s servant]. Jacob said, “Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider falls backward. I wait for your salvation, O Lord” (*Gen. 49: 16-17*). As for v. 16, could it be referring to Samson, who was a judge of Israel from the tribe of Dan? As for v. 17, could it be an allusion to that tribe in the idolatry that caused the downfall of Israel as a nation (*Judg. 18: 30-31*; later harboring Jeroboam’s calf – *1 Kin. 12: 29*)? This shows that it was never a tribe with spiritual prominence.

We can see in his banner the scales of justice, according to the prophetic word of Jacob that Dan would judge his brothers, at the same time that the cunning and treachery (snake) could distort this justice. By allowing this face of the serpent to prevail, he would be putting aside his side of **eagle** (a bird that devours the snake, because it has no fear of it). If he was willing to be renewed like an eagle, to let the Lord change his interior and transform his flesh, he could be looking directly to the north, to the face of God. As we saw, the *eagle* symbolizes *the majesty, the renewal, the ability to see far, to have free movements to dominate the space, to achieve great heights, therefore, to reach the spiritual heights (spirituality)*.

**Recalling:** One side of the faces of the cherubim was *the face of man*, symbolizing *the intelligence and the free will* given by God to man; on the other side of the face of the cherubim appeared the image of a *lion*, symbolizing *royalty, authority, leadership, strength, spiritual power*. The *ox* symbolized *the physical strength, supply, provision, wealth and abundance, in addition to be an animal used in the worship of God; in other words, obedience and service to Him*. The last animal was *the eagle*, symbolizing *longevity, the ability to see far, to renew itself, to have free movements to dominate the space and reach great heights, therefore to reach the spiritual heights (spirituality)*. We can say that these were the qualities given by God to the four orders of tribes that He always saw before Him through the cherubim. However, two of His children distorted

these qualities by using them by the opposite side, the negative. Only Judah and Ephraim seemed to use them properly.

We come now to the point where we can add more information about the cardinal points mentioned in the bible, and logically, explain better the position of the tribes and the faces of the cherubim. The parallel will be with our Christian life. The **North**, in the bible, means *the throne of God, what guides our lives, His Word and His abundant life for us*. The **South** means *our own lives, our humanity and imperfection in comparison with the majesty and fullness of God*. The **West** means *the material world, the natural things, the ancient*; and the **East**, *the spiritual world, the spiritual things*.

To lead the nation of Israel, **Judah** would have to be a **lion**, looking toward the **east**, being therefore *attentive to the spiritual world*, from where the glory of God would come to supply him (the entrance of the tabernacle and the temple's was facing the East). The second is the **face of man**, represented by the tribe of **Reuben**, who was at the **south** of the camp. As it was mentioned, the south means to our own lives, our humanity and imperfection in comparison with the majesty and fullness of God. That's what Reuben did: he let his free will lean toward the side of his *humanity*, to his smallness. **Ephraim** received the great blessing of being populous and supplied, especially in the material life, so the face turned to the **west**, to the material, like an **ox**, a symbol of *physical strength* (the military power of the tribe), *supply, provision, wealth and abundance*, in addition to be an animal used in the *worship* of God. Despite the wealth in which he has been placed, he could not fail *to be a worshiper*, to thank God for having blessed him (it's a pity that centuries later he turned to idolatry. Ephraim, part of the ten Northern tribes led by Jeroboam, worshiped the image of a calf: *1 Kin. 12: 25-33*). And the last animal is the **eagle**, symbol of longevity, spirituality, renewal, majesty, ability to see far, to be free. The **North** means the throne of God, what guides our lives, His Word and His abundant life for us. In conclusion, **Dan** rejected this blessing and preferred to look at the opposite side (the evil's, instead of the goodness and the glory of God), using cunning and treachery. When we talk about the visions of John, we'll do a correlation between the camp of Israel described here in Ezekiel and the New Jerusalem.

After Ezekiel described the faces of the cherubim, he described cars and wheels on which the angels moved. In addition to everything we already said about them, the cherubim constituted *a kind of divine chariot* as described in the book of *Psalms and 2 Samuel*:

- *Ps. 18: 10*: "He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the wind."
- *2 Sam. 22: 11*: "He rode on a cherub, and flew; he was seen upon the wings of the wind."

In Ezekiel's vision these animals were tied to a car and moved very quickly ("The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning"). Considering these elements, we can conclude that it is about the vision of *the chariot of God, symbol of His spiritual authority acting on our behalf*, such as what Elisha saw when Elijah was caught up: "Elisha kept watching and crying out, 'Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces" – *2 Kin. 2: 12*) or the one that the servant of Elisha saw when he prayed for the Lord to open his eyes to see the protection of the angels of God around him during the war against the Syrians (*2 Kin. 6: 17*: "Then Elisha prayed: 'O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.' So the Lord opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"). The expression "*chariots of fire*" symbolizes, surely, *the authority and power of God, His*

*majestic presence in all His glory in favor of His children.* The message that the vision of Ezekiel wanted to convey with the cars (chariots) was primarily targeted at the Jews taken into exile, that is, *the presence of God was there with them.* The Jews believed that the Lord was only present in the temple, through the Ark of the Covenant; however, the prophet gave them the revelation that God *moved spiritually*, where His people went, as it was in the past, in the desert. Ezekiel also says, “I heard a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings”, which corroborates the idea that *the Lord is accompanied by an army of angelic beings as His messengers and warriors.*



The wheels beside the cherubim

#### Conclusion:

In relation to the vision of Ezekiel's cherubim we can say:

1) Cherubim, in Hebrew *k'ruhbim*, plural of 'cherub' = *heavenly, celestial*, are celestial beings and in the book of Genesis it is written that they had the responsibility to guard the way to the tree of life in the garden of Eden, as were placed over the Ark of the Covenant to protect the sacred objects stored in it, which is summarized in a function of watchfulness and worship. It also indicates a class of angels with great strength of knowledge, wisdom and divine light and that reflect the beauty, power and holiness of God. Therefore, it is said that they are knowledgeable of the divine mysteries ('full of eyes').

2) The cherubim had four faces: of man, lion, ox and eagle.

3) The Jewish symbolism of these animals, based on priesthood knowledge of Ancient times, associates them to the four camps of Israel, having four tribes as leaders: Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan. To the east: Judah, Zebulun and Issachar. To the south: Reuben, Simeon and Gad. To the west: Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. To the north: Dan, Naphtali and Asher.

4) The explanation can be found in Jacob's blessing on these four tribes:

- Judah received the right to lead his brothers, but to lead and to be in God's presence it is necessary authority, strength and spiritual power, represented by the figure of the *lion*.

- Reuben defiled Jacob's bed by lying down with his concubine, hence the *man's* face, symbol of the intelligence and the free will that was given to him by God; however, misused by Reuben.

- Ephraim had the birthright blessing, even without being the firstborn. His blessings were spiritual, emotional and material. His symbol is the *ox*: physical strength, supply, provision, wealth, abundance and worship of God.

- Dan: his banner consists of the scales of justice, according to the prophetic word of Jacob that Dan would judge his brothers, while the cunning and treachery could distort this justice. By allowing this face of snake (also a symbol of this tribe) to prevail, he put aside his side of *eagle* (a bird that devours the snake, because it has no fear of it) and was not renewed; he did not let the Lord change his interior leading him to look directly to the north, to the face of God.

5) Cardinal points in parallel with our Christian life: North = the throne of God, what guides our lives, His Word and His abundant life for us (so the *eagle* as a symbol of majesty and spirituality). South = our own lives, our humanity and imperfection in comparison with the majesty and fullness of God (hence the symbol of *man*). West = material world, the natural things (hence the image of the *ox* as a symbol of wealth, abundance and physical strength). East = the spiritual world, the spiritual things (so the *lion* as a symbol of power, authority and spiritual leadership).

6) Cars (chariots) and wheels – the chariot of God – His spiritual authority and power by acting on our behalf – the presence of God is with us wherever we go.

## THE VISION OF GOD AND EZEKIEL'S CALL



### Ezek. 1

<sup>26</sup> And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form.

<sup>27</sup> Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around.

<sup>28</sup> Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

### Ezek. 2

<sup>1</sup> He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you.

<sup>2</sup> And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me.

### Ezek. 3

<sup>11</sup> then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God'; whether they hear or refuse to hear.

### Ezek. 8

<sup>2</sup> I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being; below what appeared to be its loins it was fire, and above the loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber

### Ezek. 10

<sup>1</sup> Then I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in form resembling a throne.

After the vision of the cherubim, Ezekiel describes a vision of the throne of God. He continues to maintain the previous language about brightness, fire, precious stones and gold, everything to describe the glory of God. It is also interesting to note that he now sees the Almighty in human form ("and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form"). The Lord wants to talk to him and tells him

to stand up on his feet, just as Daniel and John, almost without strength, prostrated themselves in face of the visions. It was then that Ezekiel received his call: to be a watchman (*cf. Ezek. 33: 7*) among the chosen people, that is, to be His spokesman, warning and exhorting the Israelites to repent, explaining the reason of their captivity and encouraging them to walk until the days of exile were over. As a priest, the images that he described remembered them of the time of the tabernacle and the temple, where the presence of the Most High was among His people in a so majestic and protective way. The Lord also told the prophet that his mission would not be so easy because of the hardness of heart of Israel, but anyway, He would use him to keep them under obedience and holiness. The same way as Daniel and John, Ezekiel not only beheld the vision of the Creator, as he had also important revelations for the future of his brothers. More than that, he was sure of his prophetic calling. As we said in Isaiah, the other men of God (Ezekiel, Daniel, John) had very similar views in relation to the image of the Lord as King; all of them saw the throne room in a very similar way, using words such as jewelry and metals to describe the radiance of the divine presence.

Conclusion: when the call is revealed, it must be obeyed, because God Himself will be in charge of making His word prevail. Touching Him makes us feel our humanity and powerlessness in face of certain situations, at the same time that we encourage our soul to walk in faith; we realize the importance we have for Him and the privilege to be chosen for a mission that few would dare to take on. When we come to the Lord and His Spirit reveals to us great things, we must use this opportunity to give the knowledge of truth to our brothers.

## DANIEL



### Dan. 7

<sup>13</sup> As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.

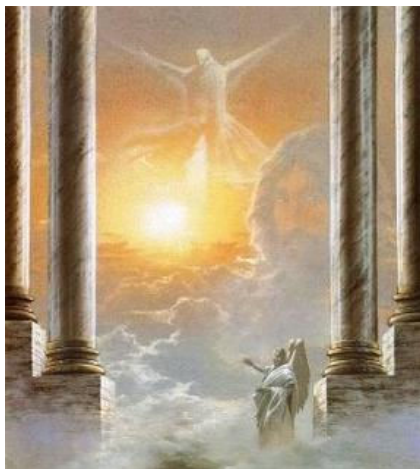
<sup>14</sup> To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

### Dan. 7

<sup>18</sup> But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever...

<sup>22</sup> until the Ancient One came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

## THE VISION OF GOD AND THE VISION OF ANGELS



It is interesting to realize the vision of the glorified Christ described by Daniel (*Ancient of Days*) in *Dan. 7: 9*; *Dan. 7: 13*; *Dan. 10: 5-6*, similar to that described by John in *Rev. 1: 13-15*; *Rev. 19: 6; 12*; *Rev. 1: 7* (*coming with the clouds*); *Rev. 1: 14* (“His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire”); *Rev. 14: 14* (“Then I looked, and there was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand!”). The sharp sickle is a symbol of the trial and justice of God, as written in *Dan. 7: 22* (“until the Ancient One came; then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High, and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom”), ready to be exercised so that His children take possession of the kingdom.

In *Dan. 7: 18* (about the holy ones that will possess the kingdom forever, written in the previous page) the written word is similar to that of John:

- *Rev. 11: 15*: “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.’”

- *Rev. 17: 14*: “they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful,” that is, the Antichrist will fight against the saints (*Dan. 17: 25*, referring to three years and a half), but these will possess the kingdom.

Daniel, like Ezekiel and John, had visions and revelations very clear about the end times. Therefore we can say that he had full assurance of God’s image as a God of righteousness and judgment against all sin and impiety. The revelations of Daniel began with the interpretation of dreams and visions of the Babylonian kings whom he served, and then he had his own visions and revelations about what the Lord has planned for the future of humanity. The expression ‘Ancient of Days’ can be a symbol of the eternity of the Creator, who has power and dominion over the kingdom of heaven and earth, giving it also to His saints.

Daniel also was instructed by angels, like Gabriel, about the visions that he could not understand, besides to be comforted with the assurance of God’s love for him. In *Dan. 8: 15-16* it is written: “When I, Daniel, had seen the vision [*That of the goat with four horns, which came out of the others and grew in power, representing Antiochus Epiphanes*], I tried to understand it. Then someone appeared standing before me, having

the appearance of a man, and I heard a human voice by the Ulai [*The river Ulai – Dan. 8: 16 – may have been the eastern branch of the Karkheh River (also called Choaspes) north-west of Susa, or the Coprates tributary of the Karun River; or else, an artificial canal which ran close by Susa and connected the two rivers mentioned above*], calling, ‘Gabriel, help this man understand the vision.’” In *Dan. 9: 21-23* it is written: “While I was speaking in prayer, the man *Gabriel*, whom I had seen before in a vision, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He came and said to me, ‘Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went out, and I have come to declare it, for you are greatly beloved. So consider the word and understand the vision.’”

The appearance of the angel he saw was completely different from that of Ezekiel, in the first place, because the message that God wanted to convey to him was different from that was revealed to the other prophet; and in second place because he was getting in touch with another hierarchy of angels (the archangels), of which this one was a messenger angel. *Gabriel* is also known as the ‘messenger of good news’ because he was the bearer of God’s promises to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist (*Lk. 1: 19*), and Mary the mother of Jesus (*Lk. 1: 26*) and the shepherds (*Lk. 2: 9-11*). The same words or symbols were used to describe the brightness of the angel. Also, his form was human.

• *Dan. 10: 4-12*: “On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris), I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz (\*) around his waist. His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude. I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground. But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees. He said to me, ‘Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you.’ So while he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. He said to me, ‘Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.’”

(\*) Uphaz was one unidentified location from where fine gold came. However, it may have been a technical term to mean ‘refined gold’ (*1 Kin. 10: 18: müphāz; Isa. 13: 12: mippāz*, similar to the definition of ‘pure gold’ – *2 Chr. 9: 17: zāhābh tāhōr*). Other scholars prefer reading *ūphīr* (*Ophir*) instead of *uphaz* (*Uphaz*), because of the similarity of the Hebrew characters for z and r.

• *Dan. 10: 13-19*: ““But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days [*the messenger of the Lord referred above, Gabriel or other angel*]. For there is a further vision for those days.’ While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless. Then one in human form touched my lips, and I opened my mouth to speak, and said to the one who stood before me, ‘My lord, because of the vision such pains have come upon me that I retain no strength. How can my lord’s servant talk with my lord? For I am shaking, no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.’ Again one in human

form touched me and strengthened me. He said, 'Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!' When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, 'Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.'"

Here we have important comments about Daniel's visions. He was extremely weak because of the spiritual struggle he was facing, which prevented him from knowing the truth of what the Lord wanted to convey to him. He had fasted for twenty-one days (*Dan. 10: 2-3*); he was extremely sensitive to the spiritual world. Due to the appearance of the divine messenger described before in verses 6-7, we can think of Jesus Himself, before His incarnation, whom the bible often calls "the Angel of the Lord." It's difficult to say if in chapter 10 was the angel Gabriel, as it was clear in the previous biblical references (*Dan. 9: 21 e Dan. 8: 16*).

Another relevant comment here is the presence of one more angel reported by Daniel. It is about an angel of war, a prince of them, in fact, that is the *archangel Michael*. Gabriel (also an archangel) told the prophet that the revelation he sought was being prevented by the rulers of darkness; they took twenty-one days to fall, the fasting time of Daniel, but Michael was at his side to give him victory and allow that the servant of God received the revelation:

- *Dan. 10: 21*: "But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes [*He referred to the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece*], except Michael, your prince."

There is another reference in *Jude 9*: "But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'"

The archangels are therefore a hierarchy of angels below the seraphim and cherubim, and who seem to be responsible for protecting the Lord's people, making them prosper and giving them the good news from God.

This teaches us something: although many theories try to say that there are many names of angels, in the bible only three have their names revealed: *Michael, Gabriel and Apollyon (Abaddon)* the angel described in Revelation (*Rev. 9: 11*: "They [*the locusts, the personification of demons*] have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit [NIV, the Abyss]; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon"). *Abaddon* is the satanic angel of Abyss (the bottomless pit), whose name in Greek means: *Destroyer*. In Hebrew, "*bhaddôn*" means '*place of destruction*' and is regularly translated as such in certain versions of the Old Testament to denote the grave (region of the dead). This region was considered by ancient Jews as 'hell', in Hebrew *Sheol*; *Hades and Geenna* in Greek, the latter name from *ge* (Valley of) *Hinnom* (Valley of Hinnom), where idolatrous sacrifices were made to the south of Jerusalem (especially to Molech, the god of the Ammonites). The meaning of 'Hinnom' is unknown; some scholars suggest 'Ben Hinnom', son of Hinnom, hinting that it is a proper noun (*2 Kin. 23: 10; 2 Chr. 28: 3*). In *Jer. 7: 32 and Jer. 19: 6* the name is changed by the prophet to 'valley of slaughter.' It's also called 'Valley of Topheth' or 'Tophet' = 'place of fire, burning place' or 'roasting place' by the Canaanites (*Jer. 7: 31-32*). The well-known "*Angel Raphael*" is not actually an angel created by God, but the very *Spirit of God in action of healing*. His name comes from *El = God; rapha = healing: The Lord is who heals* (*Ex. 15: 26*: "He said, 'If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians; *for I am the Lord who heals you*'").

*Our behavior towards the angels*

Angels are powerful beings and filled with divine radiance, as the word says (*Ps. 103: 20-21*), however, they should not be worshiped or revered like God. There is only one God to be worshiped, Jesus. Therefore, it is written in:

- *Ps. 103: 20-21*: “Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, obedient to his spoken word. Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will.”

- *Heb. 1: 13-14*: “But to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’ Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”

- *Rev. 19: 10*: “Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”

- *Rev. 22: 8-9*: “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’”

Lighting candles and making requests and prayers to them is not right. Prayers should be made to God the Father, in the name of Jesus (*Jn. 14: 13-14; Jn. 15: 16*).

Other references to archangels are in:

- *1 The. 4: 16-17*: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.” (Paul wrote in relation to the second coming of Jesus).

- *Jud. 9*: “But when the archangel Michael contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, he did not dare to bring a condemnation of slander against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”

### *Angels, below the archangels*

Below the archangels comes the hierarchy of angels, which can refer to both human and supernatural messengers, from a broader point of view, since in Hebrew, ‘angel’ means ‘messenger,’ as the prophets of God are also known. The name Malachi, for example, the prophet of God, means “my messenger.”

One last word before we conclude. This is about the existence or not of the angels we call “guardian angels”, that is, specific angels determined by God to guard a person. The Bible is not so specific about this; it only suggests this possibility:

- *Matt. 18: 10* (in reference to the children that Jesus had taken in his arms to bless): “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.”

- *Act. 12: 7-8; 11-15* (when Peter is freed from prison by an angel of the Lord and goes to Mary’s house, but the maid does not open the gate because she is frightened and people think that it is ‘Peter’s angel’): “Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, ‘Get up quickly.’ And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, ‘Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.’ He did so. Then he said to him, ‘Wrap your cloak around you and

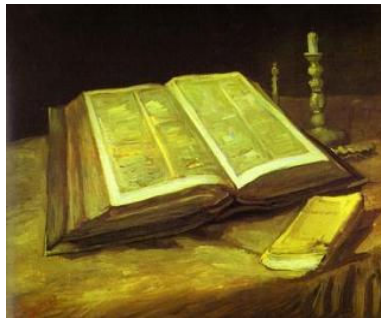
follow me.’... Then Peter came to himself and said, ‘Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.’ As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, ‘You are out of your mind!’ But she insisted that it was so. They said, ‘It is his angel.’”

When Jesus was in agony in Gethsemane, Luke describes God sending an angel to comfort Him, but he did not specifically refer to His guardian angel: “[Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]” (*Lk. 22: 43-44*).

Many other servants of God saw angels and were helped by them in various situations. Sometimes, the word ‘angel’ in the Bible is written with a capital letter (‘Angel of the LORD’), implying that it was Jesus Himself. Some servants of God had visions and were helped by angels: Abraham and Sarah, Joshua, Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, Joseph the father of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the women who went to Jesus’ tomb on Sunday morning, the prophet Elijah, Gideon, Samson’s mother and her husband Manoah, Peter, the centurion Cornelius, Jacob, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, the apostle John, and the shepherds who witnessed the birth of Jesus.

**Conclusion:** God sends angels, His messengers (the meaning of the name angel in Hebrew, often in reference to the prophets and the priests – *Mal. 2: 7*) to bring revelations and visions when a child of His is in need of it. It is He who commands all things, and determines the way to reveal and manifest Himself to men. We can also understand that there are several categories of angels, each one created by God with a purpose. The angels are under our command, because they serve God and all who received from Him the authority over the spiritual world, that is, all those who are faithful to His word. Therefore, they should not be an object of veneration or worship. Lighting candles and making petitions and prayers to them is not right. The prayers should be made to God the Father in the name of Jesus (*Jn. 14: 13-14; Jn. 15: 16*).

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REVELATION



### Dan. 12

<sup>4</sup> But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be running back and forth, and evil shall increase.

<sup>9</sup> He said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end.'

Daniel was one of the prophets who most received apocalyptic revelations, so he paid a very high price to accomplish his mission. We can say that his work was completed by the apostle John, who came to confirm, in other words, what will happen in the last days. The interesting thing is that the Lord told Daniel to *seal* the words he heard and wrote. This means that *they would not be fully revealed* to men until everything was fulfilled, even because the iniquity would multiply, bringing speculation and false teaching that would distort the truth of what there was there. That's why many people find the bible a closed book; they do not understand (with the heart) what is written, because their spirit is not open to the spiritual experiences that these servants of the Lord had. To have experiences of that kind, the price is high. So, we can understand that many important revelations from God to His children are only given to those whom the Spirit chooses to be His instrument. It is not man who chooses, but the Lord. The *seal* also means *authenticity of the words of the Lord and their faithful fulfillment* (Dan. 12: 4; Dan. 12: 9), as well as *something that is possessed with authority* (Hag. 2: 23) and *symbol of the Holy Spirit* (NT: 2 Cor. 1: 22; Eph. 1: 13 cf. Acts 10: 38 [anointed = sealed]).

**Conclusion:** as a teaching for us remains the idea that the seal means something that is possessed with authenticity and marked with authority. Therefore, the revealing words of God are partially open to men, until his spirit is ready to receive them. This means that is no use the effort of the mind in research or investigation, when something is reserved only for the pioneers of the kingdom of heaven, who are guided by faith. In the beginning of the book I said that man in Eden lost his purity and innocence; hence he can no longer reach the level of understanding and knowledge of the Creator. We need to make an effort to get back to them. Jesus is the way.

## JOHN



## Rev. 1

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

<sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest.

<sup>14</sup> His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow [*Dan. 7: 13-14*]; his eyes were like a flame of fire,

<sup>15</sup> his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters.

<sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

<sup>18</sup> and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.

<sup>19</sup> Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this.

<sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.'



## Revelation 4

<sup>1</sup> After this [*the letters to the seven churches*], I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’

<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

<sup>3</sup> And the one seated there looks like jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald.

<sup>4</sup> Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads.

<sup>5</sup> Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God;

<sup>6</sup> and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures [*cherubim, Ezek. 1: 1-14*], full of eyes in front and behind:

<sup>7</sup> the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

<sup>8</sup> And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.’

<sup>9</sup> And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

<sup>10</sup> the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

<sup>11</sup> ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’

## THE VISIONS OF THE THRONE



John, James's brother and a disciple of Jesus, was known as *the apostle of love*, for his temper facilitated to him a greater understanding of the spiritual things, therefore, of what was happening in the heart of the Lord. He was the only disciple who stayed close to Him at the crucifixion, while all the others were hiding in fear of the Jews. Next to John were the women who usually accompanied the Master, and His mother Mary.

To console her in her grief, Jesus looked at her and John and said: “‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home” (*Jn. 19: 26 b-27*). He said this so that she understood that her family, as was that of Jesus during His ministry, was composed of those who did the will of the Father; it was composed by those who surpassed the bonds of the flesh to live the spiritual ones. John was cousin of Jesus, but now, physically speaking, he was taking the place of His brother. As a disciple, he would remain His son forever. Brothers, parents and children refer to intimacy and affinity of projects, tastes and dreams.

By having this kind of behavior, John was chosen from among all others to receive God's revelations that many would need, in order to know what was His final project for all humanity, besides confirming the prophecies and previous visions of prophets of the Old Testament.

Thus, when he was very old and exiled on the Island of Patmos, John, in spirit (*Rev. 4: 2*: “At once I was in the spirit, and...”) received orders from the Lord to write down everything that would be revealed to him. The vision of the throne was very similar to the other brothers of the past; in short, difficult to express in words the vision of the glory of the Lord and the angels that surround Him. The interesting is that he also saw the images of the cherubim similar to Ezekiel's, namely, with face of a lion, ox, man and eagle. The only difference between Ezekiel and John is that John saw the lampstands, symbol of the seven churches, representing the Holy Spirit upon His people, but needs to find room in the hearts so that He can be poured.

We may ask: “Why did John, like Ezekiel, describe images and contents so much related to the temple and the sacred things?”

John took over the Church in some cities in the region of Ephesus, in Asia Minor, so he wrote to it. His epistles are aimed to renew the love in the hearts, strengthen spiritually the believers and dethrone the false teaching. Finally, Jesus gave him the opportunity to know Him even more through the revelations contained in the book of Revelation. This book was written around 90 to 95 AD to the provinces of Asia Minor (now Turkey) in order to warn the believers not to abandon faith in Christ, ensuring

their victory by remaining on God's side. The Greek word *Apokálypsis* means *revelation, discovery*. It is not the purpose of this book discussing the secrets of Revelation, but continuing to study the individual characteristics of those who had a so deep contact with the Lord as the prophets described up to here. John, like the others, has his own way of describing the facts.

*Conclusion:* God spoke in the past and continues to speak today through His anointed ones and wants to use all His children as instruments of His revelations. He wants a deep relationship with us, so we can be filled every day with His power and His love. In *Ps. 25: 14* it is written, "The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes his covenant known to them." Just live a life 'at the feet of cross' like John did.

## THE VISIONS OF THE REDEEMED

### **Rev. 7** (*Hundred and forty-four thousand sealed of Israel*)

<sup>4</sup> And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel:

<sup>5</sup> From the tribe of *Judah* twelve thousand sealed, from the tribe of *Reuben* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Gad* twelve thousand,

<sup>6</sup> from the tribe of *Asher* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Naphtali* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Manasseh* twelve thousand,

<sup>7</sup> from the tribe of *Simeon* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Levi* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Issachar* twelve thousand,

<sup>8</sup> from the tribe of *Zebulun* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Joseph [Ephraim]* twelve thousand, from the tribe of *Benjamin* twelve thousand sealed.

There is another text where John mentions all who are saved:

### **Rev. 7** (*The great multitude in white robes*)

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.

<sup>10</sup> They cried out in a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!’

<sup>14</sup> I said to him, ‘Sir, you are the one that knows.’ Then he said to me, ‘These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’

### **Rev. 14** (*The Lamb and the 144,000*)

<sup>1</sup> Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.

<sup>2</sup> And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps,

<sup>3</sup> and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth.

<sup>4</sup> It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,

<sup>5</sup> and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

The number twelve symbolizes the number of God’s elective purposes; in other words, the number of the election and the calling. One hundred and forty-four means twelve times twelve. One hundred and forty-four thousand mean a number infinitely great of saved to the Lord; it is the symbol of totality (12x12x1000), referring to all who will be saved (in the OT and the NT) and those who will be sealed at the time of the Great Tribulation (*Rev. 7: 3, Rev. 9: 4 cf. Ezek. 9: 4-6; Rev. 7: 13-14*) with the seal of the Father and the Son, instead of having the mark of the beast (*Rev. 13: 17*); therefore, to be preserved from the calamities to come. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev. 7: 9; 13-14*): “After this I looked, and there was a great multitude

that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands... Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

There is no separation between Jews and Gentiles in these texts; all are saved in the same way: by faith in Jesus and by His grace. That is why it is written in *Rev. 5: 9b-10*: "for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

What happens is that these are two phases of the same vision of the church of Christ, of the spiritual Israel of God: the first phase where John 'hears' the number of those who will be sealed, before God pours out the seventh bowl ('I heard the number of those who were sealed' – v. 4), and who will face the ordeals. Then John sees, as a consoling promise given by God, that same multitude, already victorious, redeemed and glorified, before the throne of the Lamb, celebrating the victory ('After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands').

In the third text (*Rev. 14: 1-5*), John speaks of the one hundred and forty-four thousand "who have been redeemed from the earth" (*verse 3*). In this text, the Bible says that "It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless (*Rev 14: 4-5*)." They are the same 144,000 who were sealed from all the tribes of Israel (chapter 7) and who resisted the lies and attacks of the beast, and didn't allow themselves to be corrupted with idolatry, separating themselves to Christ and not denying His name.

"Redeemed from the earth" may mean the Earth, in general, in the period of the Great Tribulation.

"And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth" (*Rev. 14: 3*) – this verse means the song of victory (*cf. Rev 5: 9-10*) for their redemption by Christ and only those who are already in heaven and the 144,000 bought from the earth can sing it.

The bible also talks about the "the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion," which is probably the heavenly Jerusalem (the only reference to Zion in Revelation – *cf. Heb. 12: 22*). These 144,000 are already in heaven. Therefore, the bible says they are the 'Firstfruits'; because they are saved at the time of the harvest and the vintage (*Rev. 14: 14-16 – the harvest; 17-20 – the vintage*), i.e., they were separated from the wicked, which corresponds to the same scene of *Rev. 16: 16* (the Rapture of the Church before the battle of Armageddon), before the Lord brings the punishment described in *Rev. 16: 17*, that is, the seventh bowl, and His wrath be consummated on the wicked.

"Firstfruits" means all those saved unto God ("to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" described in *Heb. 12: 23*), for in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless, that is, they are blameless as to the testimony of Christ, they have spiritual purity.

“These follow the Lamb wherever he goes” – it means those who follow Jesus to the end, even if it is to martyrdom, and who are now with Him in glory, as a reward for their faithfulness to Him.

## THE VISIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

As for the symbolism of animals, we have seen it in the chapter of Ezekiel.

From now on we will also describe something that Ezekiel also saw, but described with less detail than John. It is about the *New Jerusalem*, described in *Ezek. 48: 30-34*, where the *gates* are symbols of the *authority of the twelve tribes*, however, not with the details of John, nor with a so great similarity to the old camp around the tabernacle in the wilderness.

### Rev. 21

<sup>9</sup> Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb’.

<sup>10</sup> And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

<sup>11</sup> It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.

<sup>12</sup> It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites;

<sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

<sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

<sup>15</sup> The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.

<sup>16</sup> The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal [*a perfect cube, as was the Holy of Holies (1 Kin. 6: 20), also called Debir, in the tabernacle and in the temple, where the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was*].

<sup>17</sup> He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using.

<sup>18</sup> The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass.

<sup>19</sup> The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate [NIV, chalcedony], the fourth emerald,

<sup>20</sup> the fifth onyx [NIV, sardonix], the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst,

<sup>21</sup> And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

<sup>22</sup> I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

<sup>23</sup> And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

<sup>24</sup> The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

<sup>25</sup> Its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there.

<sup>26</sup> People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations (*cf. Isa. 60: 11*).

<sup>27</sup> But nothing unclean will enter it, nor anyone who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

John, like all others before him, used the symbolism of precious stones to describe the brightness and radiance of God. If you remember what we talked about in Ezekiel, the tribes in the desert camped around the tabernacle or tent of meeting and around the camp of the Levites. Thus, all of them should camp facing the tent of meeting on every side (*Num. 2: 2*). To the east was the camp of: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. To the south: Reuben, Simeon and Gad. To the west: Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. To the north: Dan, Naphtali and Asher. As we showed the banner of each tribe, they were also symbolized by stones, which were placed in the breastpiece of the high priest's robes. John used more or less the same name for the stones (despite the different posterior translations); the only difference is that he individualized each one ('foundations'), instead of putting them by 'rows' as used in *Ex. 39: 8-14* by Moses:

### Ex. 39

<sup>8</sup> He made the breastpiece, in skilled work, like the work of the ephod, of gold, of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine twisted linen.

<sup>9</sup> It was square; the breastpiece was made double, a span in length and a span in width when doubled.

<sup>10</sup> They set in it four rows of stones. A row of carnelian, chrysolite [NIV, topaz], and emerald, was the first row;

<sup>11</sup> and the second row, a turquoise [*in fact, garnet*], a sapphire, and a moonstone [*it means, a diamond*];

<sup>12</sup> and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;

<sup>13</sup> and the fourth row, a beryl [NIV, chrysolite], an onyx, and a jasper; they were enclosed in settings of gold filigree.

<sup>14</sup> There were twelve stones with names corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel; they were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes.

### Stones in the breastpiece of high priest (*Ex. 39: 8-14*)

The same orders observed in the camp



Some stones have different translations for lack of better knowledge of the subject in Ancient times; so many names used in Hebrew and Greek can bring confusion. For example: sardius (or carnelian, a brown variety of chalcedony), garnet (mistranslated as: sardonyx or emerald), carbuncle (sometimes mistranslated as emerald), diamond (mistranslated as chalcedony, when in fact it was onyx), agate (translated as chrysoprase, a light green chalcedony), chrysolite (actually the ancient name for topaz). What we can infer by the writings of John and Moses is that perhaps Moses has put the stones of the tribes according to their orders in the camp; but John seems to have named them randomly.

### Stones representing the tribes



Judah – carnelian



Zebulun – emerald



Issachar – topaz



Reuben – garnet



Simeon – sapphire



Gad – diamond



Ephraim – jacinth



Manasseh – agate



Benjamin – amethyst



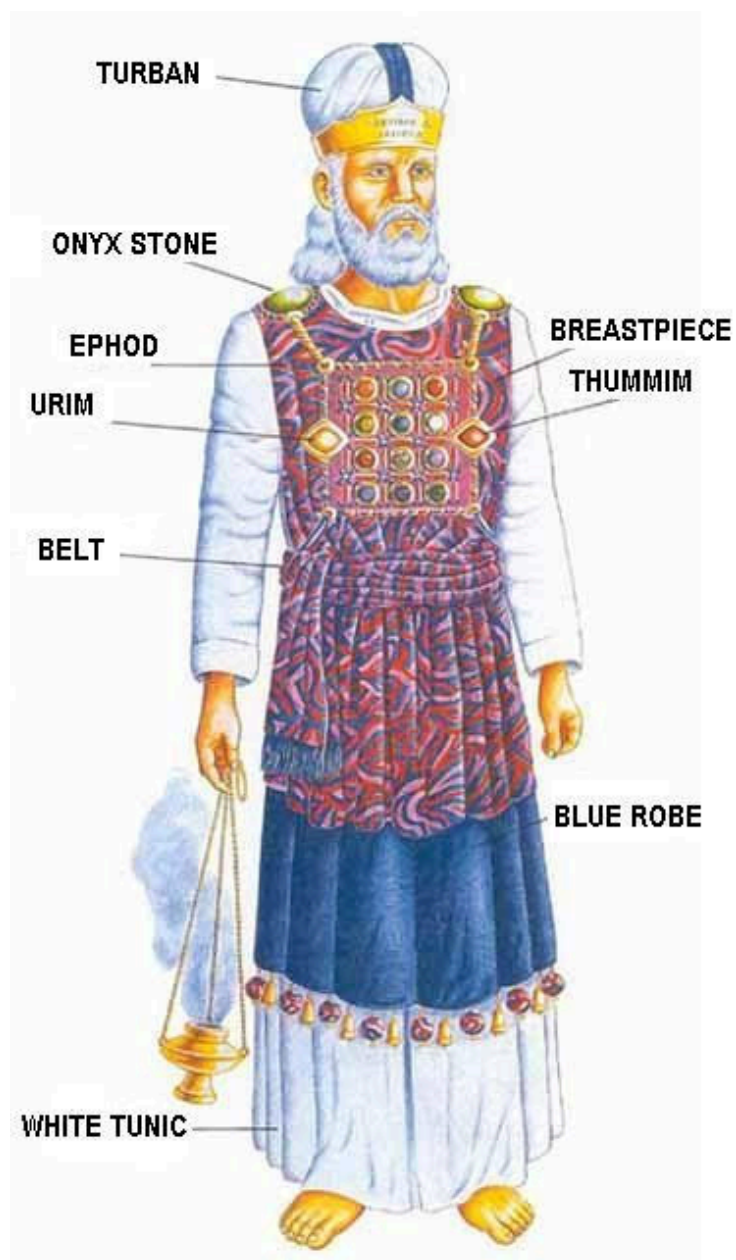
Dan – onyx



Naphtali – jasper



Asher – beryl



*The garments of Aaron, the high priest*



*The priestly garments*

Thus, if we base on the stones of the high priest's robes, the *New Jerusalem* would have the similar arrangement of the tribes around the tabernacle. See the table below:

### **New Jerusalem / Camp**

\* Other names commonly used at the time.

In **bold** are the names commonly known to the stones in our translations.

row	tribe	John	Moses	Cardinal point	color
1 <sup>st</sup>	Judah	emerald	<b>Carnelian</b> or chalcedony*	East	Red
1 <sup>st</sup>	Zebulun	chrysoprase*	<b>emerald</b>	East	Green
1 <sup>st</sup>	Issachar	<b>topaz</b>	chrysolite	East	Yellow
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Reuben	Jasper*	Turquoise (in fact, <b>garnet</b> )	South	Fire-red
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Simeon	<b>sapphire</b>	sapphire	South	Blue
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Gad	chrysolite*	<b>diamond</b>	South	White
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ephraim	<b>jacinth</b>	jacinth	West	Yellow
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Manasseh	<b>agate</b>	agate	West	Multicolored
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Benjamin	<b>amethyst</b>	amethyst	West	Violet
4 <sup>th</sup>	Dan	<b>onyx</b>	onyx	North	Gold
4 <sup>th</sup>	Naphtali	carnelian	<b>jasper</b>	North	Wine
4 <sup>th</sup>	Asher	<b>beryl</b>	beryl	North	Sea-green

### Revelation about the stones and the relationship with the New Jerusalem:

Although the relationship between the stones chosen by God and each tribe of Israel seems obscure to us (both in Exodus and Revelation), we can say in a general sense that for the Lord His children are precious jewels, each one with a different anointing, giving a special color to His creation. The explanations found on the Internet did not seem satisfactory to me due to the mystical content they contain, rather than a real biblical basis. If we had to make a correlation between the faces of the cherubim seen by Ezekiel and John and the quadrangular town that is built for those who will be saved, we could say that to be there we need four characteristics: *a)* the proper use of the authority, power and spiritual leadership that have been placed in us (lion); *b)* the proper use of the intelligence and the free will given by God to His children (man); *c)* the wisdom to deal with material goods and to be a real worshiper (ox), to obey and serve; *d)* the desire to reach the spiritual heights and be ready for the renewal that comes from the Holy Spirit (eagle).

### Rev. 21

<sup>12</sup> It has a great, high wall with **twelve gates**, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed **the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites**;

<sup>13</sup> on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

<sup>14</sup> **And the wall of the city has twelve foundations**, and on them are **the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb**.

<sup>19</sup> **The foundations of the wall** of the city are adorned **with every jewel**...

<sup>21</sup> **And the twelve gates are twelve pearls**, each of the **gates is a single pearl**, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

It is interesting to realize that these stones were called *foundations* and in them there were also twelve pearls, forming *gates*. It seems a contradiction between what is written in the Old Testament by Moses about the stones and what it is written by John the Apostle, for he no longer refers to the precious stones as the patriarchs, but as the apostles, giving to the patriarchs the symbolism of pearls, more precisely of one pearl. This means that the twelve patriarchs represent the gates placed by God on earth to establish His promise of ransom with men, more specifically with His chosen people ('a single pearl' – Rev. 21: 21). To them, the Law was given so that they fulfilled it and remained connected to the Creator. When Jesus came, fulfilling it and bringing the new covenant, He began to prepare children with His authority, through which **many other peoples** might know *Salvation*. These were the apostles, symbolized in this vision of John as foundations adorned with every jewel (Rev. 21: 19).

The patriarchs, therefore, were the gates which the Lord opened for the covenant with man and built His work, setting rules for the human being so that he understood that it was possible to pass to a new level of spiritual understanding and achieve *perfection* (*four sides of the city, four orders of tribes, four letters in the Hebrew name of the Lord – YHWH, the symbol of a perfect number, of the man united to the Trinity, the number of the gospel*), therefore, eternal life. However, by sending His Son to earth, He definitely grounded the way so that perfection was reached. It was Jesus Himself who said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14: 6). Thus, the disciples of Jesus, the twelve apostles are the foundations to the building of a great work, bringing the Gospel and covering all other peoples, not only Jews, but Gentiles equally (**precious stones of every kind** – Rev. 21:

19) in the four corners of earth. Through the work they left established, humanity would know the way (the gate) back to Eden:

## Rev. 22

<sup>1</sup> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

<sup>2</sup> through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

<sup>3</sup> Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him;

<sup>4</sup> they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads

<sup>5</sup> And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

a) River of the water of life: eternal life, salvation, full and abundant life, the constant flow of the Holy Spirit.

b) The tree of life: Jesus, in the center of the Garden of Eden.

c) Twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month: nothing will be lacking, there will be no more hunger or need of any kind; uninterrupted fructification of God's elect (*cf. Ez. 47: 12*).

d) The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations: there will be refuge for those who lived unprotected and medicine for the wounds of the soul; answer to unanswered questions, understanding of all things made by God (*Ps. 34: 8-11*).

e) And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever:

- *Gen. 1: 3*: "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." At this early stage, the light to which the bible refers is the very glory of God coming into play in the person of Jesus.

- *Isa. 60: 19-20*: "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended."

- *Jn. 1: 1-5*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

- *Rev. 21: 23*: "And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its *light*, and its lamp is the Lamb."

- *Rev. 22: 5*: "And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their *light*, and they will reign forever and ever."

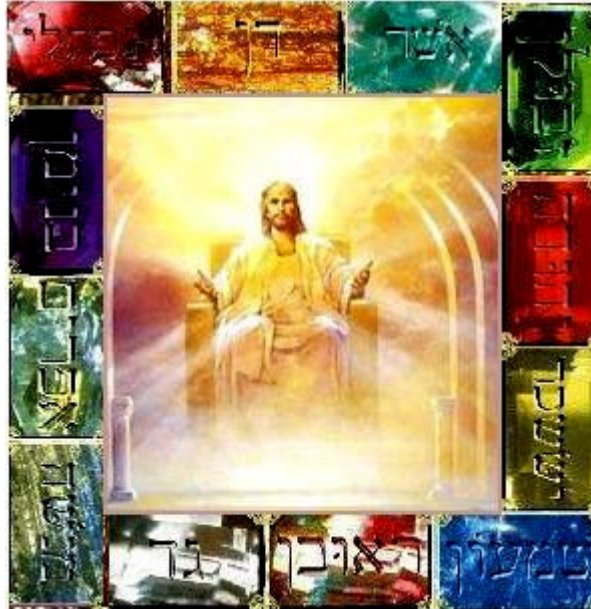
I am writing prophetic words about the New Jerusalem after the second coming of Christ to show that we are actually going back to the point where we began. The light that one day we will see (Jesus) is the same light that started everything.

*Conclusion:*

John describes the New Jerusalem as a city, symbol of the abode of the church, full and perfect communion with God. His throne is there. It is not only the home of the redeemed, but it is the Lamb's own bride. The city is holy, heavenly; it reflects the glory of God, while at the same time depicting the radiance, brightness and beauty of the bride. There, we too will fully enjoy God's fatherhood over us. There, we are the bride of Christ and children and heirs of God. This city is founded on the truth of Jesus and has a high wall signifying His protection for the redeemed.

Afterwards, John describes the New Jerusalem no longer as a city (Rev. 22:1-5), but as a garden where the river of water of life flows, similar to Eden, the garden created by God for Adam and Eve. Now, there are no longer four rivers, as there were in the Garden of Eden, but the river of water of life, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It is a symbol of eternal life, salvation, full and abundant life. The redeemed will see God face to face and nothing accursed will be found there anymore; there will be no pain anymore. There the stars will no longer be needed, like the sun, moon and stars because the Lord will shine on everyone. His light is enough.

## EPILOGUE



“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.” (Revelation 22: 13-14)