

God saves), the fullness of the meaning of the name Emmanuel—God is with us—is revealed.

2) *The Covenant between God and Humankind*

- 164 Expressed in the covenant between God and humankind, the fulfilment of God's promise proceeded in historical stages: "As for me, *I am establishing my covenant with you* and your descendants after you" (Gn 9:9, emphasis added). The covenant between God and Noah and his sons is a first stage. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons emphasizes God's initiative in the establishment of covenant: "How shall humankind pass into God, unless God has [first] passed into humankind?"¹³⁶ The rainbow, which unites heaven with earth, is a visible sign of this covenant. Noah and his descendants, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, are the representatives of humankind, of all races, and nations, of peoples united by "their own language, by their families, in their nations" (Gn 10:5).
- 165 Abram also belonged to the descendants of Noah, the heirs of the covenant with God. God drew near to him and his family, calling him to become *Abraham*, the father of all believers; and gave him the promise: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gn 12:2-3). The numerous descendants and the Promised Land (see Gn 13:15) are signs of God's protection and the fulfilment of God's promise: "I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous" (Gn 17:2). God also confirms this covenant with Isaac (see Gn 26:3-4) and with Jacob (see Gn 28:13-15). In Egypt, as God promised, the descendants of Jacob grew into a great nation (see Gn 46:3); and the exodus from Egypt, the journey through the wilderness, and the entrance into the land promised by God all confirmed the faithfulness of God to the word of his promise.
- 166 After the exodus of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt, the Lord entered into a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai. There he promised to make them his "treasured possession among all peoples..., a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6). The entire nation accepted the covenant, saying: "All that the LORD has spoken, we will do" (Ex 19:8). For the people, the observance of the commandments becomes the condition of the covenant (see Gn 20). As a sign of this covenant, Moses took blood from sacrificed animals and sprinkled it on the people, saying: "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex 24:8, KSV-CE)

¹³⁶ IRENAEUS OF LYONS, *Against Heresies*, IV, 33, 4: PG 7, 1074.

167 God continually supports and protects the people of the promise. If the covenant of God with Moses creates a nation of God's people, then the covenant with King David prefigures the kingdom of God.

I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be my son... your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever (2 Sr 7:12-16).

3) The Promise of a New Covenant

168 Moses, the great prophet and beholder of God, by prophetic inspiration pointed to the coming of yet another prophet: "the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet" (Dt 18:15). The people eventually associated the expectation of a coming Prophet, awakened by Moses, with the figure of the Messiah, God's Anointed One.

169 With the Messiah the people also associated the coming of a promised kingdom, which was primarily imagined as an earthly dominion of the People of God. Thus, the Lord God, through his prophets and by the Holy Spirit, was raising the people to a qualitatively higher level of covenant, which was to be called new. The promise to grant such a covenant was transmitted by God through the prophet Jeremiah:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD ... I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31:31-33, Rsv-CE).

And through the prophet Ezekiel, God proclaimed: "I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them" (Ez 11:19-20).

170 The New Covenant, recorded on the interior tablets of the heart, was to be brought by the Son of David—the Messiah. The prophets, from Elijah and Elisha to Malachi, prepared the People of God for the encounter with the Messiah. With their prophecies, they painted a kind of word icon of the Messiah. In accordance with the prophets, the