

Lecture 9 (from the book by Dmitriy Shchedrovitskiy
The Prophecy Of the Book Of Daniel About the Past
And Future Of Humanity)

The Executed And Immortal Messiah. The Covenant, Sacrifice And Redemption

Whereas the previous visions came to Daniel in the period of King Belshazzar's reign, the new one appeared to him after Babylon was conquered by Persians:

In the first year of Darius son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede, who became king over the realm of the Chaldeans... (Daniel 9,1)

The change of the world empires, which had earlier been predicted three times (Daniel 2, 39; 7, 5; 8, 3–4) and which took place before Daniel's eyes, made him go deeply into the prophecy of his predecessor Jeremiah. Daniel longed to know when the period designated by God for the punishment of his people would end, i.e. the period of the Babylonian captivity:

...In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to the prophet Jeremiah, must be fulfilled for the devastation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. (Daniel 9 ,2)

Consequently, Jews in the Babylonian captivity pos-

sessed the lists of prophetic books (including the Books of Jeremiah), preserved during their resettlement from Jerusalem. Obviously, a lot of copies were made, so that they could be available. Besides, Daniel being a powerful courtier also had access to rare manuscripts. Most likely, he collected a library of prophetic books for himself and other faithful to God Jews (see also Ezra 7, verses 6, 10–12, 25; 9, 10–12; 10, 3; Nehemiah 8, verses 1–8, 13–14, 18).

The prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the 70 years of the Babylonian Captivity runs as follows:

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. (Jeremiah 25, 11–12)

This prophecy speaks about the conquest of Judea and surrounding lands, about the period of the Babylonian yoke and the ruin of the Babylonian Empire after the designated time expired.

And here is the prediction of Jeremiah concerning the return of Jews from Babylon:

For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you My promise and bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29, 10)

The narrative tradition says that there were debates among Jews removed to Babylon concerning the beginning of the 70-year period of exile. For King Jeconiah together with his inner circle, troops and part of the people were captured and departed in 597 BC (2 Kings 24, 10–16), whereas the destruction of the Temple and the city and final banishment of the majority of inhabitants took place under King Zedekiah in 586 BC (2 Kings 25, 1–12).

So, there were people who claimed that the “devastation” of Jerusalem should end 70 years after the captivity of Jeconiah, whereas others believed that the seventy years were to pass after the devastation of the Temple.

In reality, the years predicted by Jeremiah are to be counted off starting from the devastation of the Temple

in 586 BC (“...the land shall become a ruin and a waste...” – Jeremiah 25, 11, which did not occur when Jeconiah was captured), and therefore they come to an end in 516 BC.

This was also the year when the building of the Second Temple was finished (Ezdra 3, 2–10; Haggai 1, 14–15; 2, 1–7; Zechariah 4, 9), i.e. the period of “the devastation” of God’s Sanctuary could be seen to have ended.

However, this time seemed so distant at the moment Daniel described that the prophet, after calculations and contemplation, turned to the Lord Himself. He turned to him with a deep prayer of repentance on behalf of the whole nation, hoping to receive a revelation concerning the further fate of Israel:

Then I turned to the Lord God, to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel 9, 3)

“Prayer” and “supplication” are two different notions.

The word תפלה <tefi’la>, “prayer” is related to two verbs with one common root: פלל <pa’lal> – “to be prostrate” and פלל <pi’lel> – “to contemplate”, “to con-

demn”, “to hope”. At the moment of prayer one should come into condition of absolute humility before God – “lay prostrate” before Him, utterly submitting to Him; at the same time it is important to contemplate God’s majesty, condemn one’s sins (i.e. be convicted of them) and hope for the Almighty.

Whereas תחנון <takha’nun>, “supplication” is conjugate to the verb חנן <kha’nan> – “to relent”, “to be merciful”. It is not only complete trust in the Creator’s grace, but also entering into the state of mercy, love and compassion to one’s fellows, both close and distant. This is the only way to receive mercy from above, for, according to the inviolable spiritual law, like follows like:

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (Matthew 5, 7)

On coming into such a state of love and mercy towards his people, Daniel on behalf of the whole Israel confesses sins before God and begs Him for forgiveness and guidance (Daniel 9, 4–9). The prophet asks to reveal the meaning of Jeremiah’s prophecy to him, repenting of the rebellion of the whole people against

the former prophets (verse 10) and admitting that “...the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God...” , which had come upon Judea and Jerusalem, were just (verse 11).

Mass idolatry as well as other lawless actions were the reasons why the Temple and the capital city were destroyed, the country devastated, just as Moses and other prophets had predicted (verses 13–14). Now however, knowing that most of the people repent of their former doings as well as Daniel himself, and that the time of the wrath is drawing to a close, the prophet begs for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple:

“...Let Your anger and wrath, we pray, turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain...

...Let Your face shine upon Your desolated Sanctuary...

...O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, listen and act and do not delay! For Your own sake, O my God, because Your city and Your people bear Your name!”
(Daniel 9, 16 – 19)

Hardly had Daniel finished praying when God’s messenger appeared before him:

...The man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. (Daniel 9:21)–KJV

We have already mentioned that Daniel, as well as other Jews faithful to God, prayed three times a day (Daniel 6, 10). Three prayers correspond to three daily offerings in the Temple of Jerusalem: the morning and evening burnt offerings of lambs (Exodus 29, 38–39; Numbers 28, 3–4) and the third grain sacrifice brought in the afternoon (Leviticus 2, 1–3) and called מנחה <min'kha> – “offering”.

The time of each prayer precisely fit the corresponding offering (see also 1 Kings 18, 36; Acts 3, 1; 10, 3 and 9). The time of Daniel's prayer described here suited the time of the grain offering מנחה <min'kha>. At that moment the prophet felt the touch of angel Gabriel, which means he regained the capacity of real communication with the spiritual world.

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. (Daniel 9, 22)–KJV

In this verse we come across two words derived from the verb בִּין <bin> – “to go deeply into”, “perceive”, “understand”. It implies the revelation, which is to shed light on Daniel’s contemplation about the expiry of “the wrath” time.

Angel Gabriel goes on to say:

“...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...” (Daniel 9, 23)

Here דָּבָר <da’var> – “word” bears the meaning of “regulation”, “[king’s] commandment” as well as “interpretation” (see also Esther 1, 15 and 21; 5, 5). What is meant here is the revelation of God sent after Daniel’s prayer right at the first moment of his address to the Creator.

Now angel Gabriel lets Daniel hear something much more significant than what he asked: for Daniel’s wish to know the time when the Babylonian captivity ends will be satisfied without a revelation. The prophet will himself soon behold the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. Whereas more distant events awaiting Israel and

the rest of the world are not limited to seventy years, but encompass a period seven times longer:

“...Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness...” (Daniel 9, 24)

The word שבוע <sha’vua> means either “a week” or “seven years” – any period divisible by seven. Obviously, here a seven-year period is meant, so the whole “seventy weeks” term amounts to 490 years. This term is assigned to prepare the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem to the greatest event related to the pardon of sins and eternal absolution (צדק <‘tzedek>, translated into English as “righteousness”).

The verse under our consideration mentions three variations of sin: פשע <‘pesha> – “rebellion”, “treason”, “tumult”; חטאת <kha’tat> – “mistake”, “departure”, “fault”, “sin”; and עון <a’von> – “crookedness”, “distortion”, “evasion”. This enumeration covers all possible sins (naturally, within each category there is a great variety). Thus, there is transgression committed consciously and daringly, – פשע <‘pesha>; sins caused by weak-

ness, inattentiveness, by mistake, – חטאת <kha'tat>; and finally, actions coming from some “distortion” in the volitional, mental and/or emotional human spheres – “a distortion” caused by the wrong direction of one’s spiritual way – עון <a'von>.

Each of the enumerated sin categories needs a special atonement, which is expressed by three different verbs used in this verse.

Thus, “a transgression” (פשע <'pesha>) is “finished” in the sense belonging to the verb כלא <ka'la> – “to restrain”, “to stop”, “to cease”, “to block”. The very inclination towards rebellion against the commandments of the Almighty is “restrained” by the power of His grace, i.e. it ceases.

A “sin” (חטאת <kha'tat>) is “redeemed” (in English translation “put an end to”) in the sense of the verb חתם <kha'tam> – “to seal”, “to conceal”: like a scroll, which is folded and sealed, i.e. secured against reading (see also Isaiah 29, 11), the list of such sins “is locked” by God and is not renewed.

“Iniquity” (עון <a'von>) “is forgiven” in the meaning proper for the verb כפר <ki'per> – “to cover up” (in NRSV translated as “to atone for”): by God’s mercy distortions of perception and misdeeds are covered up

by righteous wishes, thoughts, feelings and actions.

The forgiveness of sins of different types described above can occur only by the mercy of the Lord, Who is called “forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exodus 34, 7). Since it is spoken about the atonement for the sins of the whole people, the related event should be of world historic importance: it is named as “eternal absolution”.

But the “seventy weeks” are set for some other great events:

...And to make an end of sins... and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy...” (Daniel 9, 24)
– KJV

The considered verse provides two forms of the verb חתם <kha'tam>: in reference to sins חטאת <kha'tat> – לחתם <lekha'tem>, i.e. “to seal” in the meaning “to lock”; and referring to “the vision and prophecy” – לחתם <lakh'tsom>, i.e. “to set a seal” in the meaning of “to affirm”.

“The vision and prophecy” is a common expression denoting the set of predictions in the Scripture de-

voted to the most significant event on a worldwide scale: the coming of the Messiah and his saving activity. There are predictions concerning the Messiah in all prophetic books starting with Moses (see Luke 24, 44: "...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me"; also Luke 24, 27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself"). Especially detailed are the descriptions of the Messiah's future doings in the prophecy of Isaiah (see Isaiah 52, 13–15; 53).

All the prophets' visions of the Messiah and his sacrifice for the sins of people are to be fulfilled in "seventy weeks" of years, and the Messiah's very sacrificial life and death will confirm the truthfulness of those visions, like a "binding seal". He is called "the most Holy" – קדש קדשים <'Kodesh kada'shim>. The section of the Tabernacle and the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant was kept (Exodus 26, 33–34; 1 Kings 8, 6) bears the same name. The same definition, expressing the highest state of holiness, refers to some other sacred objects, for instance, to the grain offering (see Leviticus 2, 3 and 10; 6, 17), to the guilt offering (Le-

viticus 7, 1 and 6), to the bread of the Presence (Leviticus 24, 9), to the bronze altar for the burnt offerings and other sacrifices (Exodus 29, 37), to the blood of the sacrifice on the Atonement Day (Exodus 30, 10), to the basin for priests (Exodus 30, 28 –29), to the fragrant incense (Exodus 30, 36).

We can see that the expression “most Holy” stands specifically for objects which have to do with offerings or the sacrifices themselves. But all sacrifices and offering service pointed to the Messiah:

For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10, 14)

That is why the attribute קדש קדשים <‘Kodesh ka-da’shim> refers to him to the fullest and most perfect extent. The primary sense of the verb קדש <ka’dash> is “to separate”, hence the derivatives – “to sanctify”, “to bless”. It is the Messiah who is described as

...Holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens... (Hebrews 7, 26)

So, after the “seventy weeks” of years the Messiah is

to be “anointed” – למשח <lim’shoakh>, from the verb מִשַּׁח <ma’shakh>, therefore he is named משיח <Ma’shiakh>, in Greek Χριστος <Christos> – “Anointed One”.

However, in the Gospels we can not find evidence of Jesus’ being literally “anointed” to reign or prophetic and priest service like for instance Saul or David were (1 Samuel 10, 1; 16, 13), Aaron (Exodus 29, 4–7) or Elisha (1 Kings 19, 13). If this happened to Jesus, it was kept in secret, and we know nothing about it.

However, there is mention of another “anointment”, which was conducted over him by the Lord Himself:

... God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing ... for God was with him. (Acts 10, 38)

As a matter of fact, the anointment to reign, prophetic and priest service was only a symbol of pouring out on the anointed one the heavenly power – the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was the necessary condition for the true ministry in the face of God (1 John 2, 20 and 27; 1 Samuel 16, 13). Thus, Jesus is called and appears to be the Messiah – the Anointed One – in the truest and highest sense of this word.

At what time does the counting of the “seventy weeks” start? –

“... Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an Anointed Prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in a troubled time.” (Daniel 9, 25)

“Know and understand” is not a futile call: the knowledge of historical facts is required as well as precise time calculation. Daniel put down everything he heard in detail. He hardly managed to live to hear “the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem”, which went out at the time of King Artaxerxes I in the year of 457 BC (Nehemiah 2, 1–8). For Daniel was resettled to Babylon together with King Jeconiah (“Joachin” – Daniel 1, 1–6), which was in 597 BC, and he probably died before he was 140 years old. However, his writings should be investigated by us, his successors, and the predictions should be compared to historical events.

The regulation of Artaxerxes I issued in 457 BC was related to the erection of the walls around Jerusalem

(literally להשיב ולבנות <leha'shiv ve-liv'not> – “to restore and rebuild”), i.e. the restoring of its status of the capital city of Judea (whose name “Yehud” was discovered stamped on the local coins of the Persian period.

Since it is said that all in all seventy weeks will pass (verse 24) until the arrival of the Messiah (“the most Holy”), and verse 25 mentions “seven and sixty-two”, i.e. 69 weeks, then the counting starting from the year 457 BC ends up at the last week, the 70th, during which the prophetic service of Jesus Christ took place ending with his sacrificial death on Calvary: this last of the seventy weeks falls on 27–34 BC.

So, after 69 weeks משיח נגיד <Ma'shiakh Na'gid> is to be revealed – literally “Messiah the Prince”, i.e. the greatest of all anointed – kings, prophets and priests.

“...It shall be built again with streets and moat...” – תשוב ונבנתה <ta'shuv ve-nivne'ta> can be interpreted as “to be built again”, and רחוב וחרוץ <re'khov ve-kha'ruts> – as “the street and the block” (in the collective meaning); consequently, Jerusalem, as it had been before the destruction, would appear as a developed city divided into “administrative areas” with nicely situated and rebuilt streets.

“...But in a troubled time...” – in the original ובצוק העתים

<u-ve-tsok ha-i'tim> – “and [or “but”] in the narrows of times” or “in the period of oppression”. Social life in Jerusalem was bustling and the building and expansion of the city did not stop throughout centuries in spite of the oppression of foreign powers succeeding one another – Persians, Macedonians, Hellenistic Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties (among the latter was Antiochus Epiphanes, the monster of cruelty and butcher who launched the genocide of Jews), Romans.

Throughout this period the independent Jewish kingdom ruled by the Hasmonean dynasty existed only from 142 to 63 BC, i.e. less than a hundred years! But even this time was not easy in the history of Judea, let alone the other periods of the “seventy weeks”! It was truly “an age of oppression”.

“...And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...” (Daniel 9, 26) – KJV

“And after” stands for ואחרי <ve-akha'rei>, which is not the same as “right after”, but “after” 69 weeks was Jesus crucified – at the end of the 70th week. And the whole last week, i.e. the whole period of his prophetic service and preaching, was the preparation to

the climactic moment of his life – the great sacrifice for the sins of the humanity.

So, “cutting off” the Messiah (יכרת <jika’ret> – “will die”, “will be executed”) is the triumphant final of his earthly life, and in a certain sense the whole week of his visible service on earth can be called “dying” – preparation to the final absolute self-sacrifice for humankind.

The literal meaning of יכרת <jika’ret> is “will be cut off”. One of the most tragic results of the fact that the most part of Jesus Christ’s native people denied him became some kind of “cutting off”, “interception”, i.e. separation, him, his story, teaching, his very personality from the history of the general Jewish history, his exclusion from the “spiritual historic sphere” of the Jewish civilization.

Throughout centuries it was practically prohibited by rabbis or accepted as highly undesirable to even mention his name. Various stories were invented in order to discredit his background, lifestyle and teaching, to distort the historical truth about him (part of them were collected in the book of “Toldot Yeschu” – “Genealogy of Jesus”).

All this was predicted not only by Daniel (in one brief

word יכרת <jika'ret> – “will be cut off”, “will be intercepted” from his people), but also by Isaiah:

...He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

He is despised and rejected of men... and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

...Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

<...>

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...

<...>

...He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of My people was he stricken. (Isaiah 53, 2–8) – KJV

Saying “we” and “our” Isaiah means his people, Israel. And the last words of the quoted part of the prophecy speaks about practically the same as Daniel’s יכרת <jika'ret> – “will be cut off”: נגזר מארץ חיים <nig'zar me-'erets kha'jim> literally meaning “cut off out of the land of the living”. “The land of the living”, “the land

of life” is the name of the Holy Land. Thus, Isaiah predicts that the Messiah will not only be executed, but also in the mentality of the most of the Jewish people the story of his life and death will be “cut off” for a long time – separated from the history of the Holy Land.

...Let us focus on the expression “shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...” The words לֹא עֵין לוֹ <ein lo> which are here translated as “not for himself” literally mean “not in his favour”. It is suggested that the sacrificial death of the Messiah will be regarded as a merit not on the part of himself, but on the part of all people whose sins will be atoned for by the Messiah’s execution (John 1, 29; Matthew 26, 28; I Peter 2, 24–25).

However, another possible translation is represented by the Russian Synodal text, – such a reading suggests the Messiah’s death and resurrection: at the same time he “will be” and “will not be put to death”, i.e. he will come alive again!

“...And the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary...” (Daniel 9, 26)

“The troops” are Roman, “the prince” is commander Titus... The very succession of events in the prediction

is tragic: Daniel begged for the restoration of the Temple (see Daniel 9, 16–19), but the revelation sent from above in answer to the prayer ends with a prediction of another destruction of Jerusalem and the sanctuary.

“...Its end shall come with a flood...” (Daniel 9, 26)

A flood comes unexpectedly and covers vast territories. That was the way Roman troops flooded Judea, and it sank under the blood of the suppressed rebellion.

“...And to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed...” (Daniel 9, 26)

“Are decreed” – in the original stands the word נחרצת <nekhe’retset>, which means “appointed”, “determined” in singular feminine, whereas the word שממות <sheme’mot>, i.e. “desolations”, “horrors” is in plural feminine. This suggests a common origin (“decree”) for various desolations and horrible actions of the Romans. Those were committed by the commandments of Titus, who aimed (by means of torture and crucifixion of tens of thousands including those who surrendered voluntarily, and selling hundreds of thousands

of Jews into slavery) to crush the people morally.

All of this is discussed after the description of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, “to the end” (the same verse 26). It serves to point out the fact that after the Romans captured Jerusalem, the war would still continue for some time (“to the end there shall be war”). Indeed, the Jewish war against Rome lasted for seven years (66–73 AD), and after Jerusalem fell, the warfare still went on for 3,5 years.

Most cities of Judea were devastated – “desolations” were overall, full and universal, until the downfall of Masada fortress in the year 73 which had been considered unassailable with its heroic defenders, who preferred to take their lives voluntarily instead of falling into the hands of Romans, i.e. they preferred death to slavery.

“...He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week...” (Daniel 9, 27)

Those seven years are meant during which the Jewish War was on. The word הגביר <hig’bir> means “will strengthen”, “will make smb. courageous”, “will make smb. heroic”. The word “covenant” (ברית <be’rit>)

denotes the New Covenant made by Messiah Jesus with his disciples—apostles, who symbolically represented the tribes of Israel (Jeremiah 31, 31–34; Matthew 26, 20–28).

The events of the Jewish War again raised the question of the New Covenant – of accepting or denying the teaching of Jesus – for many Jews. On the one hand, Jesus' followers were persecuted and chased, especially by Sicarii Zealots – a militant fanatic group calling for a military revolt against the Romans (even if in an utterly hopeless situation) and hating Judeo-Christians for their propagation of peace, love and forgiveness (especially love for one's enemies – Matthew 5, 44–48). This prosecution strengthened faithfulness to Jesus and his teaching in many believers – up to a heroic sacrificial death for one's convictions.

On the other hand, quite a few Jews who remembered the way Jesus 40 years before had delivered the prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Luke 21, 20–24) or had heard these predictions retold by somebody else, got convinced of the truthfulness of the prophecy from their own experience, made certain of the fact that Jesus was sent by the Lord, and joined his followers. These are the events

predicted in such words about “the week” when “a strong covenant with many would be made”.

“...And for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease”. (Daniel 9, 27)

Right in the “half of the week” of the Jewish War, i.e. 3,5 years after its beginning, shortly before the destruction of the Temple on the 17th of Tammuz in 70 BC, the last sacrifice was brought in the Temple. And on the 9th of Av (the following month, which approximately falls on August) sacrifice ceased not only temporarily (because of the lack of sacrificial lambs in the situation of siege), but also for a very long period right until the future restoration of the Temple burnt by Roman legionaries on this tragic day.

“...and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates”. (Daniel 9, 27)

“The place”, כִּנּוֹ *<ka'naf>*, of the Temple means “aisle” of the Temple, or its remote part. Desolation and destruction will involve only the visible, material “aisle” of the Temple, whereas the “core” of it – the spiritual

essence of the service, the very opportunity of prayer to the Lord – will last forever beyond the reach of pagans and proof against desolation.

“...Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,
but do not measure the court outside the temple;
leave that out, for it is given over to the nations...”
(Revelation 11, 1–2)

The vision of John provides a particularly precise representation of this prospect of spiritual reality: “the Temple of God” vs. “the outer court” (which in the time of the Second Temple was a place where nations worshipping God were admitted)...

However, “in their place”, i.e. in the visible world, the Temple will be destroyed for a very long time – there will be “an abomination that desolates” in its place. These are the words that stand for שקוצים משומם <shiku'tsim mesho'mem> – literally “abomination of the desolator”, “infamy of the destructor”. Since the desolator and the destructor of the Temple was the Roman Empire, these words are referred to some “abomination” situated in the place of the Temple in the pe-

riod of the Roman rule. Indeed, after the Temple was destroyed, Roman officials prohibited Jews to appear at the holy place and ascend Mount Moriah. For a special payment representatives of Jewish communities took out the right to gather near “the Wailing Wall” – a remaining part of the Western Wall of the Temple court – on certain days, especially on the 9th of Av, the anniversary of the Temple fall, in order to mourn its loss.

Yet the territory of the desolated Sanctuary was falling further and further into decay. And at the time when Christianity was proclaimed state religion of Rome in the first quarter of the Vth century AD, and churches, chapels, monasteries started being erected in its holy places, the territory of the Temple was purposely turned into a city dump – as a sign for “the triumph” of Christianity over Judaism, “the abolition and trample” of the commandments of the Old Testament, which is allegedly “directed by the Gospel” (see, however, Matthew 5, 17–20; Luke 16, 17).

Acting this way, Roman authorities believed that they contributed to the fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction: “See, your house is left to you, desolate.” (Matthew 23, 38), though in reality this prediction came into life as early as the Temple was destroyed.

The city dump was situated at the site of the Temple right until Jerusalem was occupied by the troops of the Arab Caliphate in 637. Muslims treated the ruins of the Jerusalem Temple with particular reverence. The Temple Plaza was cleared up; protective constructions were erected over the places where the former bronze altar and other vessels of the Sanctuary had been located, especially, over the “Even-shti’ya” – “The Corner Stone” of the universe, where the Most Holy once was situated; these were the sites of Muslim prayer. In 687 the erection of “the Dome of the Rock” (the so-called “Mosque of Omar”)– a special sacral building over the central territory of the Temple – was launched.

Thus, the prophecy about “the abomination that desolates”, literally, “infamy of the destructor”, i.e. Rome, was coming into life – until the time came when the direct successors of the Temple desolators fell from power over the Holy City.

“...Until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator.” (Daniel 9, 27)

“The desolator”, or “the destructor”, שׁמֵם <sho’mem> ,

was a military commander and later Emperor Titus. His being Emperor was not long-lasting (from 79 to 81) and he died from a cruel disease with raging headaches, disorders in perception and mind. Tradition says that for blasphemy the Lord sent “the tiniest creature” in his brain – a minute insect, which, when it moved, caused tortures and unbearable rumbling in his ears. The Emperor tried to dampen this noise with the help of a smith, who beat on the anvil continuously in his presence.

This was the punishment of the actual “desolator”. But in a broader and deeper sense the “desolator” of the Temple was Roman paganism, which tried to destroy Jerusalem as a citadel of monotheism – an oppositional ideology. “The decreed end” (כלה <ka’la> – literally “the end”, “exhaustion”, “annihilation”) came upon this “desolator” as well, when the official Christianity triumphed in the Roman Empire in the IV century AD.