**{T412}** **Punished and forgiven in the past, the Jews will not be forgiven again**[[1]](#footnote-1)

**256:1** Exposing their insanity, the divine Chrysostom states this (among many other things):

If, O Jew, you want to argue about the end,[[2]](#footnote-2) learn about the present from the things that are past. For consider: you went down into Egypt, but soon after two hundred years God liberated you from that slavery, even though you were ungodly and committed the worst kind of idolatry. You were liberated from Egypt and you worshipped a calf, you sacrificed your sons and your daughters to Beelphegor and the daemons, you polluted the temple, you failed to acknowledge nature, you filled mountains, valleys, hills, springs, rivers, gardens with foul sacrifices. You slew prophets, you destroyed altars, you entered upon every kind of evil and displayed every excess of wickedness and godlessness. But having handed you over to the Babylonians for 70 years, he nevertheless led you back to your former freedom, gave you your homeland and the temple and the ancient gift of prophecy, and once again there were prophets and the grace of a holy spirit. Or rather, even in the time of your captivity you were not abandoned, but even then there was Daniel and Ezekiel, and Jeremiah in Egypt, and indeed before these Moses and Aaron in the desert. And even after these things you reverted to your former evil, and went into a frenzy, and crossed over to Hellenic **{B400}** culture under the ungodly Antiochus. But having been surrendered to Antiochus for three years […], you soon raised brilliant trophies of victory through the Maccabees. But there is nothing like that now, but the complete opposite has occurred. Which is much to be marvelled at, that the time for evil has expired and the time for punishment stretches forward and there is no hope of any change. For not only have seventy years passed […] but many more, and there is not even a shadow of hope to be found, and these things **{T413}** prevail even though you are not worshipping idols or doing any of the other things that you dared to do in the past. [[3]](#footnote-3)

 **The end of the first two captivities prophesied.**

256:2 In order to say what is to be said about these things more clearly and in greater detail, let us begin again from the top.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Jews were subjected to three terrible captivities, and divine justice brought not one upon them without it being foretold, but provided that the place and the time and the manner and the suffering and the return and everything else be told to them in advance with great exactness. And concerning the first in Egypt, the Lord talked to Abraham and spoke thus:

Know for certain that your seed will be a foreigner in an alien land, and they will enslave it and mistreat it … for four hundred years // in the fourth generation they will come [back] here. — *Gen 15:13 // 15:16*

Concerning the second, Jeremiah said,

‘Thus said the Lord. When seventy years are about to be completed in Babylon, I will visit you and I will put into effect my good words to you of return to your place, // and I will reverse your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where you are, to which I dispersed you, says the Lord. And I will return you to the place from which **{B401}** I removed you.’ — *Jer 29:10 (LXX 36:10)*

The discussion has shown briefly the two captivities of this kind came upon them following a prophecy; they did not simply happen nor were they unexpected. So it remains to introduce the third, and then we must speak about the fourth which now holds them and show clearly that not a single prophet announced that there would be a release from the evils that hold them nor any relief at all.

 **The third captivity, and its end, were prophesied**

**256:3** So which is the third? That under Antiochus Epiphanes. For when Alexander, the king of the Macedonian, brought Darius down, he assumed personal control of the empire, and when he died, after him many became kings, one of whom, this Antiochus, **{T414}** quite a long time later, not only burnt the temple but also laid waste the holy of holies, and cancelled the sacrifices, and subjugated the Jews and dissolved their entire state. And all these things were foretold by Jeremiah with complete accuracy down to the very day, and when they would be and how and by whom and in what manner, and where they would end, and what change it would bring about. You will see more clearly, when you have heard this vision, what the prophet announced to you in parables, calling Darius, the king of the Persians, a ram and that of the Hellenes, Alexander, king of the Macedonians, a goat. He says that four horns arose after him, and the last horn of these was Antiochus. For he says: 'I had a vision, and behold a ram standing, with tall horns, one taller than the other, and the tall **{B402}** one went up to the heights. And I saw the ram butting towards the sea and the north and the south, and all the beasts will not stand before it, and there was no one to rescue any from its hand, and it did as it wanted to, and became great.' He is referring to the Persian power, which overran the whole earth.

Next, talking about the Macedonian Alexander, he says: 'And behold, a he-goat[[5]](#footnote-5) came from the west and over the face of the whole earth, and it was not touching the ground, and a horn could be seen on this goat between its eyes' [Dan 8:5]. Referring then to the attack on Darius and the battle with him and the overwhelming victory, the goat, he says, 'came up to the ram with the horns // and grew savage, and struck the ram, and smashed both of its horns, and there was none to free it from its hand [Dan 8:6 // 8:7]. Later, telling of the death of Alexander and the succession of the four kings, **{T415}** he adds, 'and at the height of his power the great horn was crushed, and four horns rose up from below him, towards the four winds of heaven [Dan 8:8]. And going from there to the reign of Antiochus, and having shown that he is from one of those four, again he says, 'And out of one of them emerged a strong one, and it grew exceedingly great towards the south and towards the east [Dan 8:9]. And indicating that he will destroy the Jewish way of life, he says, 'And through him sacrifice was disrupted by transgression, and it came to pass, and he prospered. And the holy place will be desolated, **{B403}** and a sin-offering will be made.' For after the altar was cast down and the holy things trampled under foot, he set up an idol within and offered unlawful sacrifices to the daemons. Wherefore he says, 'righteousness was cast down, and he did this and he prospered' [Dan 8:12].

Then, referring a second time to the same reign of Antiochus Epiphanes and to the captivity and the capture and destruction and desolation of the holy place, he added the date. For commencing again from the reign of Alexander, towards the end of the book, after narrating everything in between that the Ptolemies and the Seleucids did in their wars with each other and what their generals did, the stratagems, the victories, the campaigns, the battles on land and sea, he goes down to Antiochus and stops once more and says,

From him will come powerful forces, and they will defile the sanctuary, and remove the continuity,

referring to the customary daily sacrifices,

and will give it an abomination, and those violating the covenant,

that is, the transgressors among the Jews,

they will lead by treachery with them and remove them, and a people who knows its God will become strong,

referring to the events under the Maccabees and those under Judas and Simon and John; **{T416}**

and the wise men of the people will understand many things. But they will fail by the sword and fire,

 describing again the burning of the city,

and by captivity and days of plunder; and when they fail, they will receive a little help,

indicating that, in the midst of those evils, they will be able to draw a breath and rise from **{B404}** the terrible things that have overtaken them,

but many will be added to them through treachery, and some of the wise shall fail,

showing that many of those who stood firm will fall.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Next, the reason why God allowed them to enter into such evils. What is the reason?

To test them by fire in these things and to select them and to make them white until the end of time.

For he says that God allowed these things so as to purge them and to reveal who among them was tried and true. Next, speaking of his power he said,

And he will do as he wants, and he will be exalted and magnified.

And indeed he also referred to his blasphemous mentality, adding that,

He will speak swaggeringly against the God of gods and will prosper until the wrath be accomplished,

showing that he so prevailed and gained power not through his own will but because of the wrath of God against the Jews.

Telling through many other passages the evils that he visited on Egypt, Palestine, and how he would return, at whose bidding, compelled by what cause, he then recounts the change of events, and that the Jews, having been punished by all these things, would attain some succour, an angel having been sent to their aid. For he says,

At that time Michael the great prince will rise up, guardian over the sons of your people. And it will be a time of tribulation such as has never been from the time a nation came upon the earth until **{T417}** that time. And at that time many people will be saved, those whose names are enrolled in the book,

 **{B405}** that is, those who are worthy of salvation.

But the question has even now not yet been answered with proof. What, indeed, is that question? That he specified the years [they would be] in these evils, just as he had earlier specified four hundred years and after those events seventy years. So therefor let us see if in this case he specifies a fixed time. Where might one find this? In what would be said afterwards. For after he heard about the many great evils, the burning of the city, the overturning of the law, the captivity, he then wants to learn about when they would end, and if there would be a change from these disasters, so he enquires in these words: ‘Lord, how will these things end?’ And He said,

Come here, Daniel, because the words are locked up and sealed until the end of time,

alluding to the obscurity of the words. Then the reason why the evils were permitted:

Until many are elected and made white and tested in the fire, the lawless will act lawlessly, the unholy ones will understand, and the intelligent will know.’

Then foretelling how long the terrible things will keep hold of them, he says,

‘From the time of the changing of the continuity’,

continuity being what the daily offering was called; for the continuous is that which is frequent and on-going. For it was the custom among the Jews to sacrifice to God both morning and night every day, and for this reason that offering was called the continuity. But when Antiochus came, he abolished this practice and it changed, because of which the angel said, that ‘from the time of the changing of the continuity᾽, that is, from the abolition of the sacrifice, there are 1,290 days, which is three and a half years. Then declaring that there would be a release and a deliverance from the evils, he added, **{B406}**

Blessed is he who holds out and attains 1,335 days,

having added 35 to the 1,290, **{T418}** because it happened that the conflict took place over one and a half months, during which the victory and the total deliverance from the evils that oppressed became clear. For by saying, ‘Blessed is he who holds out and attains 1,335 days’, he indicated the deliverance. And he did not say simply, ‘attains’, because many of the ungodly saw the change, these he does not call blessed, but those who held out in the times of the evils and did not forsake piety and who found relief. So what could be clearer than these things?

 **No end was prophesied for the fourth and current captivity**

**256:4** So now it is time to come to the question and to the current captivity and slavery, for which we started all this. That the three captivities — the one of 400 years, the one of 70 years and the one of three and a half years — were announced beforehand has been sufficiently demonstrated from that source, as far as we were able. Come, now, and let us talk about this one. That this prophet also spoke in advance about the fourth and last and final captivity, we adduce Josephus himself as a witness, who was one of them. For after he had spoken about the captivity [imposed] by Antiochus, calling the prophet as a witness, he continues about this captivity, saying,

In the same way Daniel also wrote about the domination of the Romans, and that Jerusalem would be devastated by them and the temple destroyed.

Please consider that man’s love of the truth, who even though he was a Jew, could not **{B407}** bring himself to emulate the Jewish contentiousness and mendacity. For when he wrote saying that Jerusalem and the temple would be made desolate, he did not go on to add that what had been devastated would be restored somehow, because he found that the prophet too had not added any such thing.

Now, where did Daniel say that the temple would be made desolate? Listen. After he had prayed that prayer, the one in sackcloth and ashes, Gabriel **{T419}** came to him and says,

A limit of 70 hebdomads has been set for your people and the holy city. — *Dan 9:24*

Notice that here too a time has been stated, not that of the captivity, but after how much time the captivity would occur. He next says, more precisely,

And you will know and understand that from the going forth of the word of the answer that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt until Christ the prince, there will be 7 hebdomads and 62 hebdomads. — *Dan 9.25*

Please pay close attention at this point, for here is the nub of the whole question. Now, 7 hebdomads and 62 hebdomads are 483 years. For here he is not talking about hebdomads of days nor of months, but hebdomads of years. From Cyrus to Antiochus Epiphanes and that captivity are 394 years. Next, he teaches us from when we should start counting, not from the day of the return, but from the going forth of the word of the answer that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt. It was not rebuilt under Cyrus but under Artaxerxes Macrocheir.[[7]](#footnote-7) For after the return, Cambyses came back [to the throne], then the Magians, and after them Darius Hystaspes reigned over Persia, following whom were Xerxes, son of Darius, and Artabanes, then Artaxerxes Macrocheir; **{B408}** in the twentieth year of his reign, Nehemiah returned and rebuilt the city. Ezra has given us an accurate account of these things. If we count 480 years from that point, we will surely arrive at its destruction, as Josephus too again testifies, saying,

The desolation of the city and the temple occurred in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel made 408 years earlier. — *AJ 12.322*[[8]](#footnote-8)

For this reason he says,

It will be rebuilt broad and walled. — *Dan 9:25*[[9]](#footnote-9)

After it had been rebuilt and assumed its proper form, that is from when he started counting the 70 hebdomads.

After the 70 hebdomads, the anointed one will be destroyed, and there will be no judgement in him — *Dan 9:26*[[10]](#footnote-10)

as was said earlier. For after the **{T420}** desolation of Vespasian and Titus took place, the Jews rose up and strove to return to their earlier statehood, they who fight against God in vain. After the emperor brought them under control and destroyed the entire city and obliterated every last trace of it, and after this raising it anew, he called it Aelian after his own name. Wherefore Christ, coming after Antiochus Epiphanes and foretelling the captivity that was to be, and showing that it was about this that Daniel had spoken earlier, says:

When you see the abomination of desolation, the one spoken of through the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place, let the reader understand ... — *Mt 24:15*

And since every idol and every image of a human is called an abomination by the Jews, He enigmatically indicated that statue, and at the same time he also foretold both when and by whom the captivity would take place. **{B409}** And Josephus also testifies that these statements refer to the Romans, as we said earlier.

What argument remains to them, then, when the prophets are shown to speak of captivities with specific time frames but specify no duration for this [captivity] but, on the contrary, say that the desolation will be until the consummation? For we have sufficiently demonstrated that, if the present enslavement were going to have an end, the prophets would have foretold this and not remained silent, by showing that all their captivities befell them accompanied by prophecies; for each of these we have documented the passages pre-announcing through the divine Scriptures both the manner [of their occurrence] and their duration. For the present [captivity], however, no prophet specified a duration, but on the one hand Daniel foretold that it would come and reduce everything to desolation and change the polity and after how much time following the return from Babylon it would take place, while on the other hand, neither he [Daniel] nor any other prophet declared that an end would arrive and these evils would stop, but on the contrary, as has been stated, he foretold that this **{T421}** tribulation would hold them in its grip until the consummation. And quite rightly so. The length of the intervening time, which has shown neither trace nor prelude that might indicate a change for the better, stands in evidence of what has been said, and this despite them attempting many times to restore the temple, under Hadrian and Constantine and Julian, and being prevented from doing so first by soldiers, then under the Apostate when fire leapt forth from the foundations and held them back from their importunate contentiousness and transgression. **{B410}**

Wherefore tell us, why did they meet with compassion after spending so much time being ill-treated in Egypt? And again, having been abducted to Babylon, why did they return home? And having suffered so many evils under Antiochus, why did they immediately return to their former status, while now, nothing of this sort has happened but with 500 years having passed since then — by now, 1,000 — we cannot see even a hint, like that previously, of such a change emerging?

If they were to put forward their sins and say, ‘Because we sinned against God, that is why we are not recovering our homeland’, again I would quite reasonably ask them: is it because of your sins, O Jews, that you have been living for such a long time away from Jerusalem? What is strange and unusual here? Is it only now that you are living sinful lives, in contrast to living in justice and good works in the beginning? Did you not, long before today and from the beginning, wallow in myriad transgressions of the Law? With the sea being parted and rocks split asunder and so many miracles taking place in the desert, did not you worship a calf? Did you not often try to kill Moses by hurling stones and myriad other methods and stir God to wrath with your blaspheming? Were you not initiated into the rites of Beelphegor? Did you not sacrifice your sons and your daughters to the daemons, and did you not serve alien gods? Have you not displayed every kind of sin and evil? How is it that God did not turn away from you, but after the killing of children, after the worship of idols, **{T422}** after so much ingratitude, He even allowed various prophets to be among you, and they worked signs and **{B411}** marvelous wonders? Why, when of old you were impious and perpetrated myriad wicked things, did you enjoy such great favour and protection and providence from God, but now, when you neither worship idols nor kill children, do you live in terrible captivity and tribulation? Was there one God then and another now? Is He not the same who dispensed the former and now brings the latter about? Why, when your sins were greater, did you have great honour from God, but now when your sins are less serious, has He totally turned away from you and given you over to unlimited disgrace? But even if you remain silent, the stones cry out. Because you raised your hands against the Master, that is why there is no remediation for you, and hence neither forgiveness nor defence. For what you dared to do back then was against [His] servants, but now you clearly conceal all those events of old because of your mania against Christ the Master of all, because of which you are more severely punished.

Nor do you distance yourselves from the sheer stupidity and madness of your fathers by calling Him an imposter and lawbreaker. If Christ was an imposter, as you say, and a lawbreaker, He [God] should have held you in high honour for killing him. For if Phineas, by killing some law-breaker, brought to an end all God’s wrath against the nation —

then Phineas stood up and made atonement and the destructive plague ceased, and this was credited to him as righteousness — *Ps 105(106):30-31*

 — even more so should this have happened to you, if indeed the one crucified by you was a lawbreaker. **{B412}**

And from what is it clear, they say, that God has completely turned away from us? The facts themselves cry out and let forth a voice clearer than that of a trumpet through the destruction of the city, through the desolation of the temple, through everything else. But it was humans, they say, who brought these on, not God. If these things were the work of humans and not of the wrath of God, your [punishment] should have stopped with the capture [of the city] and your disgrace and suffering not progress beyond that. But suppose, in accordance with your argument, that humans destroyed the walls and demolished the city and overturned the altar. **{T423}** Was it humans who also brought an end to the [line of] prophets? Was it they who abolished the grace of the spirit and the other things that are held in reverence by you, such as the voice coming from Mercy Seat, the power that comes with the anointing, the ‘declaration’ of the priest from the stones? For the Jewish way of life did not have all of its origins from down here, but the greater number, and the holier ones, were from above, from the heavens. What do I mean by this? Having allowed sacrifices to be conducted, the altar and the wood and the knife and the priest were below, but the fire that was about to enter the sanctuary and consume the offerings had its origin from above. For no human brought fire into the temple, but a flame brought down from above completed the sacrifice during the service. Again, if there was something that had to be learned, a voice came from between the Cherubim in the Mercy Seat and foretold what was to happen in the future. In the same way, a certain flashing occurred on the stones on the breast of the high priest, which they called the ‘declaration’, and this **{B413}** prefigured what was to occur in the future. Similarly, whenever someone was to be anointed, the grace of the spirit hovered above and the oil ran, and prophets served in these matters, and many times a cloud of smoke filled the sanctuary. So that you would not act impudently nor attribute the vanishing of these things to humans, He not only permitted the city to fall and the temple be abandoned, but he also caused those things to be removed which had their origins from the heavens. For why is it that you do not now have prophets nor any of those other things from God? Is it not obvious that this is after God turned away from your affairs? And they say, from what is this clear? Since before this, when you lived in ungodliness, you were completely successful, but while you now seem to be living a more moderate life, after the cross you are subject to greater punishment and enjoy none of the things that you used to, nor will you enjoy them, as the divine prophecies clearly declare.

If you wish, we will marshal other prophets too who state clearly that your affairs will have an end while ours will flourish and the preaching will be extended throughout the whole *oikoumene*, and a way of offering a different kind of sacrifice will be introduced, with yours having been abolished. I do not adduce Isaiah, our earlier **{T424}** witness, nor Jeremiah nor any of the others prior to the captivity, so that you cannot say that the terrible things of which they spoke were fulfilled during the captivity, but Malachi, who prophesied clearly about your affairs after the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the city. For after they returned and regained the city and were building the temple and **{B414}** performing the sacrifices, he foretold that this total and final destruction would come about, and the abolition of the sacrifices, saying:

Shall I receive sacrifice from your hands, says the Lord Almighty, // when from the rising of the sun even unto its setting my name has been glorified among the nations, and in every land incense is offered to my name and a sacrifice that is pure. You, however, profane it. *— Mal 1:9 // 11-12*

So when were these things fulfilled, O Jews, and when was incense offered to God in every land, and a pure sacrifice? You cannot say any time other than the present, the time after the coming of Christ. For if it is not this time that he foretells, nor our sacrifice but rather the Jewish sacrifice, [then] the prophecy is contrary to the Law. For if Moses commanded that sacrifice not be brought to any place other than the place which the Lord God had chosen, and confined those sacrifices to one particular location in Jerusalem, when the prophet says ‘in every land will incense be offered, and a pure sacrifice’, he is opposed to and contradicts Moses. But let this not be the case: for the one was speaking about one kind of sacrifice, and the other about a different kind. Listen so Zephaniah concurring with these things and saying,

The Lord shall appear to all the nations and destroy all the gods of the nations; then each will worship Him in his own land. *— Zeph 2:11*

Yet this was not permitted, but Moses decreed that they worship in a single location. So when you hear the prophets foretelling and predicting that people from all over will not be forced to assemble in a single location **{B415} {T425}**but each person will worship the divine while sitting at home, what time could you say other than the present, in which our worship flourishes throughout the whole *oikoumene*, while yours has been extinguished and you journey in darkness throughout the whole *oikoumene*?

Again, that in the beginning He did not want you to give these sacrifices, listen to what Isaiah says:

The Lord says, what is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? *— Is. 1:11*

and

Who sought these things from your hands? *— Is. 1:12*

If he had required these things from the beginning, he would have inducted all those ancients who first flourished among you into this rule of life. He [the Jew] says, so how did He permit them? By making an accommodation to your weakness. And just as a physician, seeing a person with a fever who is being cranky and insufferable, wanting a cool drink and threatening to kill himself unless he gets one, will want to prevent the greater evil by supplying the lesser evil in order to avoid a violent death, so too did God act. Since he saw them raging and choking with desire for sacrifices, and prepared to desert to the idols if they didn’t get them — or rather, not prepared but having already deserted — He permitted sacrifices. And that this is the reason is evident from when this happened; for after the abominable festival they celebrated by making a calf in honour of the daemons, that was when He permitted sacrifices, saying only,

‘You rage with desire to sacrifice? So sacrifice to me.’[[11]](#footnote-11)

But having allowed this, He did not permit it until the end **{B416}** but through His most wise devisings He repealed it; and like that physician, having made a concession to the desire of the patient and then bringing a cup from home will prescribe partaking of cold drink from it alone, and when the patient has been persuaded to agree, he will secretly instruct compliant people to smash that cup, so that stealthily and without raising suspicion he might draw him [the patient] away from his desire, thus too did God act. Having permitted [them] to sacrifice, he did not allow this to happen in any place in the *oikoumene* other than in Jerusalem alone. Wherefore David says,

A hymn befits you, O God, in Sion, and a vow to you will be fulfilled in Jerusalem *— Ps 64(65):2*

Then when **{T426}** they had sacrificed for some years, He destroyed the city. Like the physician through the smashing of the cup, so too through the destruction of the city did God lead them, though unwilling, away from the thing. Since if He had openly said, ‘Keep away [from sacrifices]’, they would not have coped with it easily, by making the location essential he drew them away from their mania for the thing without them knowing it.

So suppose that God is the doctor, the city is the cup, the patient is the recalcitrant Jewish people, and the cold drink is the permission and authority to offer sacrifices. For if He did not intend to set this up, for what reason did He, who is present everywhere and fills all things, restrict such an important sacrifice to a single location? Why, having reduced worship to sacrifices, then the sacrifices to a location, then the location to a time, then the time to a single city, did He then destroy that very city? And **{B417}** what is remarkable and surprising, that while the whole *oikoumene* is accessible to the Jews, only Jerusalem, in which alone it is permissible for them to sacrifice, has become inaccessible and deserted?

Of which things, indeed, the divine word says in the *Apostolic Constitutions* as well:

Even before the dispensation of the incarnation, it is clear that God quite rightly refused the sacrifices of the Jews who, sinning against him frequently, thought that they could appease Him through sacrifices and not through repentance. — *Apost.Const. 6.22.10-13.*

For He says through the prophets,

Why do you bring me frankincense from Sheba and cinnamon from a distant land? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, and your sacrifices have given me no pleasure. *— Jer 6:20*

and,

Gather together your burnt offerings with your sacrifices and eat the meat, because I did not give you commands, when I led you out of Egypt, about burnt offerings and sacrifices. *— Jer 7:21-22*

and,

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? I am fed up with burnt offerings of rams, and I do not want the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls and goats, not even if you come to be seen by me. Who sought these things from **{T427}** your hands? Do not persist in trampling my court. If you bring me wheaten flour, it is in vain; incense is an abomination to me. I can’t bear your new moons and sabbaths and great feast. My soul despises your fasting and holy day and your festivals, I have had a surfeit of them. *— Is 1:11-14*

and,

Take away from me the noise of your odes, and let me not **{B418}** hear the psalms of your instruments. *— Amos 5:23*

and,

I will not accept calves from your house, nor he-goats from your flocks // For the oikoumene is mine and the fulness of it. Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?*— Ps 49(50):9 // 12-13*

and,

To God, sacrifice is a broken spirit. *— Ps 50:19*

and in like manner in all the Scriptures He refuses their sacrifices because of their sinning against Him in their extreme wickedness and disobedience and hard-heartedness.

The sacrifices of the impious are an abomination to the Lord, for they offer them against the law. *— Prov 21:27*

and,

Their sacrifices are as bread of mourning to them, and all who eat them will be defiled. *— Os 9:4*

Wherefore, indeed, the divine Samuel said also to Saul:

To obey is better than sacrifice, and listening is better than the fat of rams. // for behold, the Lord does not want sacrifice as much as obedience to him. — *cf. 1 Sm 15:22*

So if even before His coming he sought a pure heart and a broken spirit, how much more so would he abrogate those blood sacrifices when He came, which He did not require anyway of old, as has been said, but allowed them if they wanted to and if they offered them with the correct intention. When he says, ‘If you want to sacrifice, sacrifice to me who does not require it.’ When they became forgetful of these things and called upon a calf as a god instead of God and ascribed to it the cause of their coming out of Egypt, saying:

These are your gods, Israel, who led you out of the land of Egypt. — *Ex 32:4*

and they denied the God who through Moses had visited them in their affliction, who had worked the wonders with His hand and His rod, who had smitten the Egyptians with ten plagues, who had parted the Red Sea into divisions and **{B419}** led them though the water as though through dry land, who had drowned their enemies, who had sweetened the bitter Marah spring, who had brought water in abundance out of the hard-edged rock, who had overshadowed them with a pillar **{T428}** of cloud and a pillar of fire through immense heat and had lighted their way and guided them when they knew not which way they should go, who had given them manna from heaven and the flesh of corncrakes from the sea, who had given them laws on the mountain, whose divine and thunderous voice they were deemed worthy to hear — Him they rejected, saying to Aaron,

Make gods for us, who will go before us — *Ex 31:1, 23*

and they cast a calf and sacrificed to the idol. And from then on the patient God, angered at being treated ungratefully by them, bound them in indissoluble bonds, piling a heavy burden on them and a stiff collar, and no longer did He say, 'If you make', as He had said before the making of the calf, but 'Build an altar and sacrifice continuously — for you are forgetful and ungrateful — so that you may be constantly mindful of me.' For since the ungrateful wretches abused their power, He imposed the necessity from then on of making burnt offerings and abstaining from certain foods, and He made a distinction between clean and unclean animals (even though every animal is clean — everything that God made is very good), and he commanded various separations and purifications and ablutions and tithes and strict observances and non-work days, setting out punishment for those who disobeyed. so that under pressure and **{B420}** squeezed by the collar they would depart from the error of polytheism. Therefore it was because of their hardness of heart that He bound them, so that by sacrificing and resting and purifying and keeping observances such as these they might come to the knowledge of God who ordained and laid these things down as a law for them.

But right from the very start until the end they, with the wickedness of their behaviour and ungrateful attitude, never failed to lose sight of God and go astray and worship the creature instead of the creator, and at one point, as was said, making a calf, at another worshipping Beelphegor, at another time Baal and Thabouz and Sidonian Astarte and Molchom and Chamos, and sometimes the sun and the moon and the stars, which God made to provide light to people and not for worship, and sometimes they honoured even irrational animals, as among the Egyptians the bull Apis and the Mendesian goat, **{T429}** and silver and gold gods, as in Judaea. It was because of this that God threatened them, saying through the prophet,

Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to commit these abominations which they have committed? For they have filled the land with lawlessness, provoking me to anger. — *Ez 8:17*

It is obviously for this reason that they were destroyed, because they had angered God and had polluted that holy land from the beginning until its last and final conquest under Vespasian and Titus. For when various peoples captured and reduced her, says Theodoret,[[12]](#footnote-12) He restored her to her ancient status and dignity, but now no longer:

For first Thelephalasar (Tiglath-Pileser) took captive most of the ten tribes, second **{B421}** Salamanasar (Shalmaneser) enslaved Samaria and the cities around it, while third Senachereim laid siege to the remaining cities of Judaea and re-located many prisoners, but campaigning arrogantly and impiously against Jerusalem he justly reaped the rewards of blasphemy: losing his army struck down by God and withdrawing in shame, he was slain by his own children. After him Nabouchodonosor, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, arrived in Judaea with a large force and, having taken many talents of gold and silver and many prisoners from among the royal family and part of the sacred vessels, he imposed a tribute and departed. And after a little while Jehoiakim denounced the tax, and Nabouchodonosor, in the eleventh year of the former's reign and the eighth year of his own leadership, again campaigned against Jerusalem. Killing Jehoiakim and ordering that he be thrown from the wall, he left him unburied for some time (about which Jeremiah says,

Thus says the Lord of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah the king of Judah, 'Woe to that man, they will not lament for him, "Oh brother", nor will they weep for him, "Alas, Lord" and "Alas brother", but he will be buried with a donkey's burial and like a donkey will be hurled away from the gate of Jerusalem. — *Jer 22.18-19)*

and taking prisoner all those in authority and appointing **{T430}** Jechoniah, son of Eliakeim, as king for those left behind, he went off to Babylon. Then hearing after three months that he had **{B422}** rebelled, he came back and put him in chains and led him away into exile with many others, in his stead establishing Sedekias his father's brother to rule over the remainder, binding him with oaths to God to not rebel. But with him too violating his oaths and not wanting to pay the tribute, far from maintaining [Nabouchodonosor's] good will but having recourse to the Egyptians, he [Nabouchodonosor] came immediately, and having overcome and blinded Sedekias and captured the city with all its people, he burned the palace and the holy temple and every house, led away as prisoners all who had survived the famine and the war as well as the outstanding vessels of the Lord's temple. Joel, narrating this multitude of their disasters, says that first the caterpillar will come, what is not eaten by it will be eaten by the locust, what escapes this the nymph will destroy, and finally the detestable rust will leave absolutely nothing undamaged. For he says,

What the caterpillar leaves behind the locust will eat, what the locust leaves behind the nymph will devour, what the nymph leaves behind the rust will devour — *Joel 1:4*

For these are to be interpreted metaphorically of the Assyrian and Babylonian, calling Thalaphalasar a caterpillar, Salamanasar a locust, Senachereim a nymph, and Nabouchodonosor rust, the last to campaign and who totally laid Judaea to waste and took captive all who escaped death, as has been said.

For as the great Cyril[[13]](#footnote-13) says in turn, it happened that Judaea was conquered many times, by Assyrians and Egyptians, by Syrians and **{B423}** Moabites, Idumaeans and those called Philistines, that is, **{T431}** Palestinians; but she suffered little and after she succumbed to the appropriate disasters, she rose again with God coming to her aid, the God who had also punished her. But now, following the crucifixion of the Lord, she has been totally lost.

**256:5. The succession of kingdoms ordained by God**

Now, just as the kingdom of the Assyrians was dissolved by the Babylonians, and that of the Babylonians by the Persians, and that of the Persians by the Macedonians, and that of the Macedonians by the Romans, so too will that of the Romans be dissolved by the Antichrist and that of the Antichrist by Christ.[[14]](#footnote-14) For through the four winds does the great Zechariah teach of the four great kingdoms, those of the Chaldees and the Persians and the Macedonians and the Romans, and he speaks of the two regions of the *oikoumene* as the two mountains;[[15]](#footnote-15) for the *oikoumene* is divided into two, into Asia and Europe. And the red horses signify the murderousness of the Chaldees, the black [horses signify] the death brought on to the Babylonians by the Persians and Medes, the white [horses signify] the manifest glory of the Macedonians — for it is not like the other kingdoms — while the dappled and piebald [horses] indicate the strength and vigour of the Roman empire. When the Medes and Persians were waging war against the Babylonians, because of this they are said to be progressing and indeed to quell the anger of the Lord; for when they turned cruel against the people of God, for this reason they were delivered into the hands of the Persian Cyrus. That the white horses, that is, the Macedonians, proceed after the **{B424}** black indicates that in their turn the Macedonians will overcome the kingdom of the Persians. And that the dappled [horses] go towards the south shows that the Romans are to make war against Jerusalem; for the city lies in the south. That they [the horses] are commanded to patrol the earth again teaches us that every kingdom comes to be established through God.

1. The whole of ch. 256 = GM 405.10–415.11 // 415.18–433.21. GM quotes a variety of sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. That is, the Jewish hope of an end to their sufferings. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Chrysostom, *On the epistle to the Romans*, PG 60, 584.41–585.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Chrysostom, *Adv. Iud.* 5.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Greek τρᾶγος αἰγῶν is a literal rendering of the Hebrew [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Chrysostom, *Adv. Iud.* 5.6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. r. 465-424 BCE [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This is in GM but not in Chrysostom. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. KJV: ‘the street shall be built again, and the wall’; but περίτειχος is read as an adjective by Eusebius *DE* ed. Heikel, 8.2.50.6: ἡ δὲ [πόλις] ᾠκοδομήθη πλατεῖα καὶ περίτειχος, ὡς προεφητεύθη, and SLog 70.33-34: καὶ ᾠκοδομήθη πλατεῖα καὶ περίτειχος ἡ πόλις. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Eusebius, Theodoret, Zonaras *Epitome* 1.208.20 ff interpret this to mean the end of the succession of legitimate high priests upon the death of Hyrkanos in 30 BCE and hence of legitimate spiritual judgements. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. A fictional quotation. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Theodoret, *Interpetatio in Ezechielem*, PG 81, 812.14 - [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cyril, *Commentarius in Isaiam prophetam*, PG 70, 25.5-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Here follows a precis of Cyril *Commentarius in xii prophetas minores* vol 2 pp 357 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Zechariah 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)