

The Church of St. Spas

The Church of St. Spas is amazingly exquisite. It was built in 1609 with a donation from a rich citizen of Nessebar, according to a donation inscription above the southern entrance, which reads: "During the archpriestship of the all-holy metropolitan of the most holy metropolis of Messemvria, Mr. Kyprian, and during the priesthood of the most devout among priests, Agapius, priest and sacelary, was inscribed this divine temple of our most holy mistress, Theotokos and ever-present Mary, called by the name of Ascension, through the expenses of the most noble chief Mr. Theodokis Cappaduca for the benefit and spiritual salvation of his own soul and for the consolation of pious and Christ-loving auxiliary men and women... 1609."

The modest-looking temple, built of stones and mud, is the only Christian temple built during the Ottoman presence in 1609. The temple was painted with inspiration and passion by the Nesebar painters. According to the requirements of the Ottomans, the building was not supposed to stand out among its surroundings. Its dimensions are modest (12x6 meters). It had a wooden roof, no bell tower and dome, with small windows. Its eastern facade was half dug into the ground. But the murals are breathtaking! They were restored and preserved to this day in the Church, which became one of the most visited museums on the peninsula.



The church "St. Spas" is for many years known with the gravestone of the Byzantine princess Mataisa Kantakuzina Palaiologos (born with the name of Maria), who was promised to and engaged with the future Bulgarian king Mihail Asen being a little child. When the time came, they married, but shortly after the marriage, Mihail Asen lost his life in one of the many of Bulgaria's battles with the Ottoman turks. The tombstone of Mataisa was embedded in the floor of "St. Spas" in order

to protect it from abuse by the Ottomans, who could use it for construction. Now, the plaque is in the Archaeological Museum of Nesebar. The inscription on it reads: "The servant of God, Mataisa Kantakuzina Paleologina, rested in the year 1441, the month of November, indict V".

Common borders. Common solutions.