

Lamentations 1:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

Analysis

A horrifying violation: "The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary" (yado parash tsar al kol-machmudeha ki ra'atah goyim ba'u mik dasah). The "pleasant things" (machmudim) include temple treasures, but the real desecration is gentiles entering the sanctuary (mikdash, מִקְדָּשׁ)—the holy place. God's command was explicit: "whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation" (tsivita lo-yavo'u va-kahal lakh). Deuteronomy 23:3-6 excluded certain nations from the assembly. More broadly, only priests could enter the temple's inner courts; Uzziah's presumptuous entry caused leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Now pagan soldiers trampled the holy place with impunity. This represents the ultimate judgment—God removing His protective presence, allowing the sacred to be profaned. When God's glory departed (Ezekiel 10-11), the temple became merely a building, subject to destruction like any other. The verse confronts the terrible reality that religious institutions provide no automatic protection; their holiness derives solely from God's presence, which covenant breaking drives away.

Historical Context

The sanctuary's sanctity was fundamental to Israel's worship. The temple complex had graduated levels of holiness: outer courts where gentiles and women could enter, the Court of Israel for Jewish men, the Court of Priests, the Holy Place (accessible only to priests), and the Most Holy Place (only for the high priest once yearly). Violating these boundaries meant death. When Babylonian soldiers conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC, they showed no regard for sacred space. 2 Kings 25:9 records: "he burnt the house of the LORD." Before burning it, they looted it (2 Kings 25:13-17). The Babylonians were "heathen" (goyim, גּוֹיִם)—uncircumcised pagans who worshiped Marduk and other false gods. Their defiling presence in God's sanctuary was abominable. Yet this occurred because God permitted it as judgment. Ezekiel 8-11 describes why: the temple itself had been defiled by Israel's secret idolatries. Elders offered incense to false gods in the temple chambers (Ezekiel 8:11), women wept for Tammuz at the gate (8:14), and men worshiped the sun in the inner court (8:16). God's glory departed because His own people had already profaned the sanctuary. The principle appears in Jesus's pronouncement: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38). When God withdraws His presence, the most magnificent religious structure becomes empty form. Conversely, Ephesians 2:19-22 shows that believers—Jews and gentiles united in Christ—become God's holy temple, indwelt by His Spirit.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the violation of the sanctuary by gentiles illustrate the principle that external religious forms cannot substitute for heart obedience?
2. What does it mean that God 'permitted' this desecration as judgment, and how does this inform our understanding of divine sovereignty over even blasphemous actions?

3. In what ways might we profane the temple of our own bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19) or the church (1 Corinthians 3:16-17) through sin?
4. How does Christ's tearing of the temple veil (Matthew 27:51) both judge the old system and open access for all believers to the true Holy of Holies?

Interlinear Text

יָד	פָּרָשׁ	אֵרֶץ	כָּל	עַל	מִמְּמֹדֶת יְהִי
his hand	hath spread out	The adversary	H5921	H3605	upon all her pleasant things
H3027	H6566	H6862			H4261
פִּי	כִּאֵת הָ	גּוֹיִם	יָבַא	מִלְּדוֹשׁ הָ	אֲשֶׁר
H3588	for she hath seen	that the heathen	entered	into her sanctuary	H834
H7200		H1471	H935	H4720	
צַו יְהָה	יָבַא	לֹא	בְּקָבֶד	לְ	לֹ:
whom thou didst command	H3808	entered	into thy congregation	H0	
H6680		H935	H6951		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 23:3 (Parallel theme): An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:

Jeremiah 51:51 (Parallel theme): We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.

Nehemiah 13:1 (Parallel theme): On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

Lamentations 1:7 (Parallel theme): Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

