

Psalms 74:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

Analysis

But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers—The Hebrew *pittûhîm* (פִּתּוּחִים) refers to the intricate engravings and wood carvings that adorned Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:29, 32). The brutal imagery of *kappîsh* (כַּפִּישׁ, axes) and *kêlappôth* (כִּלְפֹת, hammers) smashing these sacred works portrays the Babylonian desecration in 586 BC with visceral force. What took seven years of skilled craftsmanship to create (1 Kings 6:38) was destroyed **at once** (יָחַד, *yaḥdāw*—together, suddenly).

This verse marks the transition from remembering God's mighty acts (vv. 1-15) to lamenting the present devastation. The psalmist's anguish stems not from aesthetic loss but from the theological crisis: God's dwelling place, where His Name resided (Deuteronomy 12:11), has been violated. Asaph's question "Why?" (v. 1) finds no answer, only the raw reality of covenant curses fulfilled (Leviticus 26:31; Deuteronomy 28:52).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem's coming destruction (Luke 19:41-44), which occurred in AD 70 when Rome obliterated Herod's temple. Both destructions vindicate God's warnings while demonstrating that physical structures, however sacred, cannot contain His glory. Christ Himself became the true temple (John 2:19-21), and believers are now God's sanctuary (1 Corinthians 3:16)—temples that no weapon can ultimately destroy.

Historical Context

Psalm 74 is attributed to Asaph (likely the guild bearing his name) and describes the Babylonian destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. The vivid detail suggests either eyewitness testimony or the immediacy of generational trauma. Nebuchadnezzar's forces systematically dismantled the temple's treasures before burning it (2 Kings 25:9-17), fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecies.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What sacred things in your life might God allow to be dismantled in order to reveal where your true security lies?
2. How does the temporary nature of all earthly temples—even the most beautiful—point you toward Christ as the eternal dwelling place of God?
3. When facing devastating loss, how can you hold together both lament (like Asaph) and trust in God's sovereignty?

Interlinear Text

עֲבָדָה	פְּתוּחַ יָדָה	יָדָה	בְּכֶשֶׁל יָדָה	כִּלְפֵי וְתֵדָה
H6258	the carved work	thereof at once	with axes	and hammers
	H6603	H3162	H3781	H3597

יִהְיוּ לְמִן:

But now they break down

H1986

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 6:18 (Parallel theme): And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers: all was cedar; there was no stone seen.

1 Kings 6:35 (Parallel theme): And he carved thereon cherubims and palm trees and open flowers: and covered them with gold fitted upon the carved work.

1 Kings 6:29 (Parallel theme): And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without.

1 Kings 6:32 (Parallel theme): The two doors also were of olive tree; and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims, and upon the palm trees.