

Psalms 74:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

Analysis

They have cast fire into thy sanctuary (שָׁלַחַ בְּאֵשׁ מִקְדָּשׁ, shilhû vâ'esh miqdâshekâ)—The verb shâlah means to send forth or hurl, suggesting violent, deliberate desecration. The miqdâsh (sanctuary) was not merely a building but the meeting place between holy God and sinful humanity, mediated through sacrifice and priesthood. Fire, which should have consumed only prescribed offerings on the altar, now consumed the entire structure—a reversal of sacred order.

They have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground—The Hebrew *ḥillēlû* (חִלְלָה, defiled/profaned) is the same word used for violating a virgin or breaking covenant (Leviticus 21:9). God's Name (shêm, שֵׁם) represented His character and presence dwelling among His people (Deuteronomy 12:5). To cast this dwelling place **to the ground** (lā'āres, לָאָרֶשׁ) was to desecrate what was most holy, reducing the vertical connection between heaven and earth to rubble.

Yet this judgment was not arbitrary. God Himself promised to profane His sanctuary if Israel broke covenant (Ezekiel 24:21). The Babylonians were instruments of divine discipline, not victors over Yahweh. This paradox—God judging His own house—reappears in the New Testament: judgment begins with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17), and Christ's body (the true temple) was broken before resurrection could come.

Historical Context

2 Kings 25:9 records that Nebuzaradan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, "burnt the house of the LORD" along with all Jerusalem's great houses. The temple fire fulfilled warnings given through Moses (Leviticus 26:31), Solomon (1 Kings 9:7-8), and Jeremiah (7:14). This catastrophe shattered Israel's theology of divine presence and forced a reckoning with covenant unfaithfulness.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's willingness to judge His own sanctuary challenge comfortable assumptions about His protection?
2. What does it mean that Christ's body—the ultimate temple—had to be broken before God's presence could dwell in all believers?
3. In what ways might you be profaning God's dwelling place (your body, 1 Corinthians 6:19) through sin, requiring His purifying discipline?

Interlinear Text

מְלֹא	לֹא	רֹא	שְׁלֹחַ	בְּ	אֵשׁ	וְ	שְׁלֹחַ	וְ
they have cast	fire	into thy sanctuary	to the ground	they have defiled				
H7971	H784	H4720	H776	H2490				
מְשֻׁבֵּן	שְׁמַנְיָה							
by casting down the dwelling place	of thy name							
H4908	H8034							

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:39 (Parallel theme): Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

2 Kings 25:9 (Parallel theme): And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

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