



[Ezekiel 24:20-21](#)

(20) Then I answered them, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying,
(21) 'Speak to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul; and your sons and daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.

New King James Version

[God](#) promised to profane His own sanctuary! He promised to break and pollute His holy place—His own Temple. What would prompt God to destroy His own habitation on earth?

The words He uses to describe His sanctuary give us a clue as to what aroused His jealousy. In verse 21, God describes the Temple as "*your* arrogant boast, the desire of *your* eyes, the delight of *your* soul." These are strange descriptors, as the Temple was supposed to be *His* house, *His* dwelling place, and a place of sacrifice to *Him*. Yet what God emphasizes is the perspective of the people. In verse 25, He further describes the Temple as "*their* stronghold, *their* [joy](#) and *their* glory, and that on which they set their minds."

Their focus was entirely wrong. Their boast, the desire of their eyes, the delight of their soul, their stronghold, their joy, their glory—all of these should have been God! They were supposed to be setting their minds on God—not on the physical Temple! The Temple was a means to facilitate the proper worship of God, and as such, it was extremely important. God commanded it to be built, and commanded it to be rebuilt after He caused it to be destroyed. But the Temple was not supposed to become more admired than God or to be the source of their security.

In the same way, God founded the church—the spiritual Temple—to be a community of called-out believers, given His Spirit. It is a spiritual organism, not contained within the confines of a physical organization. Its purpose is to "perfect [or, *complete*] the saints"—to foster spiritual growth into the [image of God](#). The church—and the corporate organizations into which the believers are gathered—serve a vital role, for God does nothing on a whim.

Yet, like Israel and the Temple, either other believers or the individual organizations can become larger in our minds than God. Because they are visible and tangible, they can receive more of our attention than God, causing us to forget Him—even if only slightly. If regarded or used improperly, these things transform from being the means to an end to the end itself. As the example of Israel shows, God is quite willing to dismantle violently what He has commissioned to be built if it ends up drawing His people away from Him. The church of God is not immune to this.

— David C. Grabbe

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[**Worshipping the Temple \(Part One\)**](#)

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