

Amos 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

Analysis

In the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him (בַּיּוֹם פָּקַדְתִּי) b'yom pokdi pish'ei yisrael alav)—The verb פָּקַד (pakad, 'visit, attend to, punish') appears frequently in judgment contexts; God's 'visitation' brings reckoning. **I will also visit the altars of Beth-el** (וְפָקַדְתִּי עַל-מִזְבְּחוֹת בֵּית-אֵל) ufakadti al-mizbechot beit-el)—Bethel's golden calf altar, established by Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:28-29), epitomized Israel's syncretistic worship. **The horns of the altar shall be cut off** (וְנִגְדְּעֵו קָרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ) v'nigde'u karnot hamizbeach)—altar horns provided sanctuary (1 Kings 1:50), but now even that refuge is destroyed.

The cutting off of altar horns symbolizes judgment reaching even sacred spaces. No false worship, religious tradition, or holy place can protect covenant-breakers. This prefigures Christ's prophecy that Jerusalem's temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2)—structures of false confidence collapse under divine judgment.

Historical Context

Bethel ('House of God') was where Jacob encountered God (Genesis 28:19), making Jeroboam's idolatry there particularly blasphemous. This sanctuary became the center of Israel's apostate worship. In 722 BC, the Assyrians destroyed these altars; Josiah later desecrated the site completely (2 Kings 23:15-16).

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What false refuges—religious traditions, church buildings, rituals—do people trust instead of Christ alone?
2. How does God's judgment on religious institutions that bear His name warn contemporary churches?
3. In what ways might modern Christians be like Israel—maintaining religious forms while living in covenant unfaithfulness?

Interlinear Text

בַּיּוֹם	וְפָקַדְתִּי	פְּשָׁעִי	עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל	
H3588 That in the day	H3117 that I shall visit	H6485 the transgressions	H5921 of Israel	H3478
עַל	בֵּית	בְּמִזְבֵּחַ	אֵל	קָרְבָּן וְתַּרְמָדָעָו וְתַּרְמָדָעָו
that I shall visit	H5921	H4196	H1008	H7161
לְאָרֶץ:	יָנַפְלֶל	וּפְמִזְבֵּחַ		
of the altar	H5307	H776		

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 23:15 (Sin): Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

