

Amos 3:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

You only have I known of all the families of the earth:
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Analysis

This verse articulates one of Scripture's most important theological principles regarding election and accountability. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (raq etkhem yadati mikol mishpehot ha-adamah) declares Israel's unique covenant relationship with God. The verb "known" (yada) means far more than intellectual awareness—it signifies intimate, covenant relationship characterized by choice, commitment, and exclusive love. God chose Israel alone from all earth's peoples to be His treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2; Exodus 19:5-6).

Israel likely expected the conclusion: "therefore I will bless you above all nations." Instead, Amos delivers shocking reversal: "therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" ('al-ken efqod 'alekem et kol-avonotekem). The logic contradicts natural expectation but reveals covenant reality. Privilege increases responsibility; intimacy intensifies accountability. The same special relationship that makes Israel unique also makes their sin more grievous. They aren't judged despite being chosen but precisely because they were chosen.

The verb paqad ("punish/visit") has legal overtones of inspection, reckoning, and judicial sentence. God will "visit" Israel's iniquities upon them—making them accountable for sins they thought covenant status excused. The phrase "all your iniquities" (kol-avonotekem) emphasizes comprehensive judgment. No sin escapes divine notice; every violation faces reckoning. This principle appears throughout Scripture: "To whom much is given, of him shall much be required" (Luke 12:48).

Israel's election meant greater revelation, greater blessings, and therefore greater obligation and accountability.

Historical Context

Israel's election began with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), intensified through Moses and the Exodus, and was formalized at Sinai through covenant. God delivered Israel from Egypt, gave them His law, dwelt among them in the tabernacle, and brought them into the promised land. No other nation experienced such direct, sustained divine intervention and revelation. This made Israel unique among all earth's peoples.

By Amos's time, Israel interpreted election as guarantee of protection regardless of behavior. They continued sacrificial worship (Amos 4:4-5, 5:21-23), assumed God's presence assured security (5:14, 18), and believed their Abrahamic descent made them immune to judgment (though Amos doesn't directly cite this, it's implied in their complacency). The people longed for the "Day of the LORD," expecting it to bring vindication against enemies and blessing for Israel (5:18-20).

Amos shattered this presumption. The Day of the LORD would bring darkness, not light (5:18-20). Covenant relationship didn't exempt Israel from judgment but subjected them to stricter standards. God's exclusive knowledge of Israel meant exclusive accountability. Within 30 years, Assyria conquered the northern kingdom (722 BC), proving Amos correct: election without obedience leads to judgment, not escape from it.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the principle "to whom much is given, much is required" apply to Christians who possess the full revelation of Scripture and the indwelling Spirit?
2. In what ways do modern believers presume God's love and election nullify accountability for sin?
3. What does it mean that intimacy with God increases rather than decreases moral responsibility?

Interlinear Text

בָּאָדָם הַ מִשְׁפָּחָה וְתַּ מִכְּ לָאַתְּכָם מִ בְּ כִּי
H7535 H853 You only have I known H3605 of all the families H4940 of the earth H127

עַל כִּי אַפְּקָן דְּ כָּל אַתְּ עַלְיכָם
H5921 H3651 therefore I will punish H5921 H853 H3605
H6485

עַוְנָתִיכֶם:

you for all your iniquities
H5771

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 7:6 (Parallel theme): For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

1 Peter 4:17 (Parallel theme): For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Deuteronomy 10:15 (Parallel theme): Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

Romans 2:9 (Parallel theme): Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

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