

Deuteronomy 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Analysis

The comparison 'As the nations which the LORD destroyeth... so shall ye perish' makes Israel's potential fate explicit. The same God who judges Canaanite nations for wickedness will judge Israel for the same offenses. This destroys any notion of unconditional immunity—election doesn't mean freedom from judgment but greater accountability. The reason given is singular and sufficient: 'because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.' The Hebrew *lo tishme'un* (would not be obedient/hearken) emphasizes willful disobedience, not mere failure. Privilege increases responsibility; greater light increases accountability. As Jesus said, 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required' (Luke 12:48).

Historical Context

This principle governed Israel's history. God destroyed Canaanite nations for iniquity (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24-28); He would judge Israel by the same standard. The Assyrian and Babylonian conquests fulfilled this precisely—Israel perished like the nations they were meant to dispossess. The prophets emphasized this irony: Israel would suffer the fate of those they judged (Jeremiah 7:12-15; Ezekiel 16:44-52). The New Testament warns believers of the same principle: God's judgment begins with His house (1 Peter 4:17). Professing Christians who persist in disobedience face severer judgment than pagans ignorant of truth (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God judges His people by the same standards as unbelievers affect your view of sin?
2. In what ways does covenant privilege increase rather than decrease your accountability to obey God?
3. What disobedience are you tolerating that you assume God will overlook because of your Christian profession?

Interlinear Text

מִפְנִיכֶם	אֲשֶׁר	תִּהְיוּ הָנָשָׁנִים	תִּהְרֹא בְּפָנָיכֶם	כִּי
As the nations	H834	of the LORD	destroyeth	before your face
H1471		H3068	H6	H6440
destroyeth	because	ye would not be obedient	unto the voice	of the LORD
H6	H3808	H8085	H6963	H3068
אֱלֹהִיכֶם:		לֹא יָרַק בְּתָרְבֵּן	לֹא תָשִׁמְעַן	לֹא תִּהְרֹא בְּפָנָיכֶם
your God				
H430				

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