

The Abuse of Privilege

Amos 3:1-15

With this lesson we begin a new section—a new message—spoken by the prophet Amos. It has already been established in chapters one and two that there is no turning back the judgment of God on His chosen nation of Israel. In chapters 3-6 God's complaints against Israel are further elaborated in a collection of separate messages. Each message carries a different emphasis but they are all designed to bring the people face to face with their sin and the devastating consequences. Every word is weighted. Let us listen and learn!

Open Your Heart: “Purify *us*, O God, with Your precious cleansing blood that flowed so freely for *us* on that unforgettable day at Calvary.”

For many years Israel (and Judah) had been relaxing in comparative peace and prosperity, so they must have been very startled to hear Amos' declaration in Amos 3:1-2. **Read** these verses carefully. Then **read** Amos 3:3-8.

1. As Amos gets further into the urgency of his message he begins each new prophecy in chapters 3-5 with the warning _____.
2. When God addresses Israel in chapter three, is He talking to the northern kingdom, whose capital is Samaria, or to the whole kingdom of Israel—north and south? Give the reason for your answer from the text.
3. What is the message of surpassing importance that both parts of the nation must hear?

The Hebrew word translated “chosen” (verse 2) describes the most intimate of relationships, based on mutual consent. Compare Exodus 19:3-8 with Amos 3:3

4. a. What do we learn about the special responsibility that accompanies the privilege of being God's treasured people? See Luke 12:48b for the basic principle.
- b. In what ways had the entire nation of Israel been abusing the unique privilege bestowed upon them by God? (Consult Amos 2:4b; Hosea 11:1-4; Malachi 2:10-12.)

Amos continues by confronting the people with a rapid series of illuminating questions (3:3-6). **Reread** these verses from several translations. Consider what God is doing and the points He is making. Each pair of questions signifies “cause” and “effect,” or “warning” and consequence.”

5. What is God trying to show His people with each of these revealing illustrations?

Verse 4 –

Verse 5 –

Verse 6 –

6. What light does Amos 3:6 shed on events of world history? Keep the context of the book of Amos in mind.

“The Lion has roared”— “the Sovereign LORD has spoken” but did Israel hear the sound of approaching danger? Did they listen? When the trumpet sounded did the people “tremble?” Did they believe that when disaster comes to a city, the Lord has caused it?

7. How would you explain the lack of response on the part of Israel to Amos’ message?

As believers in Jesus Christ we are also privileged people—we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight—in love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons to the praise of His glorious grace—in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. We have been made alive in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms! (From Ephesians 1)

8. How may believers today be abusing the incredible privilege we have been given in our Lord Jesus Christ? *Examine your own heart before commenting.*

9. What warnings are there to be seen today of coming judgment from God? (See 2 Timothy 3:1-5 for example.)

Double Punishment (Amos 3:9-10)

Using a dramatic method frequently employed by the prophets, Amos called on other nations to witness the charges against Israel. **Read** Amos 3:9-10 several times. Try to picture the scene.

10. Who is invited to come and see the Lord pronounce judgment on Israel? Where were they to gather and why was this significant? (To identify Ashdod see Amos 1:8.)

The two nations to whom Israel ought to have borne witness concerning the righteousness of God now become witnesses of her apostasy. Their chastisement would not only be *painful* but also *insulting*.

11. Why do you think God may have used this tactic to confront Israel at this time?

12. What would those nations who were invited to come and witness the Lord's pronouncement of judgment observe about Israel's lifestyle (Amos 3:9b, 10, 15)? Describe these sins in contemporary terms.

Since Israel had for centuries given the pagan nations a dreadful impression of God, He would be His own witness and vindicate His name before a watching world. The punishment is now stated in abrupt and vivid language. Note how the LORD refers to Himself in this section.

13. **Reread** Amos 3:11-15. How does the LORD's judgment against Israel fit her crimes (verses 10-11, 15)? (Read the notes at the top of the next page before answering the question.)

Notes: 1.) Fortresses were castles or strongholds where citizens could gather and feel secure from the attacks of their enemies. 2.) According to the law, people in danger could find refuge by grasping the horns of the altar (see 1 Kings 1:50-51). 3.) The picture in Amos 3:12 is that of a shepherd trying to save from the devouring lion even the most insignificant parts of the sheep,

because of the shepherd's love for his own sheep. In wrath God remembers mercy—He rescues from the destruction a small remnant.

14. What elements in this prophecy would give rise to both despair and hope among the people?

15. What punishment awaits those who remain unrepentant of their sins? (See 2 Peter 2:4-9.)

16. God's plan for His people is seen more clearly in the New Testament. How can sinful people escape the judgment of hell? (Look at Romans 10:9-10 and John 14:5-6.)

17. a. Take some time to reflect on the truths that have spoken to your heart during this study. In what ways have you been convicted by the Spirit of God?

b. Invite God to work on your heart and mind in the areas noted above. Write a prayer to God below. Be honest about your hopes and fears.

♥ **Store in your heart:** Amos 3:2-3

Oh God, may we learn—deeply and in a way that changes us—that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

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