



Obadiah 10-21 – What Goes Around Comes Around

Lesson 3

Teacher's Note: *Don't forget to check up on homework! Ask your group if they have had the chance to read through Obadiah several times and pick up on the major themes of the book. If they have written them down or can remember them, ask them what their list is. Tell them that we will be returning to the question of the themes of Obadiah later in the lesson.*

Ever found yourself discouraged by the seeming success of the wicked? If so, you're not alone. Many times in God's Word the saints cry out to God asking how long before he does something about the wrong that seems to be so prevalent and so successful. In Psalm 73 Asaph transparently admits that he was about ready to quit because it seemed that the wicked prospered and God didn't care. In Revelation 6:9-11 the martyrs in heaven cry out asking God to avenge them and to judge the world. God does not expect Christians to be unbothered by the evil they see in the world around them. He does expect him to work in his time to bring justice.

Why do you think it is that God includes accounts in Scripture of his people begging him to do justice?

As we come to Obadiah, it would appear that Judah felt discouraged by the seeming success of the wicked. Edom had

joined invaders attacking the city of Jerusalem and had used the difficult time to take advantage of and plunder Judah. While Edom might have been partying it up with the rest of the nations, God warns that he has seen and that his judgment is coming for them and for the whole world.

Last time we saw the following outline:

God describes the judgment of Edom (1-14)

God warns Edom that judgment is coming (1-4)

God details the nature of the coming judgment (5-9)

God gives the reasons for the coming judgment (10-14)

God describes the Day of the Lord (15-21)

God's judgment on Judah's enemies (15-16)

God's restoration of his people (17-21)

We then unpacked verses 1-9, the first two subpoints under the first main point. There we saw that Edom's pride in thinking they were untouchable was strongly renounced by God. In this lesson we will be finishing up the first point describing the judgment coming upon Edom as well as studying how this judgment serves as a paradigm for coming judgment on all the nations.

I. God explains why judgment is coming on Edom (10-14)

The exact historical situation that lies behind these statements has been hotly debated. Some think that this took place during the mid-800's B.C. under the reign of Jehoram (848-841), while other think that it happened when Judah fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In either case, it is clear that God's anger with Edom resulted from their taking advantage of Jerusalem during a time of great vulnerability.

As you read through Scripture, be on the lookout for repeated words as they often can help you understand what the big ideas of a passage are. For example, what

word do you see showing up again and again in verses 11-14? Why do you think this is?

In this section, the word “day” shows up quite a few times (10, to be exact). This repetition is highlighting the word, leading the reader up to verse 15 where God declares that his day is coming. Because of what Edom did in that day, another day is coming when God will judge. As we study verses 10-14 carefully, we see at least 3 ways in which God is upset with Edom.

The first verse in this section (v 10) sets up a general principle that God will bring shame upon the proud nation of Edom for their violence. What that violence looks like is then detailed throughout the following verses.

A. Edom reacted arrogantly to the pain of Judah.

The arrogance of Edom is a theme that we considered last time, but it comes up again in this section. Twice Edom is said to have looked upon the city in the day of disaster (vv 12- 13). The idea here is that Edom had an arrogant, proud look. Gloating is the idea. When disaster fell upon Judah, Edom smugly looked on the situation and even went so far as to rejoice in the pain of Judah and to boast (v 12).

Why do you think Edom would have been happy at Judah’s destruction?

Sadly, that same spirit of Edom is all too common today. When those we dislike or who dislike us face calamity, the tendency can be to have a smug, arrogant reaction that thinks “Good, I’m glad they got what was coming to them.” Too often we can have a heart like Jonah that doesn’t want to see wicked people be forgiven, or a

heart like the older brother of the prodigal son who sulked when good things happened to someone he felt didn't deserve the attention. The sin of malice, of wanting bad things to happen to others, continues to be a very real temptation today.

How do we distinguish a heart of malice that wishes evil upon others and a genuine, God-given desire for justice? How do we avoid being like Jonah while still allowing for the slain saints of Revelation to cry for justice?

B. Edom joined in plundering the city.

But Edom did more than gleefully watch the destruction of Judah, she went so far as to participate. The passage builds on the initial observation of violence done against Judah by describing Edom as joining in with those who were plundering Judah (v 11) and as coming into the city itself to loot the wealth (13). God took note of the violence and cruelty of Edom. While it might seem like they were getting away with this at the time, God was watching. And God will always bring justice.

C. Edom took advantage of those who were suffering.

Finally, this brief section of the book ends on a particularly low note. Edom captured those who were trying to escape and handed them over to Judah's enemies (v 14). This action appears to be done out of pure malice and for no reason. The unnecessary cruelty of Edom is matched all too often by the unnecessary cruelty of humanity that we see all around us. But God sees and God promises that those who proudly act that way today will one day be ashamed.

II. God describes the Day the of the Lord on the nations (15-21)

Up until this point the focus of the book of Obadiah has been on one nation – Edom. Now, however, the prophet lifts his eyes to see the coming of God’s justice upon all the nations (KJV “heathen”), and not just on the tiny country of Edom.

Can you remember what was said about the Day of the Lord from previous lessons?

As we saw in our first lesson in this series, the Day of the Lord includes judgment on the enemies of God and vindication of God’s people. Both elements are found in second half of Obadiah. God begins by warning about the punishment he is bringing on the nations and ends by describing the future national dominance of Judah.

A. Judgment on the enemies of God’s people (15-16).

God turns the corner now and warns the nations, not just Edom, that he will bring back their own violence upon them. Those who have taken advantage of the destitute and have gleefully stolen and plundered Judah will one day be the exiles standing by in horror as their homes are destroyed and their possessions looted (v 15). God describes the nations as drinking in celebration in the destroyed capital of Jerusalem, but threatens them that now they will have to drink, likely a reference to drinking the cup of God’s wrath (v 16; cf Jeremiah 25:15; Isaiah 51:17, 22).

If indeed Obadiah is the first of the writing prophets, then this book marks the beginning of a theme that will be expanded on and developed throughout the rest of the prophets. God is promising that the nations of the world will one day be judged by him, a

theme we see developed particularly in Joel, Zechariah, and through the New Testament as well. Galatians warns that people not be deceived, because God will not be mocked (that is, no one will make a fool of God). What a person sows, he will reap, whether that be bad or good (Galatians 6:7-8).

Why do people think they will get away with wrong actions, that God will be “mocked”?

The warning here is stark. The end result of God’s judgment is that “they shall be as though they had not been” (v 16). God’s punishment may be delayed but when it comes it is swift and it is severe. Edom didn’t know how long it would be before God’s judgment, but they were warned that it was near and that they would suffer an awful price unless they turned. Indeed, Obadiah later describes Edom as stubble that is set on fire and destroyed (v 18).

Why do you think it is that Edom ignored the dire warnings of God?

Why do people today ignore the warnings of Scripture?

B. The restoration and vindication of God’s people (17-21).

The Day of the Lord is two-sided, as we see here in Obadiah. God will bring punishment and destruction, but he will also save his people. God will allow some on Mount Zion to be delivered, to be set apart to God, and to be restored to what was taken from them. In fact, there is a large section at the end of this book that details all of the land that Judah will

recover. It is difficult to know exactly where all of these locations are found, but generally they are in the south (mount Esau, v 19), the west (the plain of the Philistines, v 19), and north (the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria, v 19; unto Zarephath, v 20). What had been ripped away from Judah would one day be returned, and in that day the kingdom would belong to God (v 21).

This quick statement that God would be king over all, almost a throwaway at the end of the book, becomes the longing of the Old Testament prophets. This theme is built up and developed until eventually Jesus comes forward as the King who will one day rule over all. Again, this is another theme that will be built upon in our upcoming study of Joel.

Why do you think the land plays such a major role in the ending of this book?

What does this promise have to do with modern day believers?

For Israel, the peaceful possession of the land represented the hope of a coming kingdom where righteousness reigned and the blessings of God would be felt. Today we likewise long for the coming of God's kingdom on earth (Matthew 6:10), when evil will be dealt with and the blessings of God are poured out on humanity (cf Revelation 20-22). Like Israel, we too long for the day when the kingdom will be the Lord's.

III. Major themes of Obadiah

Throughout this study, we have sought to explain verse by verse the prophecies of Obadiah. The goal has been to apply these practically as we do wo, but at the end of this brief two part series on Obadiah we want to see how some of the major ideas of the book can be a help to Christians today.

Especially when studying the prophets, taking a step back and looking at the bigger picture can help us understand how it is that the books can help us today. We should carefully study each verse, but in doing so we will better see how each verse contributes to an overall theme. Once we understand what the prophet has to say about that theme, we will better understand what that theme (and those verses) means for us.

A. Humility and pride

How does Obadiah describe the pride of Edom?

How does that type of pride show up in those around us or even in ourselves?

How should the warning against Edom

B. You reap what you sow

Why do people ignore the warnings of Scripture that their actions will have consequences?

In what ways do believers subtly think that they can sin and win?

C. God's inevitable justice

How should believers respond when God's promise of judgment seems delayed more than we would like?

Why does God delay his justice at all?

What value is there in studying how Scripture describes God's coming justice in the prophets?

The small country of Edom has disappeared from the face of the earth. The warnings of God's judgment were ultimately realized, and now nothing remains of their memory except the stern warnings of judgment found in Obadiah and the prophets. But that stern warning should continue to teach us today. While we may not be a country living in the hills, we too can find ourselves exalted in pride, thinking we are above the consequences of our actions, and taking advantage of others because we think we can. But we also can take heart that when we see injustice and cruelty, God does too. And through the work of Christ he is planning on doing something about it. Like Obadiah, we too can look forward to the Day of the Lord, the day when God addresses evil and the kingdom is the Lord's.