

Mid Week • Obadiah

INTRODUCTION

The time is about 586 B.C.

The place is Jerusalem.

The event is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies.

We see the angry soldiers as they wreck the walls, slay the people, and burn the city.

But we see something else: We see a group of neighboring citizens—the Edomites—as they stand on the other side and encourage the Babylonians to ruin the city.

They call out, “Raze it! Dash their little children against the stones and wipe out the Jews!” (Ps. 137:7-9)

Who are these people who desire such terrible things to happen to their neighbors?

They are brethren to the Jews.

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob’s older brother (Gen. 25:21-26).

Esau had moved to the mountains to the south of Israel and had established the Edomite kingdom, later known as Idumaea, the kingdom from which Herod rose.

And though the Edomites and Israelites were relatives, they became fierce enemies.

The little Book of Obadiah, the shortest in the OT, deals with these two brothers, Esau and Jacob—Edom and Israel.

This book is easily divided into two parts:

- 1) Verses 1-16 speak of Edom’s cruelty and God’s judgment
- 2) Verses 17-21 announce the restoration of the Jews to their God-given possessions.

TEXT

- 1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the LORD, And a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, “Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle”):**

2 “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised.

3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’

V. 3 pinpoints the cause for Edom’s judgment and why she proved to be a perennial problem to the Jews – Pride!

When Esau’s descendants went south to settle in the mountains south of Israel, they secured for themselves a mountain fortress that seemed impregnable.

From this mountain hideaways, they secured a stranglehold on the land trade routes that linked the African continent to Asia and Europe.

Never a numerous people, they carried an influence disproportionate to their size – all because of their security behind their mountain fortresses.

The strength of their home base had caused them over the years to develop an overweening and arrogant pride.

God says that He will come in judgment on them and reduce them in stature, not only in the eyes of the world but in their own eyes.

4 Though you ascend as high as the eagle, And though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down,” says the LORD.

The Edomites saw themselves as dwelling above others, both geographically and figuratively – but God will clip their wings.

5 “If thieves had come to you, If robbers by night— Oh, how you will be cut off!— Would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, Would they not have left some gleanings?

If Edom’s judgment was merely by a handful of thieves or some rogue bandits who were merely trying to steal some of their crops, it would not have been a national calamity.

But God is saying His judgment will not be by a few thieves who

will leave lots behind.
All of Edom will taste judgment and nothing will be left.

6 “Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! *How* his hidden treasures shall be sought after!

7 All the men in your confederacy Shall force you to the border; The men at peace with you Shall deceive you *and* prevail against you. *Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it.*

Edom’s allies will turn against her.

8 “Will I not in that day,” says the LORD, “Even destroy the wise *men* from Edom, And understanding from the mountains of Esau?

9 Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau May be cut off by slaughter.

10 “For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever.

11 In the day that you stood on the other side—In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, When foreigners entered his gates And cast lots for Jerusalem —Even you *were* as one of them.

12 “But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother In the day of his captivity; Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction; Nor should you have spoken proudly In the day of distress.

13 You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction In the day of their calamity, Nor laid *hands* on their substance In the day of their calamity.

God will judge Edom because instead of grieving over Jerusalem’s demise, they had actually provoked the destroyers.

They delighted in the destruction of Judah – and for this they would also be destroyed.

It's a natural reaction to rejoice over the misfortune of those we consider our enemies.

But it's a reaction we ought to resist.

When someone who has opposed us is down and getting pummeled, it's easy to want to get in there and give a few kicks of our own.

But being *godly* means *never* delighting in the pain and misfortune of another!

God, in His infinite love, desires the blessing, not misfortune of all, even those who have made themselves His enemies.

We read that God takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but that He does rejoice when sinners repent and turn from their wickedness.

In mercy, God delays judgment, giving sinners a space to repent in.

When the delay is over, and judgment comes, God is never joyous and happy!

On the contrary, it is the devil who rejoices to see people in pain and experiencing God's judgment.

Since men and women bear the image of God and are the objects of His love and desire, the devil loves nothing more than to see people experiencing pain and sorrow.

When we delight in another's misfortune, we are being satanic, not godly.

And it is nothing but PRIDE that moves us to rejoice at another's misfortune because we deem ourselves better, superior to the one who is suffering while we are not.

When you see the misfortune of someone you have counted an opponent, an enemy, do not let yourself turn to delight.

Pray for them – show mercy and kindness to them.

For it's the kindness of the Lord that leads to repentance.

14 You should not have stood at the crossroads To cut off those among them who escaped; Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained In the day of distress.

As refugees were fleeing from the ruin of Judah, the Edomites caught them and turned them over to the Babylonians to be sold in the slave markets.

What Edom should have done was offer refuge to these refugees.

15 “For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

16 For as you drank on My holy mountain, So shall all the nations drink continually; Yes, they shall drink, and swallow, And they shall be as though they had never been.

God’s judgment of Edom is a picture of His final judgment of all nations.

17 “But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

V. 17 marks the turning point.

God promises deliverance and cleansing for Mt. Zion, which is another name for Jerusalem.

18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau *shall be* stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau,” For the LORD has spoken.

Jacob refers to all of the Jews, while Joseph speaks specifically of the northern nation of Israel.

God is here promising a reuniting of the nation under one King. Edom, on the other hand, will cease to exist!

19 The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, And the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria. Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead.

20 And the captives of this host of the children of Israel

Shall possess the land of the Canaanites As far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad Shall possess the cities of the South.

21 Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

7 Times in these verses we find the word “possess.”

Understanding this word as it's used here is the key for understanding the spiritual message of Obadiah.

When Israel entered the Promised land in the Exodus, God told them to go in and take possession of the land.

In other words, they were to *make it their own* – they were to POSSESS it.

The Jews failed in this task.

They moved in and lived there, but they failed to really take possession of it and own it as God had commanded.

Their proof of their lack of possession was that they did not root out the Canaanites, but instead, just settled down among them.

The evidence of pagan culture existed side by side with Israeli culture.

In fact, it wasn't long till the pagan Canaanite religion and way of living infiltrated and dominated Jewish social and religious life.

If Israel had TAKEN POSSESSION of the land as God commanded – then a godly society and system would have been indelibly stamped on the land and the nation of Israel would never have been defeated or exiled.

If they had been earnest in taking possession of the land and making it uniquely their own, God would have given it to them and then ensured they were never removed.

The Assyrian and Babylonian exiles are proof the Jews never really possessed the land.

But God says, in the Restoration, they will *possess* the land.

Edom's land will be taken up as part of the territory of the restored Israel.

CONCLUSION

The lesson in for us is this: As Christians, God has called us to live in

a Spiritual Promised Land called Walking in the Fullness of the Spirit.

While many Christians seem content to hold their faith as a kind of fire insurance, God wants us to enter in to all that is ours in Christ and make it our own.

For so many believers today, Christianity is simply about saying the sinner's prayer, being born again, and then just waiting for heaven. They don't realize that being a Christian means entering in to a place of untold blessing.

You've heard the promise of 1 Corinthians 2:9

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Friends, this is not a promise for the sweet by and by.

Paul is clear – this is a present promise for the believer!

God wants you and I to not just dip our toes in the edge of the stream but to dive in to all He's made open to us in Christ.

Take possession of all the grace, love, truth, blessing, and abundance that is already yours because of what Jesus has done.

Remember what He said, “I have come that you might have life, and that more abundantly!”