

Who Will Bring Me Down?

Obadiah 1-4

What is God's answer for atrocities? How does the Holy One of Israel respond to events such as the Holocaust? Since the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court Case, Americans have aborted 61,628,584 (sixty-one million, six hundred twenty-eight thousand, five hundred eighty-four) babies in the womb. Who will give an account for these murders? What is God's answer for these atrocities? Today's text gives us answers. Along the way in this brief series, we will stop to consider more applications: How should we treat captives? What about illegal immigrants? Should we torture enemy combatants? The Book of Obadiah will help us understand God's answers.

¹The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. ²Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. ³The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? ⁴Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD."

The Vision of Obadiah Concerning Edom

The opening lines of this book tell us that this is a direct revelation from the Lord God of heaven. God gave this revelation to His servant and prophet, Obadiah. The name "Obadiah" means "a servant of the Lord" and that is all we really know about this prophet. But though his identity is obscure, his message was designed to warn and comfort God's people: it assured them that God would right the wrongs of wicked men. When you stop to think about it, this is just as important in our day as it has been in all generations.¹ Ancient Edom is an area south of the Dead Sea. It was about seventy miles long (north to south), and about twenty miles wide. Some ancient encampments of Edom have been found in the area now referred to as Petra, Jordan. The beautiful red sculpted stone of today's Petra was begun by the Nabateans, a nation that came after Edom. It is not clear that Edom ever received this prophecy from Obadiah. It is clear that the people of Israel received it; it is written in the Scriptures today so that we can all learn from this warning to Edom.

Overview

The most important theological concept in the Book of Obadiah is "the day of the Lord." This is referred to in verses 8 and 15: **⁸Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?"**

¹⁵For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head."

The first question we must ask is "What is 'the Day of the Lord?'" This is the day of God's open and obvious divine intervention. It is easily recognizable in this period of time that the Lord is the One who is at work, openly and obviously fulfilling His purpose by direct means. This stands in contrast to

God's providence. God's providence recognizes God's work in the background, which is usually a hidden or mysterious work. In contrast, the Day of the Lord can be easily recognized by men, even by those in ardent rebellion against God.

The second question we must ask about these two verses is this: Do these refer to the same event or to different events? Is the day of the Lord for Edom at the same time as the day of the Lord upon all nations? The answer is "no;" they refer to different events, although the earlier event carries forward many of the characteristics to the last Day of the Lord. Isaiah 13:1-19 refers to the Day of the Lord upon Babylon (see verse 6). Yet other verses refer to a Day of the Lord that shall be upon every one that is proud (Isaiah 2:12-17). From the prophecies of the Scripture, we can see that there is one great Day of the Lord remaining (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10). In that day, all the people of the Earth will know that the "great day of His wrath has come" (Revelation 6:17). But Jeremiah's lament in Lamentations 2:22 refers to the day of the Lord's anger against Jerusalem. Obadiah's vision emphasizes the day of the Lord against Edom. Dr. Robert Bell wrote, *"A study of the passages concerned leaves one with two very different classes of statements: those which seem to point literally to events about to overtake nations on account of sins which are often spelled out, and those which seem to indicate something unusual, something never yet seen in the world's history, such as Yahweh's coming in person to judge and to rescue a remnant. . . These passages contain certain elements that were specifically fulfilled when these nations experienced utter destruction as types of the day of the Lord."*ⁱⁱ

According to Isaiah 48:1-7, the Lord uses His prophecies and fulfillment of prophecies to establish His trustworthiness; He is in complete control and will fulfill His prophecies and promises. One of the reasons that He announced a "day of the Lord" against Babylon, etc. was to show those ancient civilizations His sovereign control. Each successive day of the Lord confirmed the reality of the coming Day of the Lord in the consciousness of mankind. With this in mind, every person on the face of the Earth should prepare himself for the final dreadful Day of the Lord (Acts 2:20-21). Part of God's answer is that He has promised to execute His Divine justice upon all human injustice. Many have wrestled with the problem of evil. "Why would God allow evil into His world?" they ask. Some deny that God is sovereign: that He reigns with absolute control. But it's important to remember the Gospel at this point: God chose to make His Son Jesus Christ a victim of our evil. When He died for our evil on the cross of Calvary, the Bible says that He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He did so in order that we might be made righteous in God's sight. The God of justice and grace is in control.

God's Answer for a Proud Nation

- **God will raise up the armies of nations against a proud country. 1**
**"We have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen,
Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle."**

Many of you have read Obadiah in preparation for this message, so you know what the Edomites did to Israel. (See verses 10-14). Most scholars believe that this occurred about 586 B.C. when the Jewish people were fleeing from the Chaldean invaders. Because of the wicked way that they treated these

helpless people, God promised to destroy their nation. This should be a wake-up call to every nation that manipulates, molests or destroys the helpless. In America, we have become casually murderous. In the mid-1890's, the Ottoman Turks killed between 80,000 and 300,000 Armenian Christians. This was known as the Hamidian massacres. During World War II, the German Nazis killed 6 million Jews. In America, we have killed more than ten times that number of our own children in their mother's wombs. What was God's answer for the proud nation of Edom? He sent nations to rise up to destroy it. As you read your Bible, you realize that God destroyed the proud Chaldeans and God destroyed the proud Edomites. What should the United States of America learn from these examples?

■ **In God's eyes, this proud nation was greatly despised. 2**

"² Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised."

Because Edom was well-situated to defend itself, and to benefit from trade routes, it began to think of itself as a great nation. But in God's eyes, it was a small nation and greatly despised. And God had the final say, just as He does with our own nation. Now if you are a believer today and this message give you concern about your nation, take heart. The Bible tells us about those whom God will not despise! David wrote in Psalm 51:17, **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."** Surely now is the right time for believers to lead our nation to national repentance and brokenness before the God of heaven.

■ **God declared that the nation had been deceived by its national pride. 3-4a**

"³ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? ⁴ Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, . . ."

- The nation's pride deceived the nation.

God said that the nation was greatly despised. But the pride of the Edomites deceived them. This is tragic, but it is the truth of God's Word. Our national pride can deceive us; it leads us astray. When God listed the seven things that He hates in Proverbs 6:16-17, "a proud look" was listed first. This should give us pause. Is our national pride deceiving us? Can we look past atrocities and iniquities because it's America?

- Its geographical position seemed to make it impossible for nations to attack. 3

Situated in the mountains, the Edomites felt secure. They could swoop down upon any enemy in the narrow ravines below. They felt secure. We feel the same way in our country. We have two great oceans between us and potential enemies. We feel secure. We have a great desert to our south along the border and in Mexico; we feel safe. We have a great mountain plateaus along the border of our friends to the north. What can possible go wrong? Yet each new day brings a news story of drug cartels and terrorist cells. Our treasury has been emptied and we owe trillions. Aren't we seeing the signs of national distress that should wake us up? Shouldn't Christians lead the way by falling to our knees to humbly beg God for His help? He will not despise the broken and contrite heart.

- Its strategic position led to the popular national belief: “Who shall bring me down to the ground?” 4a

All of these things contributed to the national belief: “we can’t be brought down.” They thought they were too big to fail. But God had an urgent message for them.

■ **God declared that He would bring down this proud nation. 4b-c**

“ . . . though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.”

The Most High God is over all those who exalt themselves. The Edomites thought so highly of themselves, it was as if they nested among the stars. But God promised to bring them down, and God fulfills His promises.

If you are concerned about your country today, there is good news in God’s Word: God gives grace! James 4:6 **“But He gives more grace. Wherefore He said, God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.”**

Let’s put God’s Word into practice and humble ourselves before the Most High God. God the Father sent His Son to this Earth; He humbled Himself and became an obedient servant. He died on that cross for our sins and gloriously rose again. Now He leads us to humble ourselves. Remember the highway to heaven is hidden in humility, but the path to punishment is paved with pride.

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ⁱSee for instance, Jeremiah 12:1-5. Jeremiah wanted to know why God allowed wicked people to get away with their sin against Him.

ⁱⁱⁱ Robert Bell, *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books*, Greenville: Bob Jones University Seminary Publication, 2010. Pages 378-379