

The God Who Remembers

A Sermon on Obadiah

by

Grayson Stewart Gilbert

1. Introduction

- a. I am going to argue today that this little book is incredibly important because of what it teaches about God.
 - i. If I do my job well today, and I pray to God that I do, there will only be one statement comprised of two little words you will remember from the entire sermon: God remembers.
 1. Now those two words, depending on who you are and where you stand before God, carry a drastically different meaning.
 2. I want some of you to be filled with a sense of holy dread when you leave here today.
 3. For others here, I want these two little words to comfort you and give you joy and fill you with an incredible hope.
 - ii. As we look at the book of Obadiah, all this and more is found right here in these 21 short verses in the Old Testament.
 1. We will see that God remembers the sins of a people called the Edomites and inevitably that He will pour out His wrath upon His enemies.
 2. Yet we will also see that God remembers the covenant He made to Abraham and as result, He will pour out His blessings on His children.

- b. When we start to get into the particulars of this book though, there are a few helpful things for us to keep in the back of our mind.
 - i. We really don't understand much about the prophet Obadiah and that's ok because the book ultimately isn't about Him.
 - ii. We do know a great deal about the history behind it and the events leading up to it though.
 - 1. At the heart of everything we're going to see today is this age old feud between two brothers: Esau and Jacob, which goes all the way back to Gen. 25.
 - 2. The important thing to know about this is that from something as simple as a bowl of soup changes the course of their lives forever and it shapes how their families interact for centuries to come.
 - iii. When we get to the book of Obadiah though, God is remembering a very specific event that is the cause of His judgment coming upon them.
 - 1. There are really only two major events in the Old Testament that fit the description of what the Edomites have done.
 - a. The first is that the actions of the Edomites in vv. 10-11 fit the time of Babylon's final deportation of the Jews.
 - b. The second event Obadiah could be referring to, which is my position, is that God is recalling the time when Edom revolts under the reign of King Jehoram (2 Kgs. 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-17).

2. Regardless of where you stand on the particular event and the date – the broader reason why Obadiah comes with this prophecy against the Edomites is the same. God remembers the day of Edom’s violence toward their brother Jacob, and He shall repay them for their treachery.
- iv. It is also a point of interest for us to have a brief understanding of the land of Edom.
1. The land of Edom had three major cities that were protected on all sides by the mounts they were nestled in.
 - a. The first was the capital city of Bozrah, which was situated right on top of a major trade route.
 - b. The second was the city of Teman, which was regarded in the same light of elegance and sophistry as Greece.
 - c. The final major city is the one we now know as Petra, which I want to spend a little more time on.
 - i. The only entrance in and out of the city of Petra is this mile-long passage between two, sheer cliff faces.
 - ii. The rest of the city is surrounded by mountains and many of its shelters are built straight into the face of the rock. Strategically speaking, it is a virtually perfect, natural stronghold.

2. In every aspect that we look at the region of Edom, it is by all human standards, a wealthy, culturally rich, and impregnable marvel.

2. God Remembers the Sins of Edom and Declares War with Them (vv. 1-14)

- a. The first major section of this text we're going to get into is vv. 1-9, where we see God detail the sins of the Edomites and declare war against them.
 - i. We see that immediately in verse one, the prophet opens up with this declaration of the Lord God, concerning Edom's judgment.
 1. One of the neat things to notice here is that he says, "Thus says the Lord God [that is, Yahweh Adonai] concerning Edom. We [that is Yahweh] have heard a report from Yahweh."
 2. Notice though that this messenger has been sent out with explicit purpose of commissioning these nations to rise against Edom and the One who sent this messenger is God Himself. He remembers their pride – and He will destroy them.
 - ii. The Lord makes this about as clear as it can get: God remembers their sins and He will be the source of their judgment (vv. 2-4).
 1. You see in verse two that God simply declares that He will make Edom insignificant, that He shall cause them to be hated by these nations.
 2. Then in vv. 3-4 we see God call to remembrance their great pride and arrogance.

iii. Yet God is not content to leave it here; He reveals then the totality of the destruction and ruin that will sweep them away (vv. 5-6).

1. The sheer magnitude of the judgment being poured out upon on the day God recalls their injustice against Judah, will render them utterly bankrupt. He uses two analogies here to describe the devastation they will see by His hand.

2. God declares there will nothing left behind in the wake of His fury; He will be more thorough than the robber and the harvester.

iv. From here, God tells them exactly how it's going to happen. The very things Edom prided themselves in will be used against them in the ultimate role-reversal (vv. 7-9).

1. The very same men they allied with on the day they escaped the hand of King Jehoram will be the ones to cast them out of their homeland.

a. From the passage in 2 Chronicles that refers to this event, this would have been either the Arabians or the Philistines.

b. Notice what's to happen to the Edomites in v. 7 though: the ones they trust will deceive and overpower them.

c. God remembers who we trust. The Edomites, from the time of Esau on, did not trust in the Lord.

2. He extends this curse from His very hand. Notice again in v. 8 that God takes full ownership of Edom's impending doom.

- a. He caused them to be despised (v. 2); He is the One who will destroy their wise men (v. 8); He is the One who will cause their men of valor to tremble (v. 9).
 - b. In every single aspect of Edom's doom, we see the sovereign hand of God behind it, directing it, causing it all to unfold.
- b. God remembers Edom's crimes against their brother and He is bringing that to light (10-14).
 - i. When we get down to the central reason for why God is bringing them to utter ruin, it stems from the fact that they have done violence to their brother, Jacob (v. 10-11).
 - 1. If you recall from the Introduction, we can take this family feud all the way back to Esau and Jacob, and see how the two nations of Edom and Israel formed from them.
 - 2. These two nations have been locked in a bitter struggle against each other from the day Jacob took Esau's birthright.
 - 3. Verse 11 details for us what happened on that day:
 - a. They watched indifferently as foreigners plundered the wealth of their brother..
 - b. They watched indifferently as foreigners entered into their gates.
 - c. They cast lots for the spoils of Jerusalem.

- d. Obadiah says they were just like these men who invaded them.
 - e. God remembers that He has promised to curse those who curse Israel and He's laying their hearts bare before them. They have been cruel and vile brothers.
- ii. Obadiah then moves from viewing this past event to a future event where the Lord issues Edom several commands (vv. 12-14).
- 1. Chronologically speaking, this can only be when the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and bring the Jews into exile.
 - 2. When we look at the commands given to the Edomites, we see yet again this attitude of complete hatred toward their brother.
 - a. In verse 13 God commands them not to take malignant joy in the destruction of their brother—and especially not to take their treasure on that day.
 - b. Finally, we see the most heinous thing they are commanded not to do on that day of Israel's judgment. He commands them not to lie in wait and kill or enslave those who escape the judgment on Jerusalem.
 - c. God sees what's going to happen; God knows what they're going to do. Again, God remembers the covenant He made with Abraham to be a blessing to those who bless Israel and to be a curse to those who curse them.

3. God Remembers the Sins of the World and His Promises to His People (vv. 15-21).

- a. This is the first time in our book that we find God’s remembrance to be a good thing, because God turns His focus now toward His own people.
 - i. God is looking toward this far off, future day that He calls “the Day of the Lord” and He declares that it draws near upon all nations.
 - 1. He’s looking toward the second coming of Christ when He returns, not in mercy, not in kindness, not in grace, but to judge.
 - 2. He’s looking toward that great day when the true Ruler of the earth subdues all the enemies of His people.
 - ii. The pronouncement of judgment here in vv. 15-16 take Edom and make it a representative of the whole earth.
 - 1. Just as God remembers Edom’s crimes and brings them to ruin, all the nations of the earth will likewise come to ruin.
 - 2. Just as God caused the deeds of Edom to return to them, so too will the deeds of the nations fall upon their own heads.
 - 3. Think of what kind of an encouragement this would be to a people that have been blindsided by their brother continually.
- b. This is what we see in the following verses, as the exercise of God’s judgment upon all nations becomes the very means of preservation and restoration to God’s people (vv. 17-21).
 - i. Verse 17 depicts those who on that great day of Christ’s return escape God’s wrath and order will be restored to Creation.
 - 1. Notice they will dwell on Mount Zion and it will be a “holy” place.

2. This brings to mind several passages from the Old Testament that speak toward Mount Zion being very dwelling of God.
- ii. Verses 18-21 then show us the near fulfillment, where we see the Edomites will be utterly destroyed and the Israelites will inherit their land.
 1. This is talking about a physical reality, a physical anticipation they have – not some spiritual promise.
 2. This brings out a sense of poetic justice, as the Edomites will finally come to experience judgment in the near future for their treachery and wickedness toward their brother.
 - a. Obadiah records that Edom will have no survivor in the house of Esau.
 - b. Historically, we don't see this play out immediately.
 - c. Over the next several hundred years though, we see God remembers His promise to wipe out the Edomites.

4. Conclusion: God Remembers

- a. If you remember from the beginning – there are two words that I want you to walk away at the end of this sermon: God remembers.
 - i. Two words that stress the reality that one aspect of God's character is that He remembers.
 - ii. If you are in this room today, you fall squarely in one of two groups. You are either the group God will remember for blessing, or you are the group that He will remember for cursing.

- b. If you are the person that has been toying around with where you stand before God today, might I suggest that today is the day you go home, and you don't treat this flippantly?
 - i. Would you just sit and think about all the warnings and invitations and pleadings that have come from this pulpit directly to you, and think of the gravity of what it means to have made the God of this universe your enemy?
 - ii. Would you just sit and think of all the things you have trusted in except God? You will be swept away in His terrible wrath just like Edom. Even if you make your nest in the stars – from there He will bring you down, because He remembers your rebellion and treachery. Is that not terrifying to you?
- c. If you are the person who is in Christ today though, I want to suggest you also go home and just think about it means that God remembers you.
 - i. Would you go home today and just sit and think of all the things that God has done for you in Christ?
 - ii. Would you go home today and just sit and think about the fact that because you have placed your trust in Him, you have the greatest hope in all the world – and that nothing can rob you of that?