

# The Minor Prophets

## Obadiah

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Today we are beginning a **series on the minor prophets** in the bible. They each have a book of the bible named after them.

**The reason they are called minor prophets** is not because their message is less important but simply because their books are the shortest among the prophets.

This morning we will be looking at what the prophet Obadiah has to say. The book of Obadiah is the smallest of all the Old Testament books. But he has a lot to say in these 21 verses. (found toward the end of the O.T. between Amos and Jonah)

**These minor prophets all have lessons to teach us that are very relevant to our lives today and to our nation.**

Not much is known about Obadiah other than that he was one of the prophets God used to speak to Israel. It is thought he was writing during the reign of King Zedekiah around 586 BC when the Babylonians invaded Judah and burned Jerusalem.

This book is the description of a vision Obadiah had about God's coming judgment against Israel's neighbors, **the Edomites**.

Obadiah is saying that God's anger is stirred against Edom for their failure to help Judah and Jerusalem in their time of need. Instead of coming to their assistance they took advantage of them and participated with the Babylonians in destroying them.

The Edomites gloated over Israel's destruction, helped ransack the city and even killed or turned over to the Babylonians some of those trying to escape.

**The reason this was so grievous to God was because the people of Edom and Israel were related.** Esau who became known as Edom was the brother to Jacob who became known as Israel. God refers to the Edomites and Israelites as brothers.

Ever since the feud between Esau and Jacob, the two people groups were bitter enemies. **Like many of the Arabs and Jews today.**

(In fact, when the Children of Israel fled from Egypt the Edomites refused to allow the Israelites to pass through their country on their journey to the Promised Land. Because they were related, God told Moses not to fight them but to take a detour.)

The Edomites lived in a region known as Edom and their capitol city was a fortress carved into the safety of the rocks where it was almost impossible for their enemies to access. **This place is called Petra and can still be seen today.** It is considered one of the great wonders of the world.

- **Erma and I were able to see the place when we travelled to Jordon a number of years ago.**

## **PICTURES**

- Pic #1 – Only access to the city is a narrow passage that is easily defended
- Pic #2 – Houses are carved into the high rock walls
- Pic #3 – Amazing structures and water system

Obadiah prophesied that even though the Edomites had the protection of the high rocky cliffs and like the eagles, feel their nest is high and safe, they would not escape God's judgment.

Let's read this vision from Obadiah and then draw some lessons from it for us today. **Some see this as a prophetic warning to how God will treat all nations that stray away from him.**

## **READ Obadiah 1**

**<sup>1</sup>The vision of Obadiah.**

**This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom—**

**We have heard a message from the LORD:**

**An envoy was sent to the nations to say,  
"Rise, let us go against her for battle"—**

**<sup>2</sup>"See, I will make you small among the nations;  
you will be utterly despised.**

**<sup>3</sup>The pride of your heart has deceived you,  
you who live in the clefts of the rocks  
and make your home on the heights,  
you who say to yourself,**

**'Who can bring me down to the ground?'**

**<sup>4</sup> Though you soar like the eagle  
and make your nest among the stars,  
from there I will bring you down,”**

**declares the LORD.**

**<sup>5</sup> “If thieves came to you,  
if robbers in the night—  
oh, what a disaster awaits you!—  
would they not steal only as much as they wanted?  
If grape pickers came to you,  
would they not leave a few grapes?**

**<sup>6</sup> But how Esau will be ransacked,  
his hidden treasures pillaged!**

**<sup>7</sup> All your allies will force you to the border;  
your friends will deceive and overpower you;  
those who eat your bread will set a trap for you,  
but you will not detect it.**

**<sup>8</sup> “In that day,” declares the LORD,  
“will I not destroy the wise men of Edom,  
those of understanding in the mountains of Esau?**

**<sup>9</sup> Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified,  
and everyone in Esau’s mountains  
will be cut down in the slaughter.**

**<sup>10</sup> Because of the violence against your brother Jacob,  
you will be covered with shame;  
you will be destroyed forever.**

**<sup>11</sup> On the day you stood aloof  
while strangers carried off his wealth  
and foreigners entered his gates  
and cast lots for Jerusalem,  
you were like one of them.**

**<sup>12</sup> You should not gloat over your brother  
in the day of his misfortune,  
nor rejoice over the people of Judah  
in the day of their destruction,  
nor boast so much  
in the day of their trouble.**

**<sup>13</sup> You should not march through the gates of my people**

in the day of their disaster,  
nor gloat over them in their calamity  
in the day of their disaster,  
nor seize their wealth  
in the day of their disaster.

<sup>14</sup> You should not wait at the crossroads  
to cut down their fugitives,  
nor hand over their survivors  
in the day of their trouble.

<sup>15</sup> "The day of the LORD is near  
for all nations.

As you have done, it will be done to you;  
your deeds will return upon your own head.

<sup>16</sup> Just as you drank on my holy hill,  
so all the nations will drink continually;  
they will drink and drink  
and be as if they had never been.

<sup>17</sup> But on Mount Zion will be deliverance;  
it will be holy,  
and Jacob will possess his inheritance.

<sup>18</sup> Jacob will be a fire  
and Joseph a flame;  
Esau will be stubble,  
and they will set him on fire and destroy him.  
There will be no survivors  
from Esau."

The LORD has spoken.

<sup>19</sup> People from the Negev will occupy  
the mountains of Esau,  
and people from the foothills will possess  
the land of the Philistines.

They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria,  
and Benjamin will possess Gilead.

<sup>20</sup> This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan  
will possess the land as far as Zarephath;  
the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad

**will possess the towns of the Negev.**

**<sup>21</sup> Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion  
to govern the mountains of Esau.  
And the kingdom will be the LORD's.**

Three Main Points of Obadiah's Message to us

- God will judge wrong attitudes and behavior
- We are to help others when we can
- God's heart is always to restore

### **1. God will judge wrong attitudes and behavior.**

We like to talk about God being our loving father, overflowing with undeserved mercy toward us. We sing of his amazing grace and indescribable love. All this is 100% true. He is known as the God of love.

**But the bible also describes God** as the God who disciplines his children and judges' sin and the nations. He is both grace and truth. Full of mercy and justice.

Obadiah, in verse 15 talks about the **Day of the Lord**. The Day of the Lord is when God says enough is enough and releases his judgement over sinners and ungodly nations. The book of Revelation is full of God's coming judgements.

The Day of the Lord is coming for every evil doer and ungodly nation. **It may seem like evil is winning at times** and evil people and nations are escaping God's judgement, **but Obadiah's message is that there is a day of judgment coming.**

Our nation will be judged for all the innocent blood of aborted children and perversions our nation has participated in. The Day of the Lord is coming.

We don't like to talk about judgment. We like to talk about grace and mercy. But God is also the God of justice and judgement. We must teach both.

For us this morning, we need to understand God does not overlook and ignore wrong attitudes and behavior. As a just God he cannot overlook injustice and sin.

- He will deal with it in his own time.

**The good news for those who have repented of their sinful attitudes and behavior and put their faith in Jesus** is that Jesus has taken our deserved

judgment upon himself on the cross. **We no longer fear judgement for our past sins. Jesus took our punishment and we are forgiven.**

Yes, He still disciplines us as a loving father but from a heart of helpful correction and not judgement.

**The other good news is that intercession and national repentance can remove or postpone judgment on a nation** – Abraham and Sodom -Jonah and Nineveh

## **2. We are to help others when we can.**

A sub-title to this book could be – *“You are your brother’s keeper.”* God expected Edom to be his brother’s keeper. To help and rescue him.

When it is in our power to help another person and the Spirit of God nudges us, we are to step in and rescue and restore.

### **1 John 3:16-20**

**This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: (NIV)**

God was angry with the Edomites because they just sat back and watched and did nothing. (Ps 137:7)

Instead they **gloated** – They had a self-righteous delight in Israel’s misfortune.

**Prov. 24:17 “Don’t rejoice when your enemies fall; don’t be happy when they stumble.” (NLT)**

God takes note to how we treat other people and our heart attitudes toward them.

Sometimes we are more like the Edomites then we want to admit. Here is a good question for all of us. **Do we secretly gloat or get a sense of pleasure when we think someone got what they deserve?**

- **In our hearts do we say:** *“They had it coming. They made their bed now they can lie in it. Serves them right. They needed to be taught a lesson. It’s their own dumb fault. That will teach them.”*

We need to be careful. God is listening to our hearts and words.

God was especially angry because of how they treated their brothers. **I think God is especially concerned how we treat our Christian brothers and sisters.** We can be so hard on each other. As Christians sometimes we shoot our wounded.

Let’s give each other lots of grace. We are each personally accountable to God so let’s not judge but walk in love toward each other and let God judge the hearts.

**Vs. 15 As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.**

Want mercy – give mercy.

Want more of God’s grace - give more grace to others.

Don’t want to be criticized and judged – stop criticizing and judging others

Don’t want people to talk behind your back – don’t do that to others

Want people to be kind to you – be kind to others

- We reap what we sow – good or bad

### **3. God’s heart is always to restore.**

God does not take delight in judgement or discipline in our lives. That is not his heart. **His heart is for us to repent so he can forgive and restore us into the place of great blessing.**

The reason God hates sin is because of what it does to you, your family, and to a nation. He doesn’t hate you. He loves you and is inviting you to be his child and to live with him forever in the new heaven and earth he is preparing for you.

In the midst of the hard prophetic word of Obadiah we see this grace and mercy seeping through. **God’s love cannot be restrained.** It keeps breaking through.

He promises the people of Israel that they will one day be restored to their land.

Vs 17 – On Mount Zion will be deliverance – Jacob will possess his inheritance

Vs. 18 – I will make you a burning fire once again

God says to his people, "I'll bring you back. You'll possess the land. You'll inhabit the very places your enemies lived. You'll worship in your temple. You'll find deliverance on Mt Zion." **And they did. After 70 years in exile they came back and rebuilt their temple.**

### **Conclusion:**

God's heart toward you this morning is to forgive you and restore you, if you will repent of your sinful attitudes and ways.

He wants to return to you what the enemy has stolen.

In due time he will deal with your enemies and vindicate you.

As you walk in his ways, he wants to open up the windows of heaven and pour out blessings upon you.

He is for you and not against you.

He is releasing the kingdom to you– in greater and greater measure.

That is his heart.

### **Prayer of Blessing: -**

Lord, we want to take Obadiah's message to heart today. So, we ask that you forgive us for our wrong attitudes toward other people and the judgments we made in our hearts toward others. Forgive us for the times you prompted us to help others and we did nothing. Help us to be kind in our thoughts and speech and more willing to help those in need around us.

Lord, we ask that, in your mercy, you would restore to us those things the enemy has stolen from us.

- Restore relationships, finances and health
- Restore faith, peace and trust
- Restore the joy of our salvation

Jesus, thank you for taking our punishment and judgment upon yourself so we can walk in forgiveness and relationship with God our Father and enjoy the blessed life and eternal life in you.