

11 February 24
(Week 24)

Obadiah
Edom's Condemnation
Focal Verses: Obadiah 1-4, 10-11, 15, 21

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will **IDENTIFY** opportunities to serve God, be **INSPIRED** by God's expectation of His people for mutual love, aid in times of trouble, and intervention, and **SUPPORT** one another in our experiences of **INJUSTICE**.

In Focus

Cleveland was ranked first in his class in scholastic achievement, but he ranked last among his peers. He was described as an arrogant "know it all" who had mastered the art of belittling and intimidating people.

"You keep 'dogging' people, and it'll catch up with you." These were the wise words of someone Cleveland didn't think much of, then.

Ten years later, as Cleveland sat on the curb outside of an abandoned building he called "home," he realized the truth of those words spoken over 10 years ago had actually caught up with him. His mistreatment of people over the years had left him friendless, jobless, and homeless.

His fall came after someone who was never identified slipped something in his drink at a party. That trick triggered something in Cleveland's brain that altered his intellect, which in turn affected his future. With his dreams and hopes shattered, he was humbled to face the reality he didn't know much of anything, and he really didn't feel like doing much of anything either.

Cleveland's story reminds us that God cares how we treat others. How can our acts of kindness bring about God's victory in the world?

Keep In Mind

"For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathens. As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." (**Obadiah 15**)

Lesson Text

Obadiah 1-4, 10-11, 15, 21

1 The vision of Obadiah. thus, saith the Lord God concerning Edom: We have heard a word from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen: “Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle”:

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

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, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, from thence will I bring thee down,” saith the Lord.

10 “For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side—in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem” even thou wast as one of them.

15 “For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathens. As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

21 And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

The prophetic book of Obadiah is a solitary prophecy about the relationship and attitude Edom had demonstrated toward God’s chosen people, Judah. The story told by the messenger in the Book of Obadiah is a vision of doom for Edom as Yahweh declares war on Edom. The Moabites, Ammonites, and desert Bedouins were all allies of Edom. Edom, we recall, was a descendant of Esau, the twin brother of Israel. Thus, the tribes of Edom and Israel originated as close siblings. Other tribes related to Israel included Lot’s descendants, the Moabites and the Ammonites, Semitic peoples living northeast of the Dead Sea in the area surrounding Rabbah, their capital. But these tribes often battled with the Israelites for possession of the fertile Gilead. The smaller kingdom of Judah consisted of only two of the twelve tribes of Israel. Geographically, Judah was situated close to Edom. The Book of Obadiah provides no time frame, nor does it identify the ancestors or other family members of Obadiah. Because of the events surrounding the exile, we must construe the period as post-586 B.C. and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Background

Obadiah is the shortest book of the Hebrew text (Old Testament), containing only one chapter, and Obadiah is one of the twelve minor prophets. Little is known about the writer of the book or the person of Obadiah. The name Obadiah means “servant of Yahweh.” The book begins with God calling Obadiah to experience a vision. The vision describes a condemning judgment against Edom due to its relationship with Judah. Its central message concerns the destruction of Jerusalem, which had been carried out by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Edomites played a pivotal part in the tragedy. Located south of the Dead Sea, the Edomites resided in proximity to Judah and could have provided a strategic advantage as protector. Situated to the southeast of Judah, and notwithstanding its relationship as a brother to Judah, Edom refused to come to Judah’s assistance during the siege and even assisted Babylon by ravaging Jerusalem and many of its people as refugees.

In Depth

1. A Message from God to the Disobedient People (Obadiah 1:1) The announcement of Obadiah’s vision focuses upon God as the divine giver of the vision. This vision is a prophetic revelation received from God against Edom. God will rise in battle against Edom and utterly destroy it because of its rejection of Israel and its subsequent destruction of the enemies.

2. Edom’s Misplaced Pride Is a Disease of the Heart (v. 2) The capital city of Edom was Sela. Sela is the Hebrew word for rock. It is to this capital city God refers to in the phrase, “live in the clefts of the rock.” These rocks were believed to be impregnable, with a long narrow path through the mountains being the only entrance and exit to and from Edom. Edom found refuge in its wonderful geographic location, high atop fortified hills on a plain. The “nest” is situated in a hidden and inaccessible place. The “nest among the stars” constitutes an exaggerated image of the height of the mountain against the stars of the sky and refers to the stardom of Edom itself. Very important in this scheme is the power and authoritative voice of God, a power that is far greater than that of Edom. Thus, God declares that He is the one who has spoken this prophecy to the people to differentiate the Prophet Obadiah’s words from the message of the Lord.

Edom turned against Judah in her time of need as she battled against the Babylonian siege on the brink of exile. God’s plan would be that the strength and strategic positioning of Edom would be helpful to Judah against her enemies. It was the overwhelming pride of Edom that caused it to sin. The statement, “your proud heart has deceived you” translates the Hebrew meaning concerning Edom’s heart and its pride in its military might. Edom doubted that its armies could be defeated in battle. It paraded its military independence and power.

3. God’s Expectations for Humanity (vv. 10–11) The brotherly relationship of Edom and Judah is based on the patriarchal accounts of Genesis 25–29 and 32. Esau and Jacob were blood brothers. However, tensions ran high between Edom and Judah from the early days of the rivalry

between the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau. Other texts throughout the Old Testament testify to Edom's rejoicing at the pitiful state and weakness of Judah. Instead of helping Judah, Edom stood by and watched her defeat and pillage by her enemies. Edom even assisted in the pillaging of the nation. It was always God's plan that the two nations would love each other. Deuteronomy 23:7 clearly states: "You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin" ["brother"]. Even though the relationship between these peoples involved varying levels of hostility, their fraternity presupposes a moral obligation of solidarity that should not be ignored.

4. God's Punishment of Edom; They Reap Just What They Sowed (v. 15) The nation's suffering will be complete, its destruction total and severe. The prediction is a haunting threat. The timing of the destruction is unknown, but it is still promised, "Oh, what a disaster awaits you." The God of enviable lavishness and promise to Israel could have been a blessing to Edom's future. Instead, because of its jealousy of and failure to protect Israel, this curse looms over its future.

God sends Obadiah with a vision of Edom's own suffering. Edom will be plundered by enemies and betrayed by its allies in the same manner that Edom had just treated Judah. Edom's former mammoth strength will be watered down to the extent that it will not be able to save itself. Even the other nations formerly friendly to Edom will plunder it. Edom will be expelled from its own homeland. Eventually, Edom was driven out of its homeland, westward to the Negeb.

5. Victory in the End; The Day of the Lord (v. 21) The day of the LORD is the time of Christ's second coming and of the judgments on all the nations that accompany that event. Edom's punishment, however, does not await that future time but has already been carried out.

The day of the Lord is God's eschatological statement describing the end times. God will deploy saviors, most likely judges who will help rule in the millennial kingdom.

Liberating Lesson

A unifying presence is needed in our world. The kindred relationship between people is blurred by the many distinctions that we allow to set us apart. The differences between nations, continents, races, various ethnic groups, male and female, homosexuals and heterosexuals, and the rich and the poor are actually far smaller than the commonalities. The world is richly diverse. The opportunity is ample for all to respond to God's call, for each of us to act as the sisters and brothers that we are. Archaeology and history confirm the biblical truth that each of us originates from a single ancestor and heritage. Yet rather than display solidarity, the world is separated because of its diversity. Evil is persistent as each faction endeavors to dominate the others. Yet God is a God of second chances. Over and over again, we have seen the mercy and power of God in our lives, working through people who act in brotherly and sisterly love in times of trouble for our families and communities.

Application for Activation

Read Obadiah 1:7. How many communities in your city have neighborhood covenants that govern their residents? Do any of these covenants impart a view of the beloved community in which neighbors show love and protect and preserve the lives, emotions, and well-being of its residents? What about the churches? Does each church shepherd its own, or is it in competition for the same members? In your church does each member actively seek to perform deeds of goodness and protection for fellow members and visitors? Can you envision what your community would be like if it had such intentional caring and protection for its brothers and sisters? Share with the members of your class the ways in which specific groups and individuals can restore the family God created by performing intentional acts of caring and protection for one another.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Week of 11 February 24

Daily Bible Readings



Monday – Job 32-34

Tuesday – Job 32-34

Wednesday – Job 32-34

Thursday – Psalm 1-8

Friday – Psalm 9-16

Saturday – Psalm 17-20

Sunday – Psalm 21-25