

Obadiah 1-15

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[0:00] And if you have a Bible, I invite you to open to the book of Obadiah. Maybe a little bit of a head-scratcher.

Obadiah, where is that thing at? It's in the Old Testament towards the back end of it. So maybe the way to do it is to find Matthew and start going back to the left a little bit.

It's right after the book of Amos, right before the book of Jonah. I think it's on 918 if you have one of the hardback ESV Bibles from the pew.

As you're finding this, I want to invite you to kind of take a journey back in time together this morning. Time of the people of Israel, God's people, who have just experienced the unthinkable.

An extraordinary army of a foreign superpower has arrived at their doorstep. They've made it to the nation's capital. They've torn down the gates of Jerusalem and ripped apart the walls.

[1:05] They've neutralized and captured and killed the mighty men of the city and the country. They're looting the treasury and all the valuable assets and the gold and silver and resources of God's people.

Their house of worship is being burned to the ground. The temple of the living God. All the people of any value whatsoever, the nobility, the skilled craftsmen, the mighty warriors, are enslaved and deported to a foreign land.

And all the poor who are left looking around at a nation in utter ruin. Jeremiah describes a scene in the book of Lamentations talking about weeping and wailing and Judah being carried into exile and the empty streets.

But once flourishing nation now left a ghost town. There's no one to attend the festivals and the celebrations that God ordained for his people.

We're talking, of course, about the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. When the armies of the foreign superpower Babylon came in, overthrew and destroyed the people of Israel, they devastated the nation.

[2:29] And we know that as we read the Bible, this was part of God's plan. He kept sending prophet after prophet, telling his people, repent, repent, repent. And finally, the day came when God judged his own people for their sins.

The prophet Jeremiah continues in the book of Lamentation that Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and wandering all the precious things that were hers from days of old.

They think back in the midst of this rubble and they remember the height of the monarchy where David is just conquering foes left and right. And his son Solomon has wisdom that causes foreign nations to come just to get a glimpse, to hear a word of the king.

And the wealth that Israel is acquiring and the beautiful temple of God, just a couple hundred years earlier, filled with his glory for the good of his people.

And you think back farther and you remember that God had this mighty victory over Egypt when he freed his people from bondage to this foreign nation. And as they left, they plundered the Egyptians, taking all their wealth and their riches with them.

[3:43] And now, all of Israel's national pride, all of their hopes and dreams of a bright future, are lying in the rubble of a decimated city in the midst of a conquered people.

Imagine what thoughts would be going through your mind on that day. Where is God?

Where is our hope? Where do we go from here? It's into this context of carnage that the prophet Obadiah speaks.

And it's not a word of hopelessness and despair. It is a word from the sovereign Lord of the universe, full of power and promise and coming judgment.

It's a word not just for those people of Israel who laid in ruins, but for God's people today. So we're going to look at Obadiah together.

[4:55] The first 15 verses today will be our task. And the text, to give you an idea of where we're headed, the text is set up in the following way. Verse 1 provides a formal introduction.

It says who's writing, who he's writing on behalf of, and who he's writing to. We'll spend a lot of time there because we've got to get the context of who's being written to and what's going on and why is God writing to this person.

And then, following this formal introduction, verses 12 to 15, we see kind of a sentencing hearing in a court of law. There's a defendant who's been convicted of crimes and now is just awaiting the judgment, the punishment.

Verses 2 to 9, we see the judgment. God is the judge. Edom is the criminal. And then in verses 10 to 15, we see the crimes that Edom has committed and being judged for.

By the end, when we arrive together at verse 15, we'll see clearly the main thing that God is telling us in this text. So let's jump in.

[6:13] Verse 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.

First thing we see, the formal title, the vision of Obadiah. When we see this word vision, what we need to be thinking is that Obadiah has been given a special prophetic insight into a future event. God has given him clarity regarding the judgment of Edom. But who is this Obadiah guy anyway? Well, he's a prophet, of course, of Yahweh, the one true God.

And I believe that he lived during and after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The tricky thing with that is Obadiah is a common name, shows up all over the Bible, and it's hard to really nail down specifically where this guy was.

Did another passage somewhere else reference his name? Or is this the only record we have of Obadiah, the prophet? I think this is the only place we have record of him.

[7:36] But what we can tell just by reading this book and understanding a little bit of the context, Obadiah is a faithful Jewish man. He's God-fearing. He loves the Lord.

And he has a clear and profound grasp of Old Testament theology and who God is. And most importantly, he speaks authoritatively for God.

That's the next thing we see in verse 1. Thus says the Lord God. It's this combo of two names of God, Adonai and Yahweh.

And the combination Lord God tells us that this is speaking of God's supreme authority and sovereign power. God calls the shots.

He's the boss. No one can oppose him in the end. And in this case, this statement, the Lord God, which is uniquely true of our God, the God of the Scriptures, he is the Lord God and there is no other.

[8:42] In this case, our sovereign king is speaking a message of judgment concerning Edom. Concerning Edom.

And we see a name like Edom. I don't know about you. I start scratching my head. I don't know who this guy is. I'm not like a super history guy of the Bible.

So I got to start doing some legwork and figuring out who this guy is. But it's important, right?

Because the whole thing is for him. So we better do some work. We need to go all the way back to the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Abraham, of course, was promised to be the father of many nations. God promised him a descendant even though he was old and his wife had no children.

Isaac is born, the child of promise through whom God said he would bless the nations. This same Isaac marries a lady named Rebecca. Rebecca becomes pregnant after years of trying and she's pregnant with twin boys.

[9:56] During the hard pregnancy, she asks the Lord what's going on and God answers her. In Genesis 25, verse 23, he writes this, two nations are

in your womb and two peoples from within you shall be divided.

The one shall be stronger than the other and the older shall serve the younger. Of course, God is referring to Esau and Jacob, the twin children of Isaac and Rebecca.

Well, one day, after a long day in the fields hunting for food, Esau comes in starving and sees his brother Jacob cooking stew and he says, give me some of that red stuff.

Well, red sounds in Hebrew like the name Edom. And here we have our answer as to where this guy originates from.

Esau, the son of Isaac and Rebecca, is Edom. Same guy. Jacob ends up giving him the soup for a little exchange.

[11:07] It's just the cost of his birthright. Then later on, we know Jacob steals his older brother's blessing through treachery and trickery. It's no wonder that Jacob's name means he cheats.

Of course, after Jacob steals the blessing, Esau's mad, says, I'm going to kill my brother. So, Jacob flees. When he is gone in a foreign land, Genesis 32 tells us he wrestles with God and God gives him the new name, Israel.

So, now we've got Esau and Jacob becoming Edom and Israel. And God's promise proves true.

These two nations are at odds with each other from the womb and continue to be at odds.

Israel wandering in the wilderness asks their brother Edom for safe passage through their land and Edom says, no. They refuse Israel passage.

Numbers, chapter 20, verse 14. And later on, we see the great king David kills 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt and sets up military outposts throughout Edom's land, 2 Samuel 8.

[12:25] Hadad, the Edomite, becomes an adversary of King Solomon in judgment for Solomon's refusal to abide by the word of the Lord, 1 Kings 11. And then, in 2 Chronicles 28, we see that the Edomites again invade, defeat, and carry off the people of Judah.

Long track record of conflict, violence, and bloodshed, and thievery, and deception. Two brothers rarely at peace, just like God promised.

But Edom's treatment of Israel, God's own people demanded judgment. They weren't just unrepentant, it kept growing worse. And that is why we're here today in the book of Edom, ready to hear the courtroom decree of Yahweh concerning Edom.

Now, let's look at these verses together. What we're going to read is that we're seeing a sentencing. And again, the Lord is the judge, Edom is being judged and receiving the sentence.

So I'll start back at verse 1, and I'll read down through 15. The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom.

[13:53] We have heard a report from the Lord and a messenger has been sent among the nations. Rise up! Let us rise up against her for battle. Behold, I will make you small among the nations.

You shall be utterly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock and your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, who can bring me down to the ground.

Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

If thieves came to you, if plunderers by night, how you've been destroyed. Would they not steal only enough for themselves? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings?

How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out. All your allies have driven you to your border. Those at peace with you have deceived you.

[14:57] They have prevailed against you. Those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you. He has no understanding. Will I not on that day, declares the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom and understanding out of Mount Esau, and your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever on the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem.

You were like one of them. But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune. Do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin.

Do not boast in the day of distress. Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity. Do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity. Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives. Do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.

[16:17] For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done it shall be done to you.

Your deeds shall return on your own head. So two parts in this scary word of God.

First part is the judgment that we see in verses two to nine. Essentially these verses tell us that Edom's judgment is both certain and near at hand.

In verse two we see that the Lord cuts right to the chase. He brings immediate and swift statement behold. It's like saying see look this is really urgent what I'm about to say.

I will make you small among the nations. You should be utterly despised. This small among the nations is insignificant. He's just going to weaken them to the point that everybody looks on and goes whatever.

[17:32] It's scary and in fact it's already happening because if you remember from the end of verse one there's this messenger of God who goes out among the nations and says hey rise up guys.

Time for action. And they all agree collectively agree let's go get Edom. God's already at work judging this people even before the final judgment comes.

There's an immediate sense as to why God would be so upset when we look at verse three. The pride of your heart has deceived you.

See Edom was this very high well guarded secure almost impenetrable nation in the mountains southeast of Israel. And they knew it.

They were very well aware that nobody could touch them. They looked down on their neighbors and even if somebody wanted to get from south to north or north to south they had to ask Edom permission to go through.

[18:40] And it was Edom's choice whether or not they would let people pass. Just as in numbers they said no to their own brother. And this lofty hearted thinking of Edom shows up strongly and emphatically at the question they ask at the end of verse three.

Who is going to bring to bring me down? Who can do that? We're awesome. And notice what the Lord says in verse four. You might very well be soaring like an eagle from the perspective of man. Majestic and carefree and just dominant over the landscape. Even if you were there, even if your nest was among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

Who can bring me down? The knower of hearts who knows this arrogant Edom says, I will. Your time is up.

I will. And when we see this little tag ending, declares the Lord, Lord, we should think similarly to the way Jesus introduces statements sometimes like, truly, truly I say to you, it's kind of the same thing, this weightiness, this emphasis that the one speaking has this special kind of authority and we should really pay attention to what he's saying.

[20:12] Edom, God has seen your pride and he's going to bring you down. Bank on it. As we move into verses 5 to 7, God kind of leaves the scene sort of and we start seeing how the human agents are going to carry out this judgment upon Edom.

It starts in verse 5 with this really sort of gruesome word picture of thieves coming by night and plunderers and the question, would they not only steal what they can carry off?

If thieves come, they have to be strategic, right? They got to go after the valuable things. And grape gatherers, the end of five, if they came, would they not leave gleanings?

We just saw on Ruth, right, how gleanings were left for the poor and the helpless and the vulnerable. And in verse 6, God says how Esau has been pillaged.

You will not have a grape on the ground. You will not have anything in your cupboards. My judgment is total against you. Verse 7 shows how it's their own allies, their friends, those that they've broken bread together with at table for dinner, totally at ease because you know there's peace between you.

[21:37] It's their allies that God will turn against them to bring judgment upon their heads. God is clueless. In the end of verse 7, we see Edom has no idea what's coming.

He's clueless. It's like when the Bible says that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. Edom is unprepared, unexpected. It's tragic. It's terrible.

And we see as much back in verse 5. I skipped over this little phrase, how you have been destroyed. The prophet inserts this not to gloat, not to say yay and cheer, but a shock over the total devastation that Edom faces.

Same thing in verse 6, how Esau has been pillaged. He's on the verge of tears over this reality. It's horrible. And even though Edom deserves judgment, it's not pretty.

It's not something to rejoice over. That's important because we'll see Edom do the opposite in a bit. God cared about Edom.

[22:48] He cared about the people that he said, time's up, judgment's coming. He cared a lot about Edom. In fact, in a different narrative of the Israelite wandering in the wilderness when Edom said no, in Deuteronomy 2, we see a little bit more information.

God tells them, you're about to go into the land of your brother. You're not to take advantage of them. You're not to look at their land and start going, oh, that's kind of nice.

I want that. I've given it to them as a possession. God cares about Edom very much. He is not here just looking to kind of pummel another group of people for wrongdoing.

That's not our God. God. He's a God of mercy and patience, a God slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Yet a God who does not leave the guilty go unpunished.

And time was up. Edom had had their chances and they had failed to repent. Verses 8 and 9, we see that the Lord God kind of comes back onto the scene and asks this question, will I not on that day, declares the Lord.

[24:04] There's that certainty again. Will I not destroy the wise men in understanding, terrifying the armies and making sure that no person escapes from the slaughter.

God will destroy the wisdom, all of the wise, will send the army into complete terror, and the end will be the destruction of this people.

By 312 BC, this came true. The Nabataeans came in and Edom was no more. Well, maybe you're thinking, this sounds pretty harsh.

Every person cut off by slaughter? Not to mention that the God who is saying this message has just turned his judgment upon his own people, plundered and devastated their land and his own temple, his own house.

And we could go on and on in the history of the Bible and find examples of this same type of thing. Both individuals and whole nations brought under the judgment of God and not spared.

[25:18] Can we just admit it seems harsh? Maybe a bit hasty? Is God just being extreme here?

Let's move into the second part of our text and we'll come back to that. So just keep that question there though. Moving on into verse 10 through 15, we see that now God is going to announce the formal charges against Edom, Esau.

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you and you shall be cut off forever. There's that cut off language again we just saw in verse 9.

Now this violence against Jacob, kind of this general summary, okay God violence, get it, murder maybe, but where's the details? We need more evidence here for this charge and God will provide that.

But notice in verse 10, the violence done to your brother Jacob. That's important.

[26:33] It's really, really important. See that's why throughout this whole prophetic oracle, Obadiah has kind of been interchanging Edom and Esau, Edom and Esau, because what he's really concerned with is the magnitude of the crimes.

These weren't people who didn't know each other and just kind of got in some little fight. These are brothers. Brothers. It's horrible.

In verse 11, we see that strangers came in, foreigners came in and carried out the wealth and the nobility of Israel.

And then at the end of that verse, we see God say to Edom, you were just like one of them. You treated your own brother as if he was a complete stranger. It's one thing to conquer strangers, but another thing entirely to come after your own kin.

Verse 11, if you look, you see this, on that day when you stood aloof, there's reason to think that what Edom is actually doing here is kind of looking upon the destruction to be entertained by it.

[27:53] It's like they've got their favorite lounge pants, they've popped the popcorn, the butter's on it, and the salt is just coating the butter, and it's just so delicious, and then they're just, this is amazing.

I'm loving what I'm seeing here. Woohoo! They're amused by their brother's destruction. Do you notice the on the day, twice in verse 11?

See at first, back in verse 8, when the Lord says, will I not on that day destroy the wise men? And now, verse 11, on the day that you stood aloof.

Verse 15, it changes from that day to the day of the Lord. Obadiah uses this concept of day to connect this whole oracle together.

There's three distinct days that he's talking about. The first day in verse 8 is the day of Edom, the near future day when God will completely judge the people of Edom.

[29:02] then in verses 11 to 14, the day he's talking about is the day that Israel had just experienced when Babylon came in and destroyed their land, exiled their people.

And then verse 15, the day of the Lord is the uncertain future day when the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, comes in the clouds with his angels and judges the nations once and for all.

Those are the three days that Obadiah is talking about, all having to do with sin purging judgment.

This day reference now that we see in verse 11 continues into verses 12 to 14 and it just is like this hammer on an anvil, just over and over and over.

It's used in a series of eight commands directed at Edom. The ESV translates them do not, do not, do not. Maybe if you're in KJV or other translations you might see, you should not have or you shouldn't not have.

What's going on? That's like one sounds future, one sounds past. Here's what I think Obadiah is doing. He's using these commands to continue expressing sort of the formal charges against Edom.

[30:25] So the do nots, do nots, do nots are still what Edom has already done. And writing them in the way that he has emphasizes the depth of the criminal activity.

These things are no-brainers. They knew better. This is like God saying do not, do not, do not, saying shame on you. You knew that that was wrong the whole time you did it.

You didn't care. In fact, you took great joy. notice if you look closely through the list of those eight charges in verses 12 to 14, they start in the heart and they just keep expanding and expanding and expanding until finally Edom has turned into bounty hunters, turning their own brothers over to captors because of a heart of pride.

It's scary how far pride will go. in the lives of the nations in our own lives. Notice in verse 13 that after God saying your brother and his misfortune and then 13 he says do not enter the gate of my people.

Now God is personally offended because Edom has now done harm to his chosen the ones he particularly loves in all the earth.

[31:59] These are horrible crimes against God's people. Edom's own brother. Just to point out this nerdy thing that I found this week from verse 13.

If you look and you see this word repeated three times calamity in the day of their calamity in the day of his calamity in the day of his calamity maybe in a different Bible it might say distress or destruction.

In Hebrew this word sounds a lot like Edom. So if we reword verse 13 listen to it.

Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their Edom. Do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his Edo. Do not loot his wealth in the day of his Edo.

It's like this tolling bell clanging away promising Edom full total retribution for the wrongs he committed. it's just one of the ways that Hebrew poetry is just beautiful at conveying the meaning God wants us to know.

[33:14] And now we arrive at verse 15. And we see this for the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations and we see why this is in our Bible.

It's not so we would kind of look back at Edom and just go poor fellows they met their end because God's holy. We see that Edom's judgment is just one of a multitude of signposts that warns every person everywhere today and every day judgment is coming judgment is near near upon all the nations.

Edom is an example to us all judgment is coming. It's a severe yet merciful warning to repent. This text this morning claims this the Lord will judge all the nations according to his righteousness.

The Lord will judge all the nations according to his righteousness. So what?

God, why in this warm sanctuary 2,500 years later does that matter to you and me in Christ the King Church? Let me just give us a few reasons as we close.

[34:55] it matters that the Lord will judge all the nations according to his righteousness because I think you and I if we're honest we have trouble with the idea of judgment.

It makes us a little squeamish, fearful that we might offend people who God loves. When we start talking about wrath and hell and judgment we seem like we're afraid we might come across as holier than thou.

Big headed, proud, self-righteous, legalistic, bigoted, hate mongers. We have trouble with the idea of judgment.

It's not what we want to hear. God is love, right? Let's just talk about his love day after day after day. It's so beautiful. And of course God is love. We never forget that he's love and we never cease to tell people that he is love.

There's another reason why this matters that the Lord will judge all nations according to his righteousness and it's because judgment reveals an essential character of our God, the God that we want the nations to know.

[36:11] Our Lord wants us and all the world to know that he is righteous and holy and not just to have that thought kind of hanging in our systematic theology brains like Wayne Grudem's book on a shelf.

That's not why God wants us to know that he is righteous. He wants that reality to operate in our lives, to function in our minds and in our hearts and the way we live our lives before the world.

We know a righteous God. It's important God's God's righteous good.

He's going to get that guy. A third reason why this matters to us today. It's because judgment can either make us squirm in discomfort or we can become hard-hearted, right?

We can just remove compassion from the equation, well, God's going to get you, man. Peace out. And we leave. And we condemn people. We lack compassion of our Lord Jesus.

[37:16] Oh, God's righteous good. He's going to get that guy, that creep. That's not who God is and that's not who his people are to be either. We know as Christians, as God's people who have his word, that God has determined to reveal his righteousness two ways.

One, through judgment that will be full and finally meted out when Jesus comes back. That's way number one. Way number two is by crushing his son for us.

God there's your options world. As Obadiah writes this, he says, judgment is coming upon all the nations and there is no one who will be spared.

There is not one who will stand in the judgment. None is righteous, no, not one. No one seeks God. No one understands. God and then Jesus shows up and says, I give my life as a ransom for many. That's righteous of God. You know that, right, friends? It was right and just of God to pour out his wrath on his own son so that sinners like us might become the righteousness of God welcomed into his family forever.

[38:39] God is righteous and we celebrate that. We love him for that. He's wonderful because he's righteous. And it's even more difficult, right, when we know that the world and our very neighbors and some of our closest friends and family, they reject the God of the Bible because he's

too mean.

He's cruel hearted. He's mean in the Old Testament. He's nice in the New Testament, so who needs him anyway? And so we shy away from telling people, no, he's righteous and he's loving and he sent Jesus in your place.

We fear angering those we want to save, so we kind of suppress and diminish the righteousness of God and kind of go after the warm and fuzzy things of him.

God never ceases to be righteous. Obadiah says that the day of the Lord is coming upon all the nations when God judges everybody in his righteousness. It's so clearly peppered on the pages of our Bibles.

He wants us to love his righteousness, friends. He wants us to be zealous for it, be quick to speak of it before others. He will judge all nations according to his righteousness.

[39:59] So we ask, friends, do you love his righteousness? Do you love it? If you love it, is it operating in your life?

Is it changing how you live? Do you hate sin more? Because God is righteous and God himself hates sin?

Are you longing for the day? Are you hungering and thirsting for the righteousness that one day will be satisfied when Jesus comes and brings us to glory? Long all you want, Lord.

Long all you want, friends. You'll be satisfied. God is righteous and he will one day reveal that to all nations. We only have to look at Edom.

Edom stands there. Fallen, covered in shame, no more people. We love God's righteousness and bravely and lovingly warn everybody.

[41:09] The day's coming. And after we get done telling them of the righteousness of God, we say, let me tell you about this sweet guy I know.

His name's Jesus and he gives you his own righteousness so that you can be spared from judgment forever. over and he's for all the people everywhere.

The one who takes our guilty sentence upon himself and gives us his own righteousness forever.

Perfect righteousness. The Lord will judge all the nations according to his righteousness and thanks be to God, friends, we have a refuge in Jesus Christ.

We would not stand either. We're among the proud. We're among the nations who will stand at the judgment and be cast out.

But for Christ, only him, flee to him. He's your refuge.

[42:19] Day after day after day flee to him. You have no righteousness of your own. It's filthy rags, but Jesus is your righteousness. And when God comes back to judge the nations, you'll be safe in him.

Friends, we're now going to gather at the Lord's table. reflect on the crushed body, shed blood of our Lord Jesus.

We're going to unite together and marveling at what he has done for unrighteous sinners like us to make us righteous. And then we're going to sing as we go, nothing but the blood.

So let's pray together as the communion servers come forward today. God, help us to be lovers of your righteousness. thank you for this warning in Obadiah, and I pray that you would make us messengers who go out and say, the day is coming, Jesus is your hope, repent now.

We love you, give you thanks and praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[43:36] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.