

Obadiah      “The Vision of Obadiah: The Day of the LORD against Edom”      Jan 6, 2013

Tonight we are looking at Obadiah’s vision of the Day of the LORD against Edom.

So we’re going to do something a little different and sing the Psalms of Edom  
in place of our regular hymn-sing.

Edom is another name for Esau – Jacob’s twin’ brother.

There are four Psalms that speak of Edom.

We start with Psalm 60,

“To the choirmaster: according to Shushan Eduth. A Miktam of David; for instruction;  
when he strove with Aram-Naharaim and with Aram-Zobah, and when Joab on his return struck  
down 12,000 of Edom in the Valley of Salt.”

It’s a Psalm that reminds us that *before* the victory,  
Israel must first pass through suffering and death.

Psalm 60

The second Psalm that refers to Edom is Psalm 83 –  
a song that pleads with God to rise up and bring judgment on the earth:

Psalm 83

Our third Psalm is Psalm 108 –  
which is a curious Psalm, because it consists of portions of two other Psalms,  
Psalm 57 and Psalm 60  
(which we sang earlier).

But both Psalm 57 and Psalm 60 are laments.  
Psalm 108, however, is a song of triumph!

How do you take portions of two laments and turn them into a song of assurance?

By taking only “the good parts” –  
only the parts that emphasize God’s presence and victory.

And so we sing Psalm 108 as a reminder that out of our songs of lamentation and suffering  
comes a song of triumph!

Psalm 108

We conclude our Psalms of Edom with the most famous: Psalm 137.

Psalm 137 is closely related to the text of Obadiah.

It refers to how Edom rejoiced and celebrated over the destruction of Jerusalem,  
and asks God to do to Edom (and to Babylon) what they have done to Zion.

Psalm 137

Read Obadiah

The book of Obadiah is all about Edom.

Obadiah focuses on Edom's destruction and Edom's sin,  
how Edom will be obliterated from the face of the nations.  
But Obadiah is not written (or preached) to Edom.

Obadiah was written (and preached) to Judah.

It is the word of the LORD *concerning* Edom,  
but it is a word – a vision – *for* Jerusalem –  
saying,

How should you think about Edom?

We need to remember the last Edomite in the Bible.  
Herod, the Idumean.

In Psalm 137 – as in Obadiah –

Edom joins with Babylon to destroy the temple in Jerusalem.

In the gospels, the Idumean joins with the Romans to destroy Jesus.

“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days”

Obadiah shows us what Jesus had to suffer –

and thus, how we are to share in the sufferings of Christ.

Before we start into the text,

you need to know something of what the people of Jerusalem knew about Edom.

First, Edom was descended from Esau, Jacob's brother.

So Edom is Israel's closest relation in the region.

(Of course, by the 6<sup>th</sup> century, they are now over a millennium removed –  
which means that Israel and Edom are about as closely related  
as France and Germany,  
which were last united under Charlemagne and his heirs!)

But over the centuries, Edom and Israel frequently tangled.

David subdued the Edomites and brought them under Israelite control for a time –  
but after the reign of Jehoshaphat, Edom regained its independence,  
and for the last 300 years Edom has occasionally joined with Judah  
in mutual defense pacts,  
and occasionally has rebuffed such treaties to go its own way.

In 587, when the Babylonians invaded,

Edom cancelled its treaty with Judah

and allied with Babylon in order to escape the same fate!

This betrayal by Edom brought down the scorn of the prophets –

Edom/or Esau became the primary contrast to Jacob –  
set up nicely by the prophecy over the twins in Rebekah’s womb:  
“Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples from within you shall be divided;  
the one shall be stronger than the other,  
the older shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)

At the end of the Minor Prophets Malachi would articulate this most distinctly:  
“Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated.” (Malachi 1:2)

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament.  
It is referred to as:

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

The word for “vision” is used exclusively in the context of prophetic visions.  
The related verb simply means “to see” –  
but there are two nouns derived from this verb  
that relate exclusively to prophets:  
first is the noun “seer” – ‘one who sees’  
and the second is the noun “vision” – ‘that which is seen.’

Perhaps one of the most famous examples is the one that is most often mis-used!  
“Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).  
That has been used countless times by those who emphasize “planning ahead.”  
But the word “vision” has little to do with planning ahead!  
The point in Proverbs is that where there are no prophets  
the people run hither and thither without *divine* direction!

Obadiah gives a vision –  
he gives divine direction for how we should think about the coming Day of the LORD.

### **1. Esau Shall Be Humbled (1:1-9)**

#### **a. Pride Goes before a Fall (v1-4)**

*Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom:*

*We have heard a report from the LORD,  
and a messenger has been sent among the nations:*

*“Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!”*

<sup>2</sup> *Behold, I will make you small among the nations;  
you shall be utterly despised.<sup>[a]</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> *The pride of your heart has deceived you,  
you who live in the clefts of the rock,<sup>[b]</sup>  
in your lofty dwelling,*

*who say in your heart,*

*“Who will bring me down to the ground?”*

<sup>4</sup> *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.*

Obadiah refers in verse 3 to how the Edomites lived “in the clefts of the rock.”

You may be familiar with the ancient city of Petra.

Petra is in the region of Edom – and while Petra was not necessarily an Edomite city,  
it gives you an idea of where the Edomites lived.

The point is that the Edomites believed that they were indomitable  
because their rocky fortresses were inaccessible to the outside world.

Obadiah says that the pride of Edom goes before a fall.

Even if Edom would nest among the stars,  
God will bring him down!

This is a good reminder for modern nations –  
because we *do* soar aloft like the eagle (in our airplanes)  
and nest among the stars (in our space stations)!

But God says that there is no way to hide from him.

There is no way to escape his judgment.

It would be easy to apply this simply to modern nations:  
to say, “Look at those proud and arrogant peoples! Tsk, tsk!”

But while God says this *about Edom*, who is Obadiah writing to?  
He’s writing this *to Judah*.

In other words, while he is speaking about the nations,  
he is speaking to the church.

You may recognize the language of “soaring like eagles” –  
it comes from Isaiah 40:31:

“they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.”

Soaring like eagles is what is *supposed* to happen to those who wait for the LORD.

So if you think that you are soaring like eagles *apart from the LORD*  
then your pride has deceived you.

We need to hear this warning!

Because we can easily become proud –  
when life is good, and everything is going well,  
we can think that we are soaring with eagles,

when in fact,  
we are living in our pride and arrogance –  
setting ourselves up for a terrible fall.

**b. The Pillaging and Plundering of Esau (v5-7)**

<sup>5</sup> *If thieves came to you,  
if plunderers came by night—  
how you have been destroyed!—  
would they not steal only enough for themselves?*  
*If grape gatherers came to you,  
would they not leave gleanings?*  
<sup>6</sup> *How Esau has been pillaged,  
his treasures sought out!*  
<sup>7</sup> *All your allies have driven you to your border;  
those at peace with you have deceived you;  
they have prevailed against you;  
those who eat your bread<sup>[c]</sup> have set a trap beneath you—  
you have<sup>[d]</sup> no understanding.*

Verses 5-7 then speak of that fall in the pillaging and plundering of Esau.  
Obadiah has not yet explained *why*.

Obadiah starts with the judgment of Esau,  
and only *then* explains why.

Part of the reason is probably that Obadiah's audience already knew why!

But another reason is because of the placement of Obadiah among the Twelve.

We saw at the end of Joel 3 how Edom would become a desolate wilderness  
“for the violence done to the people of Judah,  
because they have shed innocent blood in their land.” (3:19)

But then in Amos, Edom came in for more condemnation:  
in Amos 1:11, Edom is punished

“because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity.”

And while Amos spends the bulk of his prophecy focused on Samaria and Israel,  
and their preoccupation with the Syrians to the north,

he concludes his prophecy that the house of David

“will possess the remnant of Edom

and all the nations who are called by my name.” (9:12)

In other words, the reader of *The Book of the Twelve*

has already encountered the sins of Edom,

and so will not be surprised to hear of the judgment of Edom.

Also, I am persuaded that Paul House is correct

when he says that the movement of the Book of the Twelve

is from an emphasis on *sin*,

to an emphasis on *judgment*,

to an emphasis on *restoration*.

All three themes exist in all the prophets,  
but at first, Hosea, Joel and Amos spend the bulk of their time on the *sin* of Israel,  
as does Micah, the prophet who completes the first half of the Twelve.  
Obadiah and Jonah apply the theme of sin and judgment to the nations.  
Both Obadiah and Jonah are *written* to the people of God  
to instruct us how we are to think of the nations.  
Obadiah teaches us to see the judgment of God against the nations  
for their wicked ways.  
Jonah teaches us to see that God may have mercy upon the nations –  
in spite of their wicked ways.

**c. “On That Day” Edom’s Wisdom Will Die (v8-9)**

<sup>8</sup> *Will I not on that day, declares the LORD,  
destroy the wise men out of Edom,  
and understanding out of Mount Esau?*

<sup>9</sup> *And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman,  
so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.*

And in verse 8 the LORD says that “on that Day” the wisdom of Edom will die.

The “day of the LORD” is the day of judgment.

God is saying that there is a “judgment day” for Edom.

And on Edom’s “judgment day” the wisdom and strength of Edom will die.

Edom was known in the middle east for their wisdom

(think of the book of Job – where Job’s friends all have Edomite connections).

But God says that he will destroy the wise men out of Edom,  
and the mighty men of Teman will be dismayed and slaughtered.

When did this happen?

After all, the Edomites continued to prosper until Herod the Idumean became king  
under the overlordship of the Roman emperors.

When was the Day of the LORD for Edom?

I would suggest that the book of Acts relates that day.

In chapter 12, Herod Agrippa I was struck down by an angel of the Lord –  
as judgment Day came for Herod,  
and the wisdom of Edom died.

**2. Because You Joined in the Plunder of Jerusalem (1:10-14)**

**a. God’s Principle of Judgment: How Did You Treat My People (v10—11)**

<sup>10</sup> *Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob,  
shame shall cover you,  
and you shall be cut off forever.*

<sup>11</sup> *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.*

Verses 10-14 then explain the reason for God's judgment against Edom.

We see in verses 10-11 God's principle of judgment:

"because of the violence done to your brother Jacob."

We saw this in Joel as well.

God will judge the nations for how they treat his people.

When foreigners invaded Jerusalem,

Edom was "like one of them."

Think of Psalm 137 –

where Edom is portrayed as cheering on the Babylonians!

This is precisely what Jesus says in Matthew 25.

Jesus says that *everyone* will be judged for how we treat

"the least of these my brethren."

How do we treat Jesus' brothers?

How do we treat the weakest and most helpless among us?

Do we stand aloof in the day of their troubles?

Or do we come to their aid?

I have been delighted at how you have sought to use your connections  
in the service of those in need.

When people from this congregation have needed work –

you have been diligent in trying to use your connections to help them!

or, at the very least, to hire them yourselves for odd jobs.

**b. "The Day of Your Brother": Judgment Begins with the Household of God  
(v12-14)**

<sup>12</sup> *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<sup>[e]</sup>*

*in the day of distress.*

<sup>13</sup> *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.*

<sup>14</sup> *Do not stand at the crossroads*

*to cut off his fugitives;*

*do not hand over his survivors*

*in the day of distress.*

In verses 12-14, then, Obadiah reminds us that “judgment begins with the household of God.”  
After all, “the day of your brother” refers to the day of judgment that fell on Jerusalem.  
The ‘day of the LORD’ first happened to Jerusalem.

This points us forward to the fact that *Jesus* had to endure the Day of the LORD first.

1 Peter lays this out for us clearly.

Peter says that “since Christ suffered in the flesh,  
arm yourselves with the same way of thinking” (4:1).

Jesus has passed through judgment day – he has endured the day of the LORD –  
and therefore we need not fear that day.

But we do need to recognize that we *will* suffer in the flesh.

As Peter says in 4:12,

“do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you,  
as though something strange was happening to you.

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings.”

Notice that Peter does not pit “joy” vs. “suffering.”

Joy is not found in the absence of suffering.

Joy is found in the presence of the Spirit of glory and of God –  
in the midst of suffering.

So if you are a generally joyful person, ask yourself this:

why am I joyful?

Am I joyful in spite of the fact that I regularly give in to sin,  
and neglect my relationship with God?

(if so, you may be soaring like an eagle without waiting on the Lord,  
in which case, you are going to crash someday!)

Or are you joyful because you see the Spirit’s work in your life

in conforming you to the likeness of Christ in his sufferings

(in which case you simply an example of what Peter is talking about!)

Peter says in 1 Peter 4:17 that “it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God,  
and if it begins with us,

what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”

That’s the same point that Obadiah makes then, in verses 15-21.

### **3. Therefore in the Day of the LORD, Jacob Shall Possess the Land and Esau Shall Be Destroyed (1:15-21)**

#### **a. The Day of the LORD Will Come on All Nations (v15-16)**

<sup>15</sup> *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.*  
<sup>16</sup> *For as you have drunk on my holy mountain,  
so all the nations shall drink continually;  
they shall drink and swallow,  
and shall be as though they had never been.*

The Day of the LORD first came upon Jerusalem –  
and then it will come upon Edom and the nations.

In verse 15, Obadiah says that 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.”

Or as Peter says, “The end of all things is at hand.” (4:7)

Again – how you treat my people is how I will deal with you.  
That’s why Peter says in 4:8-9,  
“Above all, keep loving one another earnestly,  
since love covers a multitude of sins.  
Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

As we talk about expanding the building, we need to remember this!  
I have been so grateful to you for asking good, hard questions!  
(Is this the time? Do we have the money? Should we have more input?)  
That demonstrates your love!

I realize that sometimes I can get excited about something –  
I can be convinced that this is the right thing, the best thing! –  
and I *need you* to ask good questions!

It shows me your love for me when you are willing to be vulnerable and ask.

(Incidentally, this is true in every relationship!  
Husbands, it is possible that your *wife* is afraid to ask *you* hard questions  
because she is afraid of how you will respond!  
I know this because it was true of my wife.  
I used to brag about how my wife was so good at finding *just the right way*  
of saying something to me.  
I realize now that I was bragging about what a jerk I was  
that she couldn’t just talk to me straight.)

The Day of the LORD is coming on all nations.  
Judgment begins with the household of God –  
and it moves from us to the nations.

So, if this judgment is coming – how can we escape?

**b. But [because my people have already endured the Day of the LORD] Mount Zion Will Escape (v17-18)**

<sup>17</sup> *But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape,  
and it shall be holy,  
and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.*

<sup>18</sup> *The house of Jacob shall be a fire,  
and the house of Joseph a flame,  
and the house of Esau stubble;  
they shall burn them and consume them,  
and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau,  
for the LORD has spoken.*

Because verse 17 says that there *shall be* those in Mount Zion who escape!  
Joel 2:5 had spoken of the Day of the LORD as a fire that destroys the stubble.  
Now Obadiah says that the house of Jacob and Joseph will be a flame,  
and the house of Esau stubble.

In other words, the fire of the LORD will burn and consume Edom,  
and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau.

The key to understand this is found in Malachi 1:2,  
“Is not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD.  
“Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated.”

Malachi is not saying that all Edomites are going to hell.  
Malachi is saying that Jacob stands for the elect people of God.  
Esau stands for the reprobate.  
All humanity can be divided into two groups: “Jacob” and “Esau.”

Certainly that is Paul’s point in Romans 9.

But we need to see that Paul’s point – and Malachi’s point –  
are rooted in Obadiah’s point!

Namely, that Jerusalem – Jacob – the elect people of God –  
must first pass through the Day of the LORD!

You see, Jesus is the elect One.  
He *is* “my servant Israel” –  
he is the new humanity – the last Adam.  
After all, the only way that we can survive the Day of the LORD –  
the only way that we can endure Judgment Day –  
is because Jesus has passed through the fire of God’s wrath for us!

Notice the language of fire burning up the stubble.  
That’s the language that John the Baptist uses to speak of what Jesus will do.

John says that Jesus is the one who will bring “the Day of the LORD” to the nations.  
He is the elect remnant who executes judgment on the nations.

**c. And Jacob Will Possess the Nations (v19-21)**

<sup>19</sup> *Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau,  
and those of the Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines;  
they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria,  
and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.*

<sup>20</sup> *The exiles of this host of the people of Israel  
shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,  
and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad  
shall possess the cities of the Negeb.*

<sup>21</sup> *Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion  
to rule Mount Esau,  
and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.*

And so Jesus is the “Jacob” who will possess the nations –  
and therefore, because we have been united to him,  
we share in his inheritance.

Verses 19-21 speak of those of the Negeb possessing Mt Esau (the land of Edom to the south)  
those of the Shephelah (the central plateau of Judah)  
will possess the land of the Philistines –  
and so on.

And saviors shall go up to Mt Zion.

That may sound odd –

but “Saviors” is the word used in Judges to refer to what the judges did.

The judges “saved” Israel.

They were “Saviors” – “deliverers” who saved Israel from their enemies.

Paul uses this language in 1 Timothy 4:16.

He urges Timothy to “keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.

Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

Because Jesus has saved us,

therefore he sends “saviors” – he sends those who will proclaim the message of salvation.

You may have heard someone say,

“I was saved by Billy Graham.”

As good Reformed people we cringe and say, “No, you were saved by God!”

But Paul would say, “stop being so Reformed, and pay attention to what I said!”

“keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.

Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

Timothy will save himself and his hearers by living and preaching faithfully.  
I will save myself and *you* by living and preaching faithfully.

It's true that *only God can save* –  
but God *saves* through his appointed means!  
As our shorter catechism puts it,

Q. 85. *What does God require of us that we may escape his wrath and curse due to us for sin?*

A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

Q. 89. *How is the word made effectual to salvation?*

A. The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching, of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

Q. 90. *How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?*

A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

Q. 91. *How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?*

A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that does administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.