

ISAIAH 34 THE LORD'S SWORD AGAINST HIS ENEMIES

In this chapter, we read of the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's people. The reason why Edom (Idumea) is the only nation that is specifically named here is because of the old enmity of Esau toward Jacob – which was only an extension of that more ancient enmity of Cain toward Abel, which flowed from the original enmity of the serpent toward the Seed of the Woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its physical accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army among those nations that were neighbors to Israel. That mighty nation took pride in shedding blood and laying countries waste, and thus – although it was quite beyond their own selfish ambitions – they were fulfilling what the Lord here threatened against His and His people's enemies. But this prophecy was probably also intended to be a denunciation of the wrath of Jehovah against all those who fight against the interests of His Kingdom among humankind. And in that light, it still has a frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of nations and by other desolating judgments; and it will have its full accomplishment in the final destruction and perdition of all ungodly persons on the Day of Judgment. Let us hear and learn!

In consideration of the character and history of the Edomites, we cannot wonder at the severe tone of the prophecies against them – not only in this chapter, but also in other passages of Scripture. The book of Obadiah is entirely occupied with the subject. We do not have any detailed accounts of the way in which the prophecies were fulfilled; but in regard to the completeness of their fulfillment, anyone who visits the region at the present day may easily satisfy himself. Its condition now cannot be more accurately described than in the words of verses 11-15. It was once occupied by a warlike and prosperous nation; and it was enriched by the trade which was carried on through it between India on the east, and Egypt and other countries on the west. Large caravans of merchants – carrying spices, gold, and gems of India – used to visit Edom in those days. And there are abundant evidences of the large population which formerly occupied the mountains of Edom; we may see them in the ruins of buildings, the fragments of sculptures, and the numerous rock-temples which still exist. But now it lies waste, according to God's decree. Well might the prophet say, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read!" (verse 16)

It is our duty to study the prophecies in God's Book, and to compare them with the events which have happened in the world, in order that we may learn to realize the Lord's faithfulness and the absolute certainty with which every word of His shall be fulfilled! Here we see how God's threatenings against Edom were entirely fulfilled. Desolate ruins, wild brushwood, and savage beasts now

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ A dreadful scene of blood and confusion is presented – verses 1-8
- ❖ The total desolation of the enemies of God's people – verses 9-17

now occupy the place of splendid buildings, wealthy cities, and a prosperous population. And are there other threatenings in God's Word that are less sure of accomplishment? Sinners may think to avoid God's judgments. But so did the Edomites (Mal. 1:4-5). Nevertheless, the Lord has thrown them down, and our eyes can see it. Let us learn to magnify the Lord; and let us take home the lessons and warnings which He has given us, with all fear and reverence! But although the prophecy before us specifically refers to Edom, and has had its accomplishment in that country; it is impossible to read it without perceiving that it bears reference to much more than Edom alone. Edom is evidently used here as a sample or representative of God's enemies in general. What is here prophesied regarding Edom corresponds exactly with what is threatened in other parts of Scripture against the sinful world at large; indeed, the chapter before us refers to all the earth! In the second verse, it is said, "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies." We have a passage that is very similar in chapter 63:1-6. In that passage, the Lord Jesus, Who speaks in righteousness and is mighty to save – is represented as coming forth from the destruction of His enemies, with His raiment all sprinkled with their blood. And the reason which He gives is this: "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come!" (chapter 63:4) This expression exactly corresponds with that in verse 8 of the chapter before us. Surely this day can be none other than that great Day of Judgment, to which the Word of God – from beginning to end – is continually pointing. It is that day which shall truly be a day of vengeance and darkness for the wicked (Amos 5:18). But for the redeemed, it shall be a day of recompence – a day for which they have waited (chapter 25:9).



So here in this chapter, we see more than a prophecy of judgment that was accomplished long ago on a small, remote country. We also find herein a declaration of events which are still to happen, and which we shall all witness. They may take place very soon; the return of the Savior in glory cannot be far distant! In any case, if the Lord Jesus said to His people 2,000 years ago, "Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40) – such counsel cannot be less necessary now! If the disciples were told back then to "watch and pray" (Mark 13:33-37), surely we ought not to be less watchful or less prayerful now. If we are believers, it is both our duty and our privilege to be "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). Let each of us, then, seek to have our lights burning; and let us be like servants who wait for their Lord, so that when He comes and knocks, they may open to Him immediately! (Luke 12:35-36)

Lord, give us grace to watch and pray, so that we may not be caught unawares by the Last Day, when all Your foes shall receive everlasting condemnation! Amen.