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Judgment of Sin

Psalm 75 uses wine as a picture of the judgment that is coming to the world. It speaks of the wicked drinking “the dregs.”

Psalm 75:8, “For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.” (ESV)

What are “the dregs” when it comes to wine?

As you most likely know, wine is made from grapes which are smashed, drained through a filter,

and then allowed to ferment in a container over time. It is near impossible to get all the impurities out of the grape mixture, and so in time, the impurities settle at the bottom of the container. These are “the dregs.” They are incredibly bitter and so undesirable to taste, much less consume.

What an incredible picture of Judgment! At first, the one drinking wine- if his pallet is trained- can enjoy not only the taste of the grape, but in some cases they can detect some of the environment in which the grape developed- like if there was a drought that year, the wine will be bitter.¹ But if the dregs are inadvertently consumed, the pallet is shocked by the horrible taste!² Such is the picture of the course of the unbeliever’s life. As they live on this earth, their lives for the most part are pleasant on account of God’s common grace. Yet awaiting them at the end of their life is NOT simply a taste, BUT the full and bitter gulping down of the dregs of God’s judgment!

It is this that is pictured in the final section of Obadiah. Here God details two things:

- (1) The frightening judgment that awaits the world and
- (2) The glorious future that is planned for the genuine servant of Christ.

That which awaits the rebellious, judgment! Notice Obadiah’s first point, that the time of reckoning is quickly coming.

Obadiah 15a, “For the day of the Lord // draws near // on all the nations...”

First off note that Obadiah has transitioned from the Judgment of Edom to the Judgment that is coming to all nations.³ Notice what we are talking here about here:

“All the nations” the word for “nations” is גוֹיִם (*go-yim*). The root has reference to any and every gentile whether individual or corporate. As it is in the plural here, God clearly has in mind people groups as well as the nations in which they live. It is interesting to note that from Abraham on the expression took on the primary meaning of “gentiles” or “heathen”- in contrast to the covenant people of God. Accordingly, by “nations” the Bible primarily has in mind the non-covenant, non-believing peoples. That clearly is the reference here. In this regard, notice that when it comes to any and every individual, tribe, family, clan, or nation outside of Christ, the day of reckoning is drawing near.

The word used here is the term in Hebrew for ones kinsmen, קָרוֹב (*qārôb*). Accordingly, the word denotes being or coming into intimate proximity with another. As such, it is a relational word which does NOT have in mind a mass of people, BUT individuals!

So though the subject here is “the nations” (that is, those people-groups outside of Christ), nevertheless the judgment referenced is individual! It is as Paul said in Romans.

Romans 2:5, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself [a singular pronoun] in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

On that day, the wicked will NOT stand before God as a group. RATHER, they individually will stand before God, and so individually suffer the wrath of Almighty God. That is what is in mind in the next phrase, "the day of the Lord."

We have talked about this many times now in relation to the prophets. In fact, we were introduced to this expression in the first prophecy we looked at, Joel.

Joel 1:15, "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty."

Joel 2:1-2a, "Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness..."

Joel 2:11b, "The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?"

It goes on and on like this throughout the prophetic corpus⁴... all the way into the New Testament.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (cf. also 1 Corinthians 5:5)

These passages speak of a day in the future in which the inhabitants of the world will be filled with terror on account of the revelation of the glory of God's awesome character. In this regard note the Day of the Lord does NOT have reference to a chronological time period, BUT to a general period of wrath and judgment uniquely belonging to the Lord. It references that time when God vindicates His name by unveiling His character and so terrifying His enemies. Truly on this earth.

- Satan has had his day.
- The non-believer has had his day.
- Evil and cruel men and women have had their day.

Yet the day is coming when God will have HIS day, and all who have rebelled against Him will be judged! Until that day the trials, difficulties, and tragedies of life are given by God as a gracious reminder that such a judgment rests at the end of the life of every man

Luke 13:4-5, "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were *worse* culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

The world looks at trial and tragedy and indicts God's love. Yet God in His love ordains the trials and tragedy of life to warn man of what is coming! And what specifically is coming? What is Obadiah referencing? Ultimately this passage has in mind that time referenced in Matthew.

Matthew 25:31-33, "But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left."

It is at this time that the promise of Genesis 2:17 and Romans 3:23 will be met out in its entirety! Or as Christ put it in John.

John 5:28-29, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the *good deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the *evil deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."

At this time the world will be burned up and remade into a paradise. The just shall then inherit the earth and the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire (cf. Revelation 20:11-15). Such is the fate of any and all in rebellion against Christ! In this regard, on what basis will non-believer be judged?

The non-believer's destruction will be according to their works.

Obadiah 15b, "For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head."

This emphasizes once again the reality that man stands before God on the basis of their conduct! We just read about it in John 5. Listen to it again.

John 5:28-29, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the *good deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the *evil deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."

Truly, salvation has and will always be according to our works! Paul describes it this way:

Romans 2:5-10, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to

those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. [How could we ever doubt it... salvation is by works!] *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

And so it is in the text before us, “...As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.” We couldn’t get any clearer than that: On the Day of Judgment everyone will be recompensed for the deeds done in the flesh! Not the smallest sin will be missed!⁵

Family of God, we must NOT downplay this! When it comes to our ministry in the world, this is an important truth that needs to be pressed. Christ did NOT come to fulfill individuals OR to make them happy. He came to save them from their sin (Matthew 1:21)! If we downplay this, there is no good news/gospel! Recall Christ’s approach to evangelism in Matthew.

Matthew 19:16, 17b-21, “And behold, one [who we know to be a rich, young ruler] came to Him and said, ‘Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?’ [now after correcting his theology a bit in reference to who only is good, Christ answered the young man’s question...] And He said to him, ‘...if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ [This is so good! Because He knew the heart of the man before Him, Jesus began with the commandments in which the man obviously took pride] And Jesus said, ‘You shall not commit murder [6th commandment]; you shall not commit adultery [7th commandment]; you shall not steal [8th commandment]; you shall not bear false witness [9th commandment]; honor your father and mother [5th commandment]; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself’ [which is the sum of it all!] The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?’ [From the man’s response it is clear that he approached Jesus NOT for salvation, BUT to get from Him what he obviously had received from everyone else... commendation! This man in his mind was not a sinner (cf. Luke 18:11)! He believed that in God’s Kingdom he truly was a gem!] 21 Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”

There have been many sermons preached on this passage which emphasize the importance of the Ten Commandments when it comes to evangelism. See if a person doesn’t know he is lost, he won’t see his need to be saved. If a person doesn’t understand that he is a sinner, he will never seek a savior!

In this case, the rich young ruler’s besetting sin was that of covetousness. His wealth had become his god! So Christ pressed the issue saying to this man -- not all men, just this man for again his problem revolved around his wealth, “...go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (v. 21b). That Christ found his idol is evidenced by:

Matthew 19:22, "But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property."

Talk about extremes! This young man went from feeling pretty good about himself to knowing he fell short of God's Kingdom! Why? Because Christ pressed the standard of God (His Law) which again demands perfect obedience! Truly if we do not perfectly obey God, we cannot be saved! Walter Chantry wrote of this passage:

Normal evangelical practice is swiftly to run to the cross of Christ. But the cross means nothing apart from the law... without knowledge of the condemnation of God's holy law, the cross will draw sympathy but not saving faith from sinners. [He went on...] The average witnessing booklet insists on the question, 'Do you believe that all men are sinners?' If there is any hesitation, you establish the point with, 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' [Romans 3:23]. But no definition of sin is included. There is scarcely a man alive, including the most hardened sinner, who will deny this broad statement. Anyone would answer, 'Of course I am less holy than God. No one is perfect.' The young ruler would have conceded as much. But such is hardly an acknowledgment of sin. He would still deny that he was a liar, an adulterer, a thief... Our Savior used the law as a primary tool of evangelism. He knew that preaching the Ten Commandments was the only way to teach a sinner his guilt and thereby stir within him a desire for God's grace. (Chantry, 1970, pp. 37-40)

So understand the importance of the standard proclaimed in the text before us: "...As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head." On the Last Day, all mankind will stand before God on the basis of their works! That brings us finally to the undoing of all man- which specifically is their empty pride.

Obadiah 16, "Because just as you drank on My holy mountain..." Recall what this is referencing. Following the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the Jews to Babylon (among which many Edomites also were carried), some of the remnant of Edom stood on the temple mount and drank a toast to the destruction of Israel. This is a serious thing because when one attacks a Christian one attacks God! Yet this seemingly insignificant act was and is emblematic of every pagan before God -- who arrogantly exalt themselves above God! Consider Paul's teaching in Romans:

Romans 1:18-23, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness [think of Whack-a-Mole... every non-Christian is in a mad pursuit to deny God and/or His character!], because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. [We are talking here about the truth of God's existence and/or His character. God is literally shining the witness of Himself into the soul of every man!] For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made,

so that they are without excuse. [With this bold and effective witness, what does the non-believer do?] For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

What does the non-Christian do with the testimony of God? They push it down; they deny it; and then they turn their back on God and create false religions to get away from the Lord. That is what the Edomites were doing as they toasted the downfall of God’s people. Ultimately, they were toasting their rejection of God and so their hatred of Him and His standards! That is why God quickly moves *from* their actions *to* the judgment that awaits NOT just Edom, BUT every man, woman, child, people group, and nation...

Obadiah 16b, “...all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and swallow, and become as if they had never existed.”

The word for “swallow” is a graphic word which means to drink noisily -- underlining the torture of having to drink without stopping! So, will be the non-believer for the rest of eternity as they drink down the dregs of God’s wrath!

The expression “become as if they had never existed” does NOT mean they will go out of existence. RATHER it indicates that their doom is so awful, they will still be suffering when the memory of their existence has all been forgotten by the sons of man!

Now this is heavy! Yet in light of this heavy truth, the glorious gospel is shown. As we just saw: Salvation is by works. For any man to stand before God and be accepted, they must be perfect (cf. Matthew 5:48)!

You say, “*Who then can be saved if all have sinned?*” Only those for whom Christ died and so reconciled to the Father!” See while salvation is by works, the question of eternity is: “*On the basis of whose works are you approaching God?*”

If you approach God on the basis of your own works, you will perish.

Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

This is the majority of mankind! But if you approach God on the basis of Christ’s works, you will live forever. Speaking of the merit that is necessary to be saved, Paul put it this way:

2 Corinthians 8:9, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”

By His magnificent grace, Christ died on the cross in the place of you and me! Accordingly, today we approach God on the basis of works, just not our own.

2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Such is the glory/weightiness of the message of the gospel! For those in Christ, today we stand before the Lord having received the verdict of "Not Guilty!" when it comes to breaking any of His laws. In other words, we stand before God as ones who have perfectly obeyed Him- *for we stand before God in light of the salvation Christ earned for us!* For the non-believer and all who approach God on the basis of their OWN merit, according to the text before us they shall receive the certain and terrifying judgment of "Guilty!" on account of which they will be doomed!

How ought we to respond to a message like this?

Repent! If you are one this day who does not have a saving relationship with Christ, turn from your sin to Christ! Wait no longer! Second, we must realize that- as the hymn goes- *we've a story to tell the nations!* How can we remain silent in the presence of the non-believer when before them rests this fate?!

Oh may every concern we've ever had for our reputation vanish! Rather, let us boldly press the standard of God upon the unbeliever that they might come to the end of themselves, turn to Christ, and be saved!

But then lastly, let us respond to this message with a gratitude that takes over our entire lives! Remember, we did not choose Jesus. He chose us (John 15:16) and so opened our eyes that we might see our need for the cleansing blood of Christ. We love today, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19)! Such gratitude and awe was that with which God wanted His exiled people to be filled with!

In this regard, all week long as I studied this passage I kept going back in my mind to a hymn by Isaac Watts, who wrote it in response to the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Luke 14:16-24), that summarizes the response we must give to the message:

How sweet and awful is the place with Christ within the doors, while everlasting love displays
the choicest of her stores.

While all our hearts and all our songs join to admire the feast, each of us cry, with thankful
tongues, "Lord, why was I a guest?"

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice, and enter while there's room, when thousands make a
wretched choice, and rather starve than come?"

'Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in; else we had still refused to
taste, and perished in our sin.

Pity the nations, O our God, constrain the earth to come; send Thy victorious word abroad, and

bring the strangers home.

We long to see thy churches full, that all the chosen race may, with one voice and heart and soul, sing Thy redeeming grace. (Trinity Hymnal Rev. Edition, 1990, p. 469)

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End Note(s)

¹ The wine will be more bitter.

² It was this that was in Christ's mind when He said, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me..." (Matthew 26:39a).

³ Smith and Page wrote, "...theologically Edom represents the enemy of God's people in all generations, as well as perpetual world power over against God. The ultimate destiny of such enemies is destruction. God is unalterably opposed to such enemies. No mountain is high enough, no fortress is strong enough, no military force is large enough, and no hiding place is dark enough to secure such an enemy from the judgment of God." (Billy K. Smith, 1995, p. 190)

⁴ cf. Job 15:23b-25; Isaiah 13:6-9; 2:12; 22:5; 34:8; Jeremiah 46:10; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Ezekiel 30:1-3; Obadiah 15.

⁵ Now, as it relates to Edom and the nations, there is quite a bit of irony here! J. M. Boice put it this way, "Edom, Obadiah says with poetic justice, along with the other nations, is going to drink again [recall, they drank a toast on the temple mount in celebration of the destruction of God's people]. But this time the cup will not hold wine. It will be the cup of the wrath of God (cf. Jeremiah 25:15, 17)." (Boice, 2006, p. 235)