

The Vision of Judgment
Obadiah 1:1-9

Matthew 10:1-20

Matthew 10:21-42

Psalms 37:9-17

Last week we gave a bit of an introduction into this book that we are going to be looking at. This prophesy of Obadiah deals directly with the nation of Edom, the descendants of Esau and as we saw last week as we were reading through it, it is a judgment upon them for turning their backs against Israel in her time of need. In fact as we see in the book, they didn't just sit idle while the Babylonians took Judah, they were involved, cutting off the routes of escape and capturing those who would be fleeing. There was a constant conflict between Israel and Edom, and as we read last week this conflict even started in the womb, as Rebekah was concerned over her pregnancy and the great discomfort she was in due to this. This conflict continued for generations, in the book of Numbers is the account that Israel wanted to go through Edom after they had left Egypt, but the people of Edom would not allow it. Then in 1st and 2nd Samuel, we see that Saul attacked Edom and defeated its army, and likewise later so did David, enslaving a part of the people of Edom. Later Solomon built his ships in a port called Ezion-Geber which was in Edom, so there were moments of subjugation and control by Israel. And there were many other conflicts, in 1 Kings is recorded the Hadad, the King of Edom, was an evil enemy and caused great suffering in Israel. Edom attacked Judah at the time of King Jehoshaphat as recorded in 2nd Chronicles. And there were many other conflicts between Edom and Israel, and then in comes this message from Obadiah to the people of Edom, God has seen their evil and will judge them righteously.

The overarching message of this book though it is about the judgment and destruction of Edom, it is a message of hope to God's people. Edom believed that they were greater than all other nations, the position of their cities, quite literally carved into the side of the mountains gave them a natural defense against invasion, and they had control over some of the main trade routes which brought them great wealth, yet God says...you who make your nests among the stars, from there I will bring you down." They did not respect God, they didn't not believe that God would revenge his people, the hope of Israel in this message is the witness of God's judgment upon her oppressors. When God would carry out his judgment upon the nations, then Israel's people would see God's justice. He would then give back to Judah what the other nations have taken, restoring the land back, keeping his promises that the people of Abraham would inherit the land. God used other nations to bring about defeat of Israel as a judgment against the sins of Israel, to bring them back from going astray, driving them to repent, which then he would restore them.

God is the God of kings, the builder of nations, and the destroyer of nations. He controls the events, he uses these events, and people to carry out his purpose and plans for both the good of his people, and the punishment of evil. The nations of Edom, and Babylon, these once mighty nations no longer exist, but the descendants of Jacob, still exist.. God has kept his promises to Abraham, and has enacted his judgment upon the people of Edom. How can we relate that reality to us today? God promised Abraham his descendants would inherit the promised land, and while there is a physical fulfillment of this, the spiritual application is the descendants of Abraham are those who are of like faith, not of blood as Paul points out in Romans 9:6, "But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, in Isaac your seed shall be called. That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise' At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.

And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him who calls, it was said to her. The older shall serve the younger. As it is written Jacob have I loved by Esau I have hated.” Our inheritance isn’t in this world, our promised land is not a piece of land on this earth, but it is to be in the presence of God, in heaven.

In the return of the Lord, all the nations shall be judged, all the peoples shall be held accountable for their sin and rebellion, just like Edom, and the remnant, God’s chosen people will be spared, and in the ultimate fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, all those who are in Christ will be raised up into the true promised land, into the very presence of God in a place he has prepared for us. Israel and Edom stand as a physical example to this spiritual truth. Just like both Edom and Israel have come from one man, Issac, so to we are all descendants of Adam, yet the faithful, and the just shall prevail, and the sinners and rebels shall be destroyed. We are divided into 2 camps, the children of God, and the rebellious. We see this theme run throughout all of scripture, the nations that rise against Israel, the story of Noah and the destruction of sinful mankind except the remnant which God saved...There are warnings throughout the bible about being outsiders, we see the fate of those who oppose God ends in failure and destruction.

And so to would be our fate, and would have been the fate of ancient Israel, if not for God’s mercy, if not for his keeping the promises given to Abraham, that his descendants would be innumerable, and they will one day inherit the promised land. This morning we are going to take the first 14 verses, this book is basically split up into 2 parts The prophecy against Edom, and Israel and the nations. So let us go ahead this morning and read verse 1-14. (read Obadiah 1:1-14) This book as no need for any large introductions, verse 1 is pretty straight forward and to the point, the prophet Obadiah, got a message of the Lord through a vision. Though this prophecy concerns Edom, Obadiah was a prophet to Judah, they were the recipients of this prophecy. This is significant because this was not a prophecy with an option, this was not a prophecy of warning calling for the repentance of Edom, this was a prophecy of judgment and destruction, and it was given to those who had just been subjugated by the Babylonian empire through the help of the Edomites.

The vision that Obadiah received, was that of a messenger, one who had gone out among the nations to stir up rivalry against Edom, this was most likely a messenger of the Lord, this was not as if captive Israel sent out messengers to rile up nations against Edom, this was God’s way of portraying his work in the hearts and minds of the leaders of the various nations surrounding Edom, putting in their hearts the desire to seize Edom. One of the main messages throughout this little book, is the sovereignty of God, his control, his purpose, and his wrath poured out on sinners. In this introduction Obadiah uses the names for God, Adonai Yahweh which is the name used in Hebrew to emphasize God’s ultimate sovereignty. Adonai in Hebrew is the plural form of the word Adon, which translates to Lords, or Masters..when it is used in reference to God it denotes his supreme sovereignty and is translated to simply Lord, or Master. Yahweh this was the name that God gave himself to Israel, it is generally translated to mean, I am that I am, or He brings into existence whatever exists. Using both of these terms denotes the absolute supremacy of God, the absolute sovereignty of God, and this is being conveyed to the people of God who had their cities destroyed, their soldiers killed, and their people taken captive.

Even just this first verse, is a verse bringing about comfort the the captive people of Judah, for it is a reminder of who God is, it is a reminder of his promises to them, and the subsequent judgment against Edom is a reminder that it is God who avenges, and his vengeance is mighty, and terrible. In verse 1 we also get a sense that these things have been put into motion, in the vision Obadiah hears a report from the Lord, which says a messenger has been sent among the nations, a past tense to enact something in the future. As with all things that God says, this is a sure thing, this this is something that will happen, and in this case, there is no relenting, there is no turning away upon repentance, he shall come and utterly destroy them for their sins against Judah, for their wretchedness against God's people. The old testament gives us a great reminder of who God truly is, we see this in the new testament as well, that God is a God of judgment, and a God of vengeance, but the main message of the new testament is reconciliation, redemption, grace, and mercy. So many people today want to make this the only aspect of God's nature, that he is pure love, pure acceptance, and wouldn't hurt a single thing. It is an over emphasis upon only a single part of his nature.

God is all of those things, he is loving, and kind, merciful and gracious beyond even our own human comprehension, but he is also a jealous, vengeful, and a God of wrath. We can not hyper focus on either aspect of God and make it the totality, some religions focus upon his wrath and judgment, and others hyper focus upon his love and acceptance, but God is both of these things in equal measure, and without both aspects of God, he would not be righteous, he would not be holy. Passages like this in scripture remind us of God's vengeful nature, and that this is not a God to be trifled with, but rather all the world should take seriously, and all the world should tremble in fear, lest he turn his vengeance upon her. The impenetrable nation of Edom, who quite literally carved her cities in the mountains, was brought to utter destruction because God brought his judgment upon her.

No amount of human wisdom, security or money could change the outcome that God had ordained for Edom, he had determined to lay waste to her lands, and her people because of their transgressions against his people. Just as he told them which is written in Genesis 12:3 "I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you." Some of the blessings that we have, and a show of great mercy from God is that we, as his children, need not ever fear his wrath. Toward us, he is a God of compassion and mercy, and to unbelievers, a vengeful God of wrath who will not only destroy the body, but cast the soul into hell. As we read in Matthew this morning, "do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This verse in Matthew is both a warning, and an encouragement wrapped up into one, just like this book of Obadiah, a warning against one, and a blessing to another. For us, who are his people, we are not to live in fear, we need not fear God, nor man for we serve the sovereign God of all creation, of all nations, the king of kings, and the Lord of Lords. Yet, if you are not one of his then you should fear for the punishment for sin and rebellion is everlasting death.

That is why he says, in verse 27 in Matthew, "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light and what you hear in the ear preach on the housetops." For God's word, and this message of salvation is the only escape from judgment, the only escape from eternal darkness and damnation. Do not fear those who can kill the body, but fear him who condemns a soul to eternal darkness in hell. Yet, mankind, just like Edom, in their arrogance puffs up their chests, sticks up their heads and says, who can tear us down from our high ground, we are wise, we are rich, we are powerful....but God who is the Lord of all shall bring judgment, and vengeance.

We can see a picture of God's wrath against Edom in Isaiah 63 which reads like a conversion. "Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, This one who is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? The answer, It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Then why is your apparel red, and your garments like one who treads the winepress? Because I have trodden the winepress alone, and from my peoples no one was with me. For I have trodden them in my anger, and trampled them in my fury; their blood sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my robes. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, and I wondered, that there was no one to uphold; therefore my own arm brought salvation for me, and my own fury sustained me. I have trodden down the peoples in my anger, I have made them drunk in my fury, and brought down their strength to the earth."

The picture God gave Isaiah, was that of a man stomping on grapes, that is how powerless, those who rebel against God truly are, and this shows the veracity, the seriousness of God's wrath against the unjust. And we get the same picture in the book of Revelation. Chapter 19, "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse. And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns. HE had a name written that no one knew except himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood and his name is called The Word of God." Notice it says, in righteousness he judges and makes war, those who are under his wrath are those who deserve it, and the reality is all of mankind deserves the wrath of God, yet God in his mercy has spared some. I asked google for a summary of God's wrath, and it gave a pretty good description I think, the answer is, God's wrath refers to his righteous, just, and holy response to human sin, rebellion and injustice. There are 4 key aspects of this concept.

1. Inseparable from Love and Justice; because God is perfectly good, his love demands that he hate anything that destroys or harms his creation. Wrath is the necessary reaction of absolute holiness in the presence of evil.
2. The Handing over of humanity: In scriptures, wrath is often portrayed as God handing people over to the natural destructive consequences of their own choice and moral degradation.
3. Temporal vs Eternal. Temporal wrath manifests in earthly consequences of sin, whereas eternal wrath refers to ultimate, final judgment.
4. The Role of Redemption: God's wrath is satisfied through the atonement offered through Jesus Christ. Believers are viewed as saved from eternal wrath through Christ who endured the penalty of sin in their place.

We see some of this playing out here in this wrath being poured out upon Edom, a temporal wrath as a consequence of their rebellion and sin, but is also a punishment to Israel for her own rebellion with the difference being that God provides salvation for Israel, a way out, where the wrath upon Edom is eternal, as she is utterly destroyed. The wrath of God is something that needs to be taken seriously, and is not just a concept in religious circles, but is a reality both within this world, and the next. We don't have the prophets today, we don't have the Apostles today interpreting the events and the things that go on in this world, as we see here in scripture. These accounts serve as a warning, and an encouragement to us that God is still yet going about the business of working out his purpose and plan, and the nations, the leaders, the people are all a part of it. I think we yet have to be careful to not fall into the trap that some do, and see all negative things happening in the world or society around us as some sort of wrath or judgment, much is simply the consequence of our own actions...yet that being said, scripture says that God gives them over..he allows for their own fall, and their own destruction.

We don't get a clear picture as we may here in Obadiah, we see that the destruction of Edom which happened in history, is foretold here by the prophet and reasons are given. Today, there are wars, and conflicts, murders and violence and we may not have a clear picture or understanding why, or what is going on, but none of that is happening at random either. God is continuing his work in humanity, ever driving us forward to that great and awesome day of the lord, when he returns for his people and wages war against the ungodly, the image of the white robe, dipped in blood...the Messiah comes for the judgment of the sinful, and the salvation of the righteous. For Edom, it was judgment, it was destruction and death, as he trampled them underfoot as a man trampling grapes. God's wrath is a fearful thing, it is a mighty thing, and it is just and holy thing, and the only escape from his wrath is through Jesus...for he took God's wrath upon himself, suffering and dying in our place so that we may be made righteous, so that we may be made holy, so we may be called his children.

The warning goes out, repent, believe, turn from your sin, from your rebellion and unbelief and rest in Jesus, rest in he who has taken the sins of his people and nailed it to the cross, rest in he who has taken the punishment, and the wrath of God on the behalf of his people so that they may have mercy, and may be found righteous. In this world there are only 2 outcomes, either you are Edom, or you are Judah, one who will be spared, or one who will be utterly destroyed and cast into outer darkness. So the call goes out, unlike Edom we have been given the opportunity for repentance, so do not let it go, repent, believe, and follow him who has given his life, so that you may live.