

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

MAY 24 - 28, 2021



COURSE SERMON SERIES
5/9 - 8/1
CORRECTIONS

THE MINOR PROPHETS

MONDAY

Obadiah 1; Jeremiah 49:7-22

Obadiah and Edom are this week's lenses as we survey God's sovereign favor toward His own. Though loving, God is righteous and holy; His patience ("longsuffering") with disobedience has limits. Edom's issues included their ongoing contentiousness with Israel and rejecting Yahweh—as Abraham's descendants, they should have known better. *"The pride of your heart has deceived you ... Do not gloat over the day of your brother in ... his misfortune ... For the day of the LORD is near ... Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion ... and the kingdom shall be the LORD's"* (Obadiah 1:3, 12, 15, 21).

The timing of Obadiah's (meaning "servant of Yahweh") prophetic call is uncertain and little is known of him. Some believe that Obadiah was an Edomite convert to Judaism—interesting, given his theme of God's judgment upon Edom for its continual antagonism toward Israel.

Obadiah's prophecy encouraged Israel's faithful remnant while predicting Edom's destruction, which was ultimately realized after Herod Agrippa II aided Rome's devastation of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD. With the later death of Agrippa II—the last Herod—Edom's biblical lineage ended.

Esau ("hairy," "red"), the father of Edom, and Jacob ("heel-catcher," "supplanter"), whom God renamed Israel (Genesis 32:28), were Isaac and Rebekah's fraternal twin sons. They were born foes, their hostility escalating after Jacob tricked Esau into "selling" his birthright

(Genesis 5:22-25) and later translating into Esau's death-vow against his brother when Jacob deceived Isaac into giving him Esau's patriarchal blessing (Genesis 27). The nations proceeding from these flawed brothers also were adversaries.

During the Jews' exodus to Canaan, Edom denied Israel passage through its territory (Numbers 20:14-21). King David conquered the Edomites (2 Samuel 8:13-14), but they revolted and established their own king during Jehoram's reign (2 Kings 8:20). Edom and Judah battled during Jehoshaphat's, Amaziah's and Ahaz's reigns (1 Kings 11:14-25; etc.). Edom celebrated Jerusalem's destruction by Babylon in 586 BC (Psalm 137:7). During the Maccabean uprising (167-160 BC), Israel subjugated the Edomites and compelled their conversion to Judaism. Unlike Edom, we should heed God's warning, *"I will bless those who bless [My people], and whoever curses [them] I will curse"* (Genesis 12:3).

QUESTIONS

What does Obadiah's name mean? How did Edom's and Israel's history parallel that of their patriarchs, Esau and Jacob?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

GTi HOPE brings the light of literacy and the message of peace, hope, and love to people who have never experienced the Word. India is suffering through a devastating surge of COVID-19. Pray for lockdowns and social distancing to slow the virus. Pray for enough oxygen, medicine, vaccines, and hospital beds to meet needs.

TUESDAY

Obadiah 1:3-4; Ezekiel 25:12-14

There's an American ideal of the "rugged individualist" who "pulls himself up by the bootstraps." Such imagery is popularized by the cigarette-promoting "Marlboro Man," "rags to riches" stories, "Westerns," and even songs like Sinatra's "My Way." But are such images biblical?

Many Americans might have admired Esau. After being swindled out of his birthright and blessing, he left home and defied his parents' wishes by taking foreign wives (Genesis 26:34, 36:2), eventually spawning Edom—a major, ancient Canaanite nation south of Israel and the Dead Sea. Edom prospered economically for years—given its location along a prominent Arabia-Mediterranean trade route—and the elevated rock city of Petra sheltering many Edomites was seen as impenetrable.

Edom's arrogance paralleled that of ancient Tyre and Sidon, the coastal Phoenician city-states north of Israel. Ezekiel warned these, *"In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned ... Your heart was proud ... [and therefore] I (God) cast you to the ground"* (Ezekiel 28:16-17). Alexander the Great fulfilled this when conquering them in 332 BC. Edom, Tyre, and Sidon have much in common with ancient Babel, which set out to *"build ourselves a city and a tower ... [reaching] the heavens ... [and thereby] make a name for ourselves"* (Genesis 11:4) until God Himself

thwarted their plans. Sodom's principal sin was likewise *"pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease ... [disregarding] the poor and needy"* (Ezekiel 16:49)—The threats of Sodom's men to rape and humiliate Lot's angelic guests (Genesis 19) were symptoms of their underlying problem.

Obadiah 1:3-4 warned Edom regarding *"The pride of your heart ... Though you soar aloft like the eagle ... I (God) will bring you down."* Edom, like many both past and present, ignored God and yielded to the haughty deception of feeling *"self-made"*—indicating a rebellious, God-defying orientation that ends poorly.

Psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck described mental health as *"dedication to reality at all costs."* God Himself is the Source and Sustainer of reality. Pride and its fruit, the delusion of self-sufficiency, deny reality and make one ripe for judgment. Learn from Edom's self-destructive example: *"Every good ... gift is ... from the Father"* (James 1:17).

QUESTIONS

How does Edom's story have a particularly *"American"* feel to it? How did Edom's issues compare to those of ancient Babel, Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for safety and health for GTi Hope's partner's staff and families. Praise God that staff members who have had the virus are recovering. Pray that continues and more staff members do not get sick. Pray for God's provision as they have not been able to distribute Scripture which provides revenue for their salaries and overhead.

WEDNESDAY

Obadiah 1:12; Proverbs 24:17-18; Matthew 5:43-48

Contemporary U.S. culture seems obsessed with other's business, particularly that of celebrities. There are gossip magazines and related TV shows galore. Worse still, many of us seemingly take pleasure in another's problems. Some love to view "funniest home videos" shows or online clips exhibiting people or animals in peril. Which of us has not experienced a freeway slowdown as uninvolved drivers gaze upon the wreckage or crash victims?

Sadly, our fallen nature shows up when we enjoy others being "taken down a notch" or "getting what they deserve." Ancient Edom had this problem, celebrating God's discipline of Israel. Psalm 137:7 shares Edom's delight as Babylon sacked Jerusalem in 586 BC: *"Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, 'Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!'"*

As touched upon yesterday, among Edom's core problems was haughtiness. "The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind ... Pride is a spiritual cancer; it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense." (C.S. Lewis) An "I'm better," "That's not fair! I deserve ..." and/or "I have my rights!" attitude can reveal damaging vanity and ingratitude for God's provision and the circumstances He permits. The fool demands justice; the wise person welcomes mercy.

In American culture we are very inclined toward one-upmanship and hyper-competitiveness—our sports obsession is but one example, wherein I can struggle myself. Edom, being less favored in God’s eyes than Israel (Malachi 1:3), cheered when God judged the Jews. They were like a 6-year-old who delights when a sibling “gets caught” for a wrongdoing, perhaps even tattling on his/her brother or sister to provoke punishment. Edom lacked a proper “vertical perspective,” having forsaken the living God.

Edom needed to learn the way of Jesus, emphasizing a God-honoring “horizontal perspective” of serving others, including our need to “love our enemies” (Matthew 5:34). Their final representative leaders—the Herods—sealed their people’s fate by opposing the LORD and His people. Toward which are you more inclined, Edom’s way or Christ’s?

QUESTIONS

What was one of the most troubling ways Edom’s rebelliousness showed up? How is “pride ... the complete anti-God state of mind”? (C.S. Lewis)

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for health and safety for the local church and NGO partners, the project officers and coordinators, literacy teachers, church leaders, and VBS teachers who have been trained. There are reports that some literacy teachers and project officers have died from COVID. Ministry projects are currently suspended; pray that they can safely resume soon.

THURSDAY

Obadiah 1:13-14; Amos 1:11-12; Psalm 22:7-17

Earlier we considered Edom's sinful delight as God disciplined Israel. Obadiah 1:13-14, however, indicates that Edom exceeded mere celebration, actually exploiting the Hebrews' chastening. Both sides owned their historic discord, but Edom scorned Israel's divine favor—"the apple of His eye" (Zechariah 2:8)—and God's related warning to enemies, "I will bless those who bless [Abraham's descendants], and whoever curses [them] I will curse" (Genesis 12:3).

Some struggle with God's favor toward Israel, particularly as amplified: "I have loved Jacob (Israel), but Esau (Edom) I have hated" (Malachi 1:2-3). We should note intentional overstatement here—the Bible often uses "hate" relatively and not absolutely. Jesus did this when declaring, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children ... and even his own life, [he] cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). Yet the Fourth Commandment states, "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12), and we know that sinless Jesus kept the Law perfectly.

God's favor is a fruit of His sovereignty and love. Israel was no more deserving than Edom; God simply chose Israel. Perhaps you've heard, "I understand 'Esau have a I hated'—it's 'Jacob I have loved' that mystifies me." Likewise, accepting Christ's salvation has nothing to do with our personal merit, but rests solely in Jesus.

God used wicked nations to discipline Israel: Assyria, Babylon, etc. Yet, although He sovereignly arranged all, those countries were responsible for their behavior and were judged subsequently. This displays the interplay between God’s sovereignty and our free will. Judas Iscariot is a prime example: Jesus knew Judas would betray Him and God used this to orchestrate the crucifixion. Psalm 22—a Messianic Psalm penned over 1,000 years earlier, featuring breathtaking crucifixion prophecy—illustrates how God used the hate of enemies to enable the fullness of judgment that Jesus experienced on the cross.

If you wrestle with the “fairness” of this, that’s OK. God reminds us, “My ways are *higher than your ways*” (Isaiah 55:9). The fact that “*while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8) gloriously transcends “fairness.” Thank God for His sovereign love! Invite others into it.

QUESTIONS

Did God literally “hate” Edom? Why did God favor Israel over Edom? What are some examples of God using the wicked to achieve His ends?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for literacy students who have been learning sanitation, nutrition, and hygiene. Pray they follow social-distancing guidelines and have food and sanitary supplies for their families. Pray that any seeds of the Good News they have heard would bear fruit. Especially pray for those in rural villages with no access to hospitals or clinics.

FRIDAY

Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7; Revelation 6:14-17

This week's featured Obadiah passage ends with a heavy, prominent biblical expression, "*The day of the LORD*" (Obadiah 1:15). When the Bible conveys "LORD" spelled in all caps, this substitutes for YHWH, God's covenant name revealed to Moses in response to his "What is Your name?" question (Exodus 3:13-14). YHWH is rendered either Yahweh or Jehovah. Jewish scribes wrote "the LORD" typically instead of "God" or "YHWH," believing that His name was too holy to say or even write.

The day of the LORD is "a span of time during which God personally intervenes in history ... to accomplish some specific aspect of His plan. ... The phrase 'the day of the LORD' is used [nineteen times] in the Old Testament ... and [six] times in the New ... Passages dealing with the day of the LORD often convey a sense of imminence, nearness, and expectation. ...

"Old Testament passages referring to the day of the LORD often speak of both a near and a far fulfillment ... Some [day of the LORD] Old Testament passages ... describe [already fulfilled] historical judgments (from a 2021 perspective) ... [or] divine judgments that will take place toward the end of [an] age. ... The New Testament calls it a day of 'wrath,' a day of 'visitation,' and the 'great day of God Almighty' ... when God's [judgment] is poured out."
(GotQuestions.org)

There are several apparent, previous “day of the LORD” examples with which many concur: the flood during Noah’s time; Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection; and the Jerusalem temple’s 70 AD destruction. Others might also include Adam and Eve’s fall and banishment from Eden; Israel’s Assyrian exile; Judah’s Babylonian captivity; and Jesus’ cleansings of Jerusalem’s temple. The yet-future “day of the LORD” will be upon Jesus Christ’s return and subsequent judgment of the living and dead (Revelation 20:11-15).

“Besides ... judgment, it [is also] a time of salvation as God ... delivers the [faithful] remnant ... The ultimate or final fulfillment of ... the day of the LORD will come at the end of history when God, with wondrous power, will punish evil and fulfill all of His promises.” (GotQuestions.org) Are you ready for the forthcoming day of the LORD? Are your friends, family and neighbors ready?

QUESTIONS

Why did ancient Jewish scribes use the expression “the LORD” instead of YHWH or God? What is “the day of the LORD”? What is the next, anticipated “day of the LORD”?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for people living in slums and crowded conditions and for migrant workers stranded between cities and their home villages. Pray for brothers and sisters dealing with increased persecution from radical Hindus. Pray for open ears and softened hearts that are receptive to the Word during this challenging season and in the future.

Sources:

- M. Scott Peck's quote is from *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 51.
- C.S. Lewis' quote can be found at https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/81.
- GotQuestions.org quotes are from <https://www.gotquestions.org/day-of-the-Lord.html>.

