

Special Focus Session

January 16, 2022

SEEKING JUSTICE IN AN UNJUST WORLD

Obadiah 1-4, 10-17

God's "kingdom picture" is a big one.

From the separation of the peoples in Genesis 11 to the gathering of the peoples around His throne in Revelation, God's purpose and subsequent plan has been the redemption of all people, regardless of ethnicity, race, skin color, economic condition, gender, or social status (see Gal. 3:28). Whether mainstream or marginalized, God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). So, if God is not a "respector of persons" (Acts 10:34-35), how does He react to those who *do* show partiality? What happens to those who oppress the innocent and prey on the upright? This kind of injustice is exactly what the 9th century BC prophet Obadiah addresses in his little book.

The perception of pride (vv. 1-4). God has always used the heathen nations to bring about His divine purpose. In this case, He summoned a league of pagan nations to tear down a bitter enemy of God's people. The Edomites were descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. Jacob became the father of the Israelites; Esau became the father of the Edomites. Although God's people were commanded not to hate the Edomites (Deut. 23:7), the Edomites stayed at odds with Israel and attacked them frequently. Even later, when subjugated and assimilated into Israel's society, the Edomites remained bitter against them. Interestingly, king Herod the Great, who sought to destroy the Lord at His birth, was descended from the Edomites.

Verse 3 gives the *reason* for their demise: It was their pride. The imagery reflects their fortifications in the caves and steep cliffs of the mountains. The Edomites saw themselves as both invincible in their lofty perches, and elite because of it (vv. 3-4). But notice the *source* of their pride. Verse 3 says, "Your presumptuous heart has deceived you." This reminds us of the claim from Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Hence the nation of Edom had decided they had the riches, knowledge, prestige, and position to exert their will on everyone else. But "Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18); and when it came to Edom, God said enough is enough: "I will bring you down" (v. 4). For reflection: *What applications can be drawn from this text regarding our own nation? Our government? What is going on in our world today that warrants the same kind of warning from God's word?*

The penalty for pride (vv. 10-17). Edom's continual antagonism towards Israel (and presumably against other nations) is then described and condemned (vv. 10-11). Notice the harshness of their humiliation. Ultimately, they would be *covered with shame* and *destroyed forever*. The time frame of verse 11 is unclear. Whether their indifference to their brethren Israel was related to some previous invasion, or one yet to come, their smug satisfaction of Israel's defeats was soundly condemned. Again, note the harshness of the scolding and warnings that follow: "Do not gloat...do not rejoice...do not mock" (v. 12); "do not enter...do not gloat...do not take from them" (v. 13); "do not cut them off...do not hand them over" (v. 14). Why? "For

the Day of the Lord is near” and “as you have done, so it will be done to you” and “what you deserve will return on your own head” (v. 15). For reflection: *What biblical principles can be gleaned about God’s sense of justice? What promises does God make in the verses that follow regarding His people who have been treated so badly? How do you think that applies to the church today?*