

THE PROPHET OF VENGEANCE

Obadiah

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Turn with me to another of the prophets—Obadiah, not an easy book to find. It's only twenty-one verses in length. It's the fourth prophet after Daniel. Just before Jonah, you'll find Obadiah. We have before us the shortest book in the Old Testament. But there may be much of God in a little book or even in a short sermon. Not an easy lesson that I have learned.

Obadiah's name itself means "one who serves the Lord." Since there are some thirteen Obadiah's in the Old Testament we cannot be sure which one this is. Obadiah is not autobiographical, unlike Amos who told us what he did for a living and where he was from, or Hosea who told us whom he was married to. We learn nothing from Obadiah about himself. It is as though the Lord in his prophecy has chosen not to reveal to us who Obadiah was, where he was born, or what tribe in Israel he came from, or even exactly the time that he lived.

His book is basically a prophecy against Edom. We will comment on the significance of Edom throughout the message but just for now to put it geographically in your mind it is an area south of the Dead Sea, east and south, stretching in length a hundred miles from the southern tip of the Dead Sea down to the Gulf of Aqaba or the upper right arm of the Red Sea. A hundred miles in length, about twenty miles in width. Very rocky and high land. Known for its red rock (the root for "edom" is "red") and its inaccessible cliffs. High places—maybe 5,700 feet is the highest place in Edom. It is also the place where Petra is located. If you're interested in the end times know there is a feeling going around that in the tribulation Petra will be a place of hiding for those escaping the reign of the Antichrist. It would be remarkably fitted for such a hiding

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because it is so inaccessible and also the mammoth mountain-like sides of it would protect a person.

I. If we want to learn what is going on in Obadiah I think it's best for us to dive right in to the middle of the book.

Normally we would take it in sequence beginning with verse 1 but I would like to jump in today in verses 10–14 which really describe for us why it is that Obadiah has come at this moment to prophecy.

The immediate context for his prophecy is that Jerusalem has fallen. It is fallen to an unnamed enemy and we may speculate exactly who that unnamed enemy was. There were some in the course of Jerusalem's history—four different invasions—that might appear that the kind of devastation which Obadiah was talking about was the fall of Jerusalem to the Assyrians in 586 B.C. This would make him a prophet living perhaps in the middle of the sixth century before Christ. His complaint is not the fall of Jerusalem but it's the attitude of a people called Edom toward that fall. An attitude which he starts out by saying was a general attitude of violence toward the children of Israel, verse 10: "Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever" (NIV).

Here is an ancient city. What would be the marks of life in this city before its fall? There would certainly be a tremendous shortage of food because the city would be cut off from its market supply in the country. There was no icebox storage in those days so quickly sources of food would dry up and hunger would start.

Inevitably if an enemy has besieged the major capital such as Jerusalem it means that it has taken all the land around it. And that there has been loss after loss suffered as city after city have fallen. So in the city of Jerusalem itself here would be desperation because of the losses suffered

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by the armies of Judah. There would be the absence of fathers and sons and husbands who had gone to war and many of whom had lost their life so that grief would have visited many a home. There would be that be the helplessness of the injured, the dying; especially the injured in biblical days without any modern means of medical service or hospitalization. There would have been fearful and joyful rumors surging through the town. Fearful rumors that in the middle of the night the Assyrians had somehow breached the city wall and were pouring through. Or joyful rumors perhaps falsely spread that here and there a tiny victory had been won by the forces of Judah.

There would certainly have been fear of what might happen when the enemy came. What about the safety of our families? What about the little children that are under our feet? What about our daughters and our wives? Will we be carried off to a foreign land?

There would have been in ancient times, fires in the city. As the invading army would throw firebrands over the walls in attempt to bring the city down. There would have with that been changed behavior in animals and children. Even as this week it was incredible to note *Time* magazine describing the behavior of children now in Lebanon who have become used to the sight of murder and war and the perverted values that begin to develop in children in the midst of living under so much mayhem. One there goes into shock and silence and mental institutions, or one develops an outward thick shell which sees nothing to bodies being burned as a public spectacle. This kind of thing is happening in Jerusalem. It's a devastating day, the day of its siege. Obadiah's complaint is that in that day when Jerusalem was besieged by foreign armies and in the day it was taken, Edom, that neighboring country to Judah and Edom itself a brother, being of the descendents of Esau a literal brother to Jacob, had watched and condoned the violence.

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The Old Testament, Deuteronomy 23:7 had taught the Israelites very specifically that they were not to abhor an Edomite because “he is your brother.” Kinship creates obligation. There should have been a certain kind of affinity on that day when the brother of Edom was falling to a besieged army. Instead there was violence.

Indeed Psalm 137 notes the taunts of Edom as it watched over the fall of Jerusalem. It said, “Raze it. Raze it. Down to its foundations.”

With that general attitude of violence, Obadiah also complains in verse 11 that Edom had an aloofness to Judah’s plight. “On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them” (NIV). Here’s an Old Testament example of a New Testament story. The New Testament story is the story of the priest and the Levite who walked on the other side and refused to help the person who was in trouble. Here is Edom refusing to help Judah in its time of need. A spirit of aloofness. It maintained no underground railway such as we find in the days before the Civil War for persons who were in slavery. It, unlike Corrie ten Boom, kept no hiding place for those who were being besieged. Instead to Judah, Edom was one of them rather than one of us. Yet Edom was Judah’s brother. Here in this accusation of aloofness Obadiah the prophet is rebuking the spirit that refuses to become involved in the needs of others. That somehow counts their trauma and their plight as no business of ours.

This aloofness is fanned into a deeper sin against Judah, a gloating over Judah’s dilemma. “You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble” (verse 12, NIV). It is Edom’s way of saying to Judah “Good for you. You had it coming. See if we care.”

That’s an indication by the way of a basic human spirit, an attitude that sometimes occurs

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towards tragedy. When a person is struck down with a grievous loss and we may say in our heart or verbally “They had it coming. Serves them right.”

This is Edom’s sin in the day of Judah’s fall.

The complaint of Obadiah gives way to even a deeper one than those previously mentioned.

Verse 13, looting: “You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor look down on them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster” (NIV). Jerusalem is now overrun. It’s walls breached. Coming along behind the invading army are the Edomites carrying off things of value that belonged to the Children of Israel.

Lastly Obadiah in his complaint against Edom notes that it collaborated with the enemy. “You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble” (verse 14, NIV). The image we get that as Jerusalem is falling and the Assyrians are pouring in the city there are those within Judah who seek to get out of the city and escape for their lives—perhaps go to the safe area of Edom. But as they’re going down the road at major centers where the road forks the Edomites have set up roadblocks. There they are turning aside those who are fleeing. They are walling up the refugees and turning the refugees over to their captors. No wonder as Obadiah is prophesying after these events that there is a feeling that wells up within him that is somewhat akin to the feeling in Europe after World War II toward those who had collaborated with the enemy, those who had taken sides with the Nazis in Holland and Belgium and the other free countries of Europe. One sees a feeling within Obadiah arising that is akin to the national feeling within the human spirit toward a collaborator with an enemy.

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II. Given the understanding what Obadiah is prophesying about we then turn to his view of Edom's fate, verses 2–9 where he sees that there's a day coming when the scales are going to be reversed.

The balances tipped another direction as he forecasts the doom of Edom.

I'd like to note the incredible thing this is revealing about the spirit of prophecy and the nature of the Old Testament and the Word of God. Here you have a prophet living in a country which has been decimated by war. In ancient times a nation's fate in war was bound up with the destiny of its gods. If you had strong gods you were strong in war. Generally a captive nation bowed themselves down to the God of the nation who conquered them. Even though Babylon had conquered Judah there was no bowing down to Babylonian gods. For Israel's God had always been the unseen God. In spite of the fact that they had been defeated in war and taken into captivity the prophet rises with faith in his heart to see that God is in control of the nations. It is an incredible kind of an image. It is an image which refuses to believe in things simply as they appear, in things simply as they are seen; but it leaps out of a tiny state that is trodden under by a great military power, leaps out and sees that the God it serves is the God of other nations. That is the perspective that even as Christians we must not let go of and must cling to. God rules the nations of the earth. As Paul says in Acts, he has allotted their times, their governing periods.

A. In the destruction of Edom, Obadiah sees several things. First of all, he sees that formidable defenses are useless when God acts, verses 2–4. Edom is laying claim to the fact that it lives among the cliffs, the clefts of the rock. Its dwelling is on high. But God says, "You...say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar like the eagle, and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down" (NIV). Edom in the natural had a right to boast. It did have significant defenses. Its lofts were thousands of feet above the floor of

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the Dead Sea valley. It could overlook everything. Its major city of (modern) Petra was not accessible from three sides. Sheer perpendicular cliffs were its characteristic natural defense. It was only accessible from the southeast. Even at that two men could guard the passageway up the rocks against an army of any multitude. This natural defense had given rise to Edom saying, "I can never be brought down." It is the same kind of human spirit which says, "I'm beautiful. What do I need besides my beauty? My beauty will carry the day." Or, "I'm strong. What need have I for things of the spirit or things of God?" Or, "I am rich." Or, "I am the master of my fate." Or, "I am the captain of my soul. I am self sufficient. What do I need? I have everything." The Scriptures give alarm to Obadiah to say that whatever formidable defenses one has they are useless when God decides to act. God will bring Edom down from its place in the cliffs.

Verse 4 can be falsely interpreted. About the time we were getting ready to put a man on the moon someone found Obadiah verse 4: "Though you soar like the eagle [remember the Eagle that landed on the moon] and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD" (NIV). Therefore the United States will not come through with its moon landing. There is certainly here a condemnation of a spirit which says, "We can do anything we want to and forget about God." If indeed that is the kind of spirit which motivates technological advance or advance of any kind, God will deal with it ultimately. Now or ultimately he will come to grips with it. But the basic message from Obadiah is simply here a poetic one in respect to Edom. "Though you soar aloft, though you dwell in the clefts, I will bring you down."

B. Another thing Obadiah says about the destruction of Edom is that it must know that hypothetical reverses are nothing compared to future losses that will be inflicted on them by God. Thus God turns to the example of the thief, who when he plunders, leaves something behind. Or a gatherer of grapes. When he gathers from the vine he leaves behind gleanings. The

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implication is that both the thief and the grape gatherer leave something behind. But when God acts nothing is left behind.

Edom, in spite of the fact that it dwells in an inaccessible area, still has secret fears. The fear of the thief. It would put up a great front to the world that it was ok. Inside of it, as inside a heart that's apart from God, there nevertheless are fears. Its fears when put upon would surely come to pass.

The prophet, when he speaks in verse 6, speaks as though God has already acted. How Esau has been pillaged, its treasures sought out. Really at this point he's making prophecy. He's saying God is going to act against Edom but so certain is he that God is going to act that he can do what the prophets often did. He moves the future right into the present because the future is so certain that it may be described as occurring in the present or even the past tense. It is equivalent to our saying so certain are we of the Lord's return not that the Lord "shall" return but the Lord "is" returned. Or the Lord "has" returned. We are assured of the outcome.

C. A third thing that God says about the destruction of Edom is that the person who betrays will himself meet with betrayal, verse 7: "All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it" (NIV). Edom itself is not aware of the treachery that is being preformed upon it by its allies. It is a unique kind of a praise because Edom is known for its wisdom. We'll comment on that in a moment in verse 8. But very wise people were unaware of the fact that its undoing was at hand. And its undoing would be accomplished through its allies. Here we see an example of poetic justice. Israel had been betrayed by Edom. There had been those refugees who were fleeing and they've been turned over to the enemy by Edom. They had been betrayed. Now the

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betrayed becomes the betrayer. Edom's glib assurance in its allies would prove to be false. For in the pinch Edom would be let down by its worldly friends.

How again the spiritual message of this book drives through. That in the pinch the one who is without God is let down by the world as well. That world which we thought to be our ally, our wealth or our friends or our so-called friends in the moment of our greatest need and grief are not there. Let down by the world.

D. A fourth thing that Obadiah sees about the destruction of Edom is that in the days that God moves against it the wise man and the warriors would be cut off. Verse 8 refers to the wise man. Verse 9 refers to the warriors. Here is a nation—Edom—that has a remarkable combination. Wisdom and war. Two things that when they go together make for potent military force. We know in modern warfare it is as important to be strong as it is wise. It is important to be wise as it is strong. The two go hand in hand. Woe to the military power in our day that is only strong but not wise. Here is Edom with the best of wisdom. When we turn to Job we find that one of Job's counselors, a wise man, Eliphaz, was of Edom. It was known in the ancient world for its wisdom. It was known for its military strength. But when God purposes to overthrow nothing can stand in His way. Nothing can be an adequate defense. Natural impregnability. Native wisdom. National manpower. All of these things are useless. Edom will come tumbling down from its proud position deprived of both wit and warrior. Its rich warehouses are to be looted and left bereft of spices and gold. Its allies will turn traitor against it. Dire indeed must be the gains that earn such wages. For Edom the delusion will be seen in due time, that invulnerability is a delusion. The idea that we are so strong and we are so self sufficient that we will last forever comes tumbling down in the light of God's prophetic word.

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We know from secular accounts of history that in the centuries immediately following the prophecy of Obadiah, Edom indeed was defeated, ceased to be a nation, came in under the tutelage and governorship of the Jewish state which emerged in the first and second century before Christ. They were thoroughly subjugated and became a part of the Jewish people as was their right according to the law of Deuteronomy and Herod (we count four) who were themselves descendants of Edomites.

The word which Obadiah spoke concerning the nation came to be. As indeed all words which God speaks of the future shall come to pass.

III. This immediate forecast, however, of the doom of Edom brings forth in Obadiah's prophecy a larger theme. The theme of the Day of the Lord.

It starts in verse 15 and goes to the end of the chapter. The Day of the Lord is something which is continually seen by the Old Testament prophets. It is a day in which God judges the world and judges all the nations. It is the day He makes the score right. Where He rewards those who have had relation with Him and where He also executed justice on the earth.

The devastation of Edom talked about in the early part of Obadiah's work is simply a prelude of the overthrow of all powers which pit themselves against God. In verses 15–16 Obadiah describes the nations drinking the cup of God's wrath. He recounts "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been" (NIV). Here is an important Old Testament concept called "the cup of the Lord." Or "the cup of God's wrath." The imagery is that the Lord God has a cup in His hand. A cup which metes out justice upon the world, justice for the sin which had been committed. It is, so to speak, hemlock. When the cup is drunk it contains the pure wrath of

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God. It causes death and devastation to all of those who are forced to drink it. Psalm 75:8 says, “In the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed [“well mixed” means it is really potent]. And he will pour a draught from this. And all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”

The New Testament picks up on this in Revelation, the end-time godless civilization represented by the word “Babylon” it seemed in the form of a woman holding a cup, which is full of abomination and all manner of impurity. And it has drunk from this cup. In fact it has drunk so much that it is drunk. It has drunk from the blood of the saints. God then turns and says to the prophet John in Revelation 18 that God is going to give this lady, this civilization, this godless society, this godless person something really to drink. Very well it has drunk the blood for the saints then let it now drink the wrath of God. The revelator says that God will give it a draft which is unmixed, absolutely pure and potent, and it will drink it to the dregs. God in fact will give it a double draft to drink in just compensation for its sin.

What a horrible end for the world to drink the cup of God’s wrath. Wherever the Scriptures paint a dark picture they also paint for us a bright picture to show us a way out. I would like to connect this thing of Obadiah, of drinking the cup of God, and the psalm about the cup of wrath in his hand and Revelation about God mixing a double draft upon the world to drink—take all those things and mingle it with something which happens in the ministry of Jesus. It’s the evening before His death. That evening He is being betrayed. The next day He will go to the cross where He will take at the cross upon himself your sin and my sin. The Scriptures say that Jesus was made sin who knew no sin. That my sin and your sin was placed upon him on the cross. He died for us. What is it that Jesus is praying in the night before He goes to the cross? He prays three times that something might not happen. “Remove this cup from Me. Remove this cup from me.

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Remove this cup from me.” What is the cup? The cup is the wrath of God, which Jesus will drink in being punished for the sins of the world for your sin and my sin. Which means that Jesus has drunk the cup that is appointed for you to drink because of your sins. And if in the future age, in the Day of the Lord, anyone drink the cup of God’s wrath it will only be because we refuse to let Jesus drink the cup himself. For there is a cup of judgment for each one of us for we have sinned and come short of the glory of God. God’s marvelous provision as we look into the future and see the Day of the Lord, when only the just in Jesus Christ inherit the new heavens and the earth, when that age comes to pass the only way to enter the age is to enter without sin and Jesus offers to let us do that by allowing all of our sin and all of our failure all of our defeat and all of our inability to break habits and everything else to be put upon Him. He will drink the punishment of God on the cross for us.

One other thing which Obadiah sees as a part of the Day of the Lord is the survival of those who are the Lord’s and the perishing of those who are not the Lord’s, verses 17–21. Obadiah sees that the house of Jacob will be established but that the house of Esau will fail. He sees the house of Jacob possessing all the lands which Israel had lost in its history, which had originally been promised to it in the covenant with Abraham. He sees a time when the nations of the earth are under the reign and rule of God.

While these verses may have and probably do have a literal millennial fulfillment, we’re at this moment most concerned with their spiritual understanding, for the New Testament teaches us that we even though we may be Gentiles are heirs of Abraham and therefore heirs of Jacob.

Inasmuch as we have been promised a land, a better country according to the Book of Hebrews, these Scriptures apply to our walk and welfare with God here and in the ages to come. It simply must not be understood alone from their literal fulfillment which will come in the day of the

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Lord but must be understood also in their spiritual fulfillment for all believers. We are encouraged ourselves to possess the land. The horizons are far higher and wider than Obadiah was privileged to grasp. For each of us in a very real sense here today are either part of the house of Jacob or the house of Edom. Edom in the New Testament represents a certain kind of lifestyle. A certain kind of way. We find Edom described by his other name, "Esau" in Hebrews 12:6 where he is the sort of a person who operates by the standards of the world. That is, operates without any spiritual dimension. Lives for this time only. Judges things by this world only. Whereas Jacob comes to represent those who have living faith in God.

IV. I would like to look at the origin and the end of both the house of Jacob and the house of Esau for they are intricately tied up with this prophecy.

The tremendous thing about the Scripture, when you look at Obadiah you only begin to draw the mortar out of it if you look to its larger context in Scripture, where the root of the conflict between Edom and Jacob first started, to the end of that conflict between Edom and Jacob. Then all of a sudden Obadiah becomes far more living than we ever dreamed possible. I've never even heard a sermon on Obadiah.

You and I are either of the house of Jacob or of the house of Esau, which is Edom. How did these two nations emerge? Genesis 25 tells us that when Rebekah was with child, twins in her womb struggled with one another. So great did the struggle within her womb become that she went to the Lord to inquire. It was no natural movement. It was something off. Something that raised the hair on the back of her head. Something which she needed to have an answer for from the Lord. The Lord, knowing the future of these brothers and the future of the nations which would emerge from them, since the Lord is all knowing, indicates that there are two nations in the womb who will struggle against one another. The elder will serve the younger. The first twin

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that is born is called “Hairy” or “Red”—either name is appropriate. They called him Esau but the Hebrew will lend itself to Hairy or Red.

This man, this baby that was born, shows as his life emerges that he makes wrong choices. Two in particular are highlighted by the Scripture. One is in respect to his birthright where he takes the property and the promise that were his by right of being the oldest son, the promise which had been made to Abraham of a land and of a seed, the promise which had been reinforced to Abraham’s son Isaac and now was available for one of Jacob’s sons. He takes that and thinks so little of it that he trades it away for immediate gratification—a bowl of red soup. He is hungry and he willingly throws away the future for some immediate gratification.

Furthermore, when he married, Genesis 26:34 explicitly points out that he did not marry within the line of faith. We’d call it he married an unbeliever. He is again showing a person who couldn’t wait, who had no patience for things as God had meant them to be, but rather would rush ahead and do what he wanted. Immediate gratification was his goal. That is why Esau comes down to us as a sensual person. That is to say a person who operated by his senses. He was a man who determined what he would do on the virtue of what he saw. What he touched. What he heard. What he smelled. What he tasted. He was a man of this world. The way of receiving information was confined to this world. He was not a man who believed in anything unseen. In promises that could not be felt or seen. He was this-earth oriented. Had Esau lived in our day he would be a person who would throw heaven away for some immediate fulfillment. Something that turns him on here and now. Something that brought him a momentary delight. That is why the Book of Hebrews calls Esau an immoral and an irreligious person. He simply had no time for God or for things of the spirit because he was too busy living in this life, doing his own thing.

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His younger brother by the name of Jacob is called in the King James a quaint word, “supplanter.” A more literal translation of that is “heel grabber.” That is the way that Jacob follows his brother Esau in birth. Normally at least the distance of an hour would separate twins in birth, Jacob emerges on the heel of Esau. Clutching his heel with his hand. That describes his life. He was one who was in a hurry to pass someone. He had a lot of terrible qualities but he is something that is so remarkable that Esau never was. That is to say that he is a person of the spirit. He is a person who has faith. He is a person who believes in the world of the unseen. Whatever his methods of attaining that world God had read his heart and seen what was there as true and right intention.

How do I know that about Jacob? Jacob very much wanted the birthright. And he got it from Esau by swapping the birthright for some momentary food for Esau.

If you look carefully at the chronology of the patriarchs you’ll find that when Abraham died, Jacob was fifteen. I imagine that Jacob, when he was an adolescent, an early teenager, sat at his grandpa’s feet and grandpa told him of the promise God had made to him that he would have all the land from Euphrates down to the Nile. And that God had made him a promise that through his descendants the whole earth would be blessed. And Jacob as a young boy hearing those stories was enthralled and he wanted to be part of the future, part of God’s plan for the ages. He said, “Whatever it takes, it’s not fair, that just because I was five seconds behind my brother, that accident of history should deprive me of that birthright. If there’s any way I can get it I will.” He believed. He was a man of the spirit. He believed in the future. He literally believed that the world of the unseen was stronger than the world of the seen. He therefore becomes a person whom God justifies by faith. God declares him righteous because of his faith. He couldn’t

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declare Jacob righteous because of his deeds. No way. But by his faith he can declare him righteous.

The same process God used with Jacob he uses with you and me. He cannot declare us righteous on the basis of our deeds but he can declare us righteous on the basis of our faith.

The two boys grow. And you know much of the story perhaps. About five hundred to eight hundred years later two nations have now emerged: The nation of Israel. The nation of Edom. They are struggling against each other as though they were twins still in the womb. When Israel comes up out of slavery from Egypt and spends forty years in the wilderness it is now ready to go into Canaan. There is a clean route which it could take up out of the Sinai Peninsula on into Canaan and it led right through the heartland of Edom. It was called the King's Highway. It would mean if they couldn't take that route that a long detour would ensue. Israel requests permission of Edom to go through its territory. It promises to pay for any water it drank, any food that it ate, just let it go through. God had specifically told Israel that they couldn't have one inch of the Edomite property. That had been given to Edom and that was not their own. But Edom in an act of inhospitality refused to let Israel go through, committing a sin of unbrotherhood against their own brother Israel. Furthermore a kind of incredible thing in the Pentateuch in the book of Deuteronomy 23:8 is that God specifically gave a provision whereby Edom could be included as being part of the promise to Abraham. Where it was said if an Edomite lived among the Children of Israel for three generations he should be counted fully as an Israelite. In that time when Israel was coming up through the wilderness Edom had its golden opportunity to become a part of the community of faith, to believe in the world that was unseen, a promise that God would give a land to his people, the heirs of Jacob and Abraham. But Edom declined.

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This led to a long time in the history of the nations of warring. Under King Saul, David, Solomon and other kings of Judah there were invasions of Edom and Edom invaded Judah. It is striking that under the kings of Judah, when they invaded Edom, in spite of the fact that God had told them not to take an inch of Edom's territory, when they invaded Edom they began to act like Edom. Thus when King Amaziah of Judah, not a very good king at all in scriptural estimation, invaded Edom on one occasion he killed ten thousand Edomite soldiers and took ten thousand more up to the top of a cliff and threw them over. What was he doing? Was he acting like a child of Jacob? No. He was acting like Edom. Why was he acting like Edom? Because he shouldn't have been in Edom. When you're the children of promise and not of this world, not to act like the world, not to think like the world and you compromise with the world and try to win the world's battles on the world's territory you start acting like the world. That's exactly what Israel did at this moment.

The outcome of Edom and Israel stand before us in two keen aspects of the New Testament. In the flesh the descendant of Jacob is Jesus. In the flesh the descendant of Esau is Herod. If you want to know where Jacob's line is going, look at Jesus. If you want to know where Edom's line is going look at Herod. Herod is a man of this world just like Esau. When Herod the great, the first of the four Herods in the New Testament, hears word that a little king has been born, a king of the Jews, he acts like a man of the world. Instead of believing that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and that a baby is to be worshipped in Bethlehem, he orders the soldiers to kill every baby in sight. When the second Herod of the New Testament, Herod of Galilee, is faced with the message of John the Baptist—repentance and belief in the unseen kingdom that is coming—Herod responds by requiring the head of John the Baptist, acting consistently with his Edomite nature, his Esau-like habits. He silences the truth because he

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will have this life forget the life that is coming, the spiritual. When Herod Agrippa I hears the clear message of Jesus raised from the dead, what's he do with that thing which he cannot see? He turns and with potent political force murders James and imprisons Peter. When Herod Agrippa II, the last of the Herods in the New Testament (Acts 26), after there have been twenty-five years of preaching of the resurrection of Jesus and he's heard it all, here's the apostle Paul before him, pleading that he believe in the resurrection. Herod Agrippa II dismisses Paul the apostle with a wave of the hand and a sarcastic remark. That's his Edomite nature.

If we look at the flow of history we will see that the world is not going towards God. The world operates by what it can see, feel, hear, taste, smell. But the world of the spirit is the world where we hear the message of God coming so clearly through to us, the message like Obadiah's. In a time when his nation is defeated, he is to rise up because God has spoken and say, "This defeated nation serves the God who is the God of all the nations. This God has a kingdom, which is to come." As he closes his book he says the kingdom shall be the Lord's. That is a statement that belongs to the house of Jacob. That God rules over the earth. To leave us not without hope the New Testament one time mentions the word Edom in its Greek spelling and it shows us that when God acts in Jesus Christ, Edom still has hope. In Mark 3:8 when it describes the popularity of Jesus' ministry, Mark the evangelist notes that the crowds came to Jesus from every quarter and then he named them: Jerusalem, Judea, Idumea—Edom. What strikingly Jesus does is He inserts his ministry between verses 14 and 15 of the prophet Obadiah. And he says, "Before the Day of the Lord comes when you drink the wrath, before that day comes on Edom or before it comes on any nation or any man, know that I have appeared and have myself drunk the cup so that no one need drink it. I myself have not cried out for vengeance upon the enemies of Jacob or

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the enemies of God. But I myself on the cross have pleaded that those very same enemies be forgiven.

How great then is the message of this little book as it speaks to us today.

Closing Prayer

As we pray today, our Father, we are mindful of the themes of God which are not the large themes, but smaller insights. We pray that we will never be aloof from our brother when our brother is hurting or in need. We pray that we will never rise up in a spirit of condemnation or satiric joy at someone else's tragedy. But that we'll be gripped, be moved at the pain of others. We pray also Lord as we look at this book and its impact on our lives to be the sons of Jacob, who believe in you. Who are not profane and irreligious and immoral, choosing only to live by this world's values. As I pray I am conscious of the fact that in this room today there indeed are those who are living for this world alone. Who are living for the illicit joys and sins of this earth and who have never known the thrill, the satisfaction that only you can give. I pray, faithful Holy Spirit of God, that you who brought the Scripture into being would drive it deep into all of our lives. That there will not be one today that would be accounted any more a child of Esau, a child of this world. But that we will focus our prayer and our heart upon you, to believe in you. The unseen one. The unseen but risen Lord. The one who has all power and authority and who now expresses that authority through forgiving our sins and canceling the judgment that is against us and restoring us in your presence. Grant this Lord as our hearts are open to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.