



Unit .17

Session .01

The Vision of Future Justice

Scripture



Obadiah 1-4,10-21

1 The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Lord GOD has said about Edom: We have heard a message from the LORD; an envoy has been sent among the nations: “Rise up, and let us go to war against her.” **2** Look, I will make you insignificant among the nations; you will be deeply despised. **3** Your arrogant heart has deceived you, you who live in clefts of the rock in your home on the heights, who say to yourself, “Who can bring me down to the ground?” **4** Though you seem to soar like an eagle and make your nest among the stars, even from there I will bring you down. This is the LORD’s declaration. ... **10** You will be covered with shame and destroyed forever because of violence done to your brother Jacob. **11** On the day you stood aloof, on the day strangers captured his wealth, while foreigners entered his city gate and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were just like one of them. **12** Do not gloat over your brother in the day of his calamity; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction; do not boastfully mock in the day of distress. **13** Do not enter my people’s city gate in the day of their disaster. Yes, you—do not gloat over their misery in the day of their disaster, and do not appropriate their possessions in the day of their disaster. **14** Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off

their fugitives, and do not hand over their survivors in the day of distress. **15** For the day of the LORD is near, against all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; what you deserve will return on your own head. **16** As you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and gulp down and be as though they had never been. **17** But there will be a deliverance on Mount Zion, and it will be holy; the house of Jacob will dispossess those who dispossessed them. **18** Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire, and the house of Joseph, a burning flame, but the house of Esau will be stubble; Jacob will set them on fire and consume Edom. Therefore no survivor will remain of the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken. **19** People from the Negev will possess the hill country of Esau; those from the Judean foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will possess the territories of Ephraim and Samaria, while Benjamin will possess Gilead. **20** The exiles of the Israelites who are in Halah and who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath as well as the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the cities of the Negev. **21** Saviors will ascend Mount Zion to rule over the hill country of Esau, but the kingdom will be the LORD’s.

Intro Options



Main Point:
God opposes the proud
but gives grace to
the humble.

Option 1

Your students are writers for a TV series called *Got Away with It*. Their job is to write stories for episodes of people getting away with doing wrong things. It could be something as big as getting away with murder to getting away with cheating at a sports event to not getting caught stealing money from parents. Have students come up with a three-sentence pitch for their episode; then let them try to sell that episode to the studio.

After students have shared their episodes, assign each idea to a new student (each student could just take the idea of the person on his or her left). Now they'll be writing for another series: *Didn't Get Away with It after All*. They should take the pitch they just heard and make another episode; in this one, the perpetrator gets caught and justice is served in the most satisfying way possible. Have them share their three-sentence pitch for this new episode.

Point out that Obadiah promises that no one will get away with sin, no matter how much it might seem they have. God promises justice, but we also should long to escape that justice, and for others to escape that justice, by taking refuge in Jesus the Messiah.

Option 2

Break your students into two teams. They're going to hold a mini-debate on the following question: "Is it morally wrong not to help someone when you are able to?" Assign one side the "yes" answer and the other side the "no" answer. Give them a few minutes to prepare their arguments; then give each side three minutes to present their arguments.

Use the debate to introduce the historical context of Edom's standing-by while other nations took advantage of Israel. God did not take kindly to Edom's lack of action. What is the implication for us today?

TEACHING PLAN

Read Obadiah 1-4.



Obadiah delivered his message during a dark time in Israel's history, likely the Babylonian exile. The divided kingdoms were lost. The Northern Kingdom's people had long ago been sent into captivity. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had been sacked by Babylon, the best and brightest carried away in chains. Jerusalem was in ruins and only a handful of people, considered too poor to be of any real value to the Babylonians, remained. Add to that, the Edomites felt no remorse over the fall of Judah. There was no lament for Israel. The Edomites, the descendants of Esau—Jacob's older brother—rejoiced in their downfall. Free from Judah's rule, the Edomites arrogantly believed they would not share a similar fate. But God had a message for them: think again.

- **Have you ever heard or witnessed something bad happening to someone you considered an enemy? How did you feel when you heard what happened? Why?**

God's answer directly confronted the attitude and the heart of Edom's response to Judah's situation—Edom's arrogance. There is, arguably, no vice hated more by God than arrogance. He hates pride and arrogance (Prov. 8:13). Among all the things He hates, "arrogant eyes" is at the top of the list (Prov. 6:16-17). But He doesn't just hate it. Hate isn't a strong enough word. He detests it (Prov. 16:5), or as some translations put it, pride is an abomination. God hates arrogance the way that He hates idolatry, because arrogance is idolatry.

Rather than letting Edom's arrogance stand, God was personally active in cutting them down to size. He was going to "make [them] insignificant" and "deeply despised" (v. 2). The nations declared that they would rise up and go to war against Edom (v. 1), and it was God who inspired them to do so (vv. 2,4). All the nations that had made treaties with Edom would pillage them and take everything from the nation. All Esau's "hidden treasures" would be "searched out" (vv. 5,6). As God detailed what would happen to the Edomites, one thing was painfully clear: God was going to bring them down, and nothing could stop it.

Read Obadiah 10-14.



God didn't go halfway in His condemnation of Edom. They were utterly destroyed, and "covered in shame" (v. 10), all because of what they did to Judah. But reading these words leaves us with a tension: how should we respond when we read of God's judgment in Scripture and witness it playing out in the world? There are two possible responses that we need to consider.

1. Responding arrogantly to God's judgment. When Judah fell, the Edomites rejoiced, gloated, and even mocked. Their response was born from arrogance, and that arrogance led to their destruction. Delighting in the downfall of another, mocking, gloating ... all of this merely compounds sin. It does not glorify God. And God wants us to have nothing to do with such things.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God opposes the proud
but gives grace to
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Obadiah

1. Edom had long had a troubled relationship with Israel and Judah, going all the way back to the days of their ancestors, Jacob and Esau. The two brothers had battled one another from the womb (Gen. 25:23). As the elder brother, the family birthright belonged to Esau: the greater share of the inheritance, the position of honor within the family, and the blessing of his father. But he didn't value these until he lost them to his scheming younger brother (Gen. 25:27–34; Gen. 27:1–40). Despite Esau losing his blessing and birthright, Esau's father still had a word to share with his son: "You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you rebel, you will break his yoke from your neck" (Gen. 27:40). And while Esau's bitterness toward Jacob was passed from one generation to the next, they held fast to this promise from Isaac, even as the two brothers' war continued to play out in the lives of their descendants:

- Edom refused to allow Israel safe passage through their land on the journey to the promised land (Num. 20:14–21);
- Edom was conquered during Saul's reign (1 Sam. 14:47) and remained under Israel's rule during the reigns of David and Solomon; and
- Judah ruled over the Edomites until they rebelled against King Jehoram and appointed their own king (2 Kings 8:20).

3. Arrogance is rooted in an over-inflated sense of self. The arrogant think more highly of themselves than they ought, believing that God's commands do not apply to them (1 Sam. 15:23). In Obadiah specifically, the word translated "arrogant" in verse 3 conveys over-confidence and presumptuousness, displayed in self-importance and a lack of concern for others. Functionally, arrogance is self-worship, the most basic form of idolatry, which receives the strongest possible condemnation (Rom. 1:24–27).



99 Essential Doctrines (p. 48, DDG)

God is Just

God established standards for His moral creatures that are in accordance with His righteousness, and His moral creatures will be judged according to those righteous standards (Lev. 11:44–45; Rom. 2:5–11; 2 Cor. 5:10). It would be an injustice if God were not to uphold His righteousness, for such a failure would require God to violate His own righteous character. Since humanity has sinned by failing to live up to God's righteous standards, God has taken it upon Himself to make provision by being both just and the justifier of those who place their faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25–26).

TEACHING PLAN

2. Responding humbly to God's judgment. Instead of responding from arrogance, God's judgment of anyone should humble us. Whether we experience it directly or we witness it, judgment is humbling. This passage, though the word humility is never used, drives us to humility by reminding us that:
- God was right to judge Judah as He did (God warned them time and again of the consequences of their evil but they would not listen (Isa. 45:16; Jer. 10:8; Ezek. 23:37).
 - God was also right to judge Edom as He did (they, too, were blind to their own sin, and their arrogance led to their destruction (vv. 1-10).
 - God is still right in His judgment of people who persist in their sin today. All of humanity, apart from Christ, is condemned in sin. All people have denied their Creator. Apart from the transforming work of Christ, we are just as dead in our sin as Judah and Edom.
- **How does our culture tend to view the idea of God's judgment? How are you tempted to respond to God's judgment?**
 - **Is your response more consistent with culture's view or with the Bible? Explain.**

Read Obadiah 15-21.

It's strange to think of a book like Obadiah as being a compassionate message. After all, it was a warning of judgment. It was a promise that not only would Edom be judged for their sins, but so too would all the nations (vv. 15-16). But He truly was showing great compassion—and that compassion is seen in the warning itself. Think about it. God made it crystal clear: Edom was condemned in its sin and would experience the wrath of God. And not only Edom, but all the nations would be judged! That hardly sounds like a compassionate message—not until we consider the question of why: Why was God telling them this? Was it just to make them live in terror? If God were petty and cruel, He could have done it for those reasons. But He had a greater purpose in mind. God warned Edom and the nations and still warns all of us today of the consequences of sin because He didn't want them to be condemned by their sins. He was giving them an opportunity to turn away from their sin before it was too late.

- **Is it strange to think of warnings of judgment as compassionate? Why?**

Of course, God's compassion did not end there. These last verses are steeped in the hope that we have in the gospel as they find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is the great deliverer of His people, past, present, and future. Jesus ascended the hill and rules over all the nations. Jesus is the Lord to whom the kingdom belongs, and He judges the living and the dead (1 Pet. 4:5). And after judgment, Jesus will bring about the final restoration of His people—and not just of His people, but of all creation. All things will be made new. Sin will die. Death will be no more. Redemption will be completed. And we will dwell with Jesus forever in the kingdom of God. 

- **How should the promise of God's restoration of all creation motivate us to share with others God's judgment of sin and promise of salvation?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Obadiah

12. Edom showed no compassion to their “brother in the day of his calamity” (Obad. 12). In their arrogance, Edom not only gloated over Judah’s misery, they also “stood aloof,” ignoring the distress of the people that remained. They cut off their refugees and stole their possessions. They were even rounding up survivors from Babylon’s invasion of Judah to sell as slaves (Amos 1:6,9). Edom’s cruelty may have been even greater than that of the Babylonians, as their targets were not warriors capable of defending themselves, but the broken survivors of Babylon’s siege

15-18. The Jews were being cruelly mistreated by the Edomites. They were mocked and hunted. They were overwhelmed with shame. They were hopeless and helpless. And then Obadiah came with His message: As you have done to the Jews, God will do to you (v. 15). That promise that judgment was coming—and that God is just—was a great comfort to the Jews. God had not abandoned them, despite their idolatry and sin. God was not ignoring the sins of those He used to chasten them. His righteousness would be upheld. And that promise was with them throughout their exile in Babylon, through the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and centuries of rotating rulers. Judgment would come. God would come. And if that hope wasn’t enough, there was another hope coming (but we’re getting ahead of ourselves).

Activity

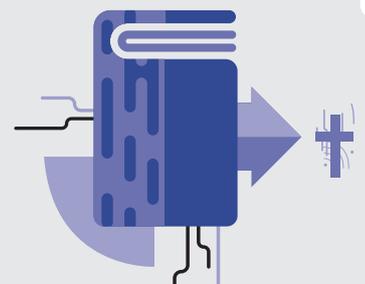
Ask your students to consider a “Ministry Op” response to this lesson. They should choose one of the three points and consider a specific way they might apply the lesson to their lives this week:

- Where am I displaying haughtiness and pride? How specifically can I yield this arrogant heart to Jesus? It might mean a kinder disposition toward a sibling or getting rid of a resentful attitude toward a parent.
- Who is someone that needs help whom I’ve been ignoring? How can I specifically help them? It could be an elderly neighbor or it could be setting aside money to send to poverty-stricken children.
- Who is someone who is currently under God’s judgment (an unbeliever) whom I’d like to see trust Jesus for deliverance? How can I winsomely share Jesus with this person?

If students are willing, ask them to share their answers to whichever question they chose. Check in on them to see how their specific “Ministry Op” is going.

(p. 49, DDG) Christ Connection

The prophet Obadiah was given a vision of the day of the Lord. On that day Edom and the nations would be judged for their sins and Israel would be delivered and live securely in the land. Through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, all those who trust in Christ are spared from judgment and can live securely, knowing they have been delivered from sin and death.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What does this account teach us about the dangers of being arrogant?

How easy is it for you to receive criticism? Would you rather receive criticism from someone who knows you well, or from someone someone that doesn't? Why?

Heart



Why should God's grace through Jesus serve as a means to develop humility within us?

What are some other means of grace God might use to humble us?

Hands



What can we learn from the mistakes of the Edomites in regards to how we should treat people in distress?

How can you show compassion to those suffering in your sphere of influence?

Main Point: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.



Head

Edom believed they were untouchable, but their arrogance deceived them. This is the most dangerous aspect of arrogance. When our arrogance consumes us, we become blind to reality. Think about the saying, “Don’t believe your own hype.” There is much wisdom in this that speaks directly to the dangers of ego and arrogance. Praise—even well-deserved praise—is intoxicating, and we can lose ourselves in it. When we ignore the wisdom that comes from constructive criticism, we risk only seeing what we want to see, not what is.

This is why friendship is so necessary for believers. We need people who know us well enough that they will not only build us up with encouragement, but will keep us grounded as well. “The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive” (Prov. 27:6). If we lack people in our lives who will tell us the truth in love, then we are headed for disaster.



Heart

Another way judgment humbles us is because in Christ, we see just how rich in mercy God truly is. He did not leave us to the fate we very well deserve. Instead, “because of his great love that he had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses” (Eph. 2:4-5). Jesus was judged in our place on the cross, facing the consequences of our sin when He had no sin of His own; and His righteousness—His absolute perfection—is given to us by faith in Him. That is the gospel! It is humbling to think that God shows that kind of mercy, that He is that willing to forgive sinners. And it should grieve us to think that some love darkness so much that they would rather persist in disobedience than turn to Christ in faith (John 3:19).



Hands

God calls His people not to delight in the downfall of others, but to show compassion to those in distress. We are to use every mean and method to assist those who are suffering and show God’s kindness even to those who have experienced His judgment, just as He shows His kindness in Christ. Compassion is the fruit of humility; it is a practical demonstration of our love for the Lord as we love our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:25–37).