

The Day of the Lord
Obadiah 15
ABC 11/17/19

How's your battle with pride going? Hopefully, we're constantly looking for it in our own lives & not in the lives of others. As we saw last week, Edom's pride is what brought them down. The Bible warns us about pride from cover to cover. Why? Because we all tend to be arrogant & it always comes out in our attitudes & actions towards those around us. Edom's pride led them eventually to violence against their brother-nation, Israel, & for this they were judged. Let me ask again, *how's your battle with pride going?* Does everything have to be done your way or do you humbly allow others to do them their way? Do you think you're the only one capable of doing what it is you do in serving others? If you're called to a specific ministry, do you look down on those who are called to a different area of service? If a fellow believer struggles in an area that doesn't even tempt you, do you arrogantly proclaim you have not & would never do whatever it is? Are you truly humble following the example of Jesus Himself? We could go on & on with those types of questions, & each of us should, with the help of the Holy Spirit, be examining ourselves regularly to see where our pride is creeping in. If you haven't done so yet, open your Bibles to Obadiah. Don't feel bad if you have to use your table of contents. It's the minorest of the minor prophets, the smallest book in the OT. Today we come to the hinge vs of Obadiah, vs 15. The 1st 9 vss concerned the pride of Edom. The Edomites boasted they were secure in their cliff-top fortresses. If their defenses should fail, which they thought was impossible, they still had their numerous allies & what they felt was their superior wisdom. They didn't need God. They certainly didn't need their despised brother, Israel. This sin of pride, great in itself, led to sins of a more active nature, the subject of vss 10-14 of Obadiah's prophecy. Edom's scorn of the Jews led to mistreatment of them. When Jerusalem was overrun by enemies, the Edomites began by looking on in glee & then actively participated in looting & in the eventual capture & betrayal of Jews trying to escape. This unbrotherly treatment of the people of Jerusalem was proof of their sin of pride & thus the reason for God's judgment of them in history. This brings us to vs 15. Having made his accusation & proved its validity, Obadiah now declares God's judgment: **15-16**

The 1st 14 vss have clearly been about Edom & their coming judgment. But then in vs 15 it says, **the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations**. We've moved specifically from Edom to all the nations & God's judgment on them. PRAY

History is filled with the reversal of people's fortunes. When Jacob returned to the Promised Land after living with Laban, his brother Esau came from Edom to meet him. Esau had 400 armed men with him. Jacob had his motley collection of shepherds & livestock. The 2 brothers embraced each other & then parted, Esau returning to Edom where his prosperity evidently continued to increase. In the Genesis account it takes an entire chapter to list Esau's descendants: **These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned.... These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans & regions** (36:31, 40). Esau gave birth to kings. But of Jacob we read, **Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan** (37:1). Jacob was a stranger in Canaan, as his fathers had been before him. He was a simple shepherd. While he lived like this, & even afterward, when his descendants went down to Egypt & became slaves to the Egyptians, Esau & his descendants prospered & boasted of their superiority to Jacob's children. Today, in fulfillment of the prophecies of God concerning Edom, Edom is no more, its people gone: **I will make Mount Seir (Edom) a waste and a desolation & I will cut off from it the one who passes through and returns.... I will make you an everlasting desolation & your cities will not be inhabited** (Ezek 35:7, 9). For her part, Israel is again back in the promised land.¹ Who could have ever predicted any of it? The Bible reveals history to be the outworking of the purposeful plan of the sovereign God. Job confessed, **I know that You can do all things, & that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted** (42:2). Through the prophet Isaiah, God declared, **My purpose will be established, & I will accomplish all My good pleasure** (46:10), & **I act & who can reverse it?** (Is 43:13). Jesus Christ is the central figure in history; the OT points to His coming, & the NT describes & expounds His life, death, resurrection, & 2nd coming. As history continues to unfold the eternally planned purposes of God, one event looms large on the horizon: **the Day of the Lord**. That event will mark the end of man's day, as God acts in judgment to take back direct

¹ Boice, J. M., *The Minor Prophets*, pp 251–252

control of the earth from the usurpers who presently rule it. It will be an unprecedented time of judgment on all unrepentant sinners.² What does the Bible mean when it refers to **the day of the Lord**? There are numerous differences of opinion over what **the day of the Lord** means. But most would agree it includes the events that surround the 2nd Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. The judgment of the tribulation period, Christ's return, the time of His kingdom that follows, the final uprising described in Rev 20, & the inception of the new heavens & the new earth. **The day of the Lord** is a future day of judgment that ultimately ends with the new heavens & earth.

Obadiah says **the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations**. Which leads to the thoughts, *It's been 2,500+ years since Obadiah prophesied, how **near** could it have been? The catching up of the church hasn't taken place yet, so how can he write **near**? Was he wrong? What does he mean?* Without going into it in depth, it simply means it may come at any moment. Not that it must come at any moment, but that it may happen at any moment. We know that **the day of the Lord** hasn't come yet, so it's still a future event, but it could happen at any time. Although the ultimate **day of the Lord** hasn't yet come, **the historical day of the Lord** wasn't long delayed for Edom. Edom was judged & is no more. But Obadiah speaks now not just of the judgment of Edom but of a judgment that **is near for all nations**. How can that be true? As I said, the Bible's view of nearness is more what we would call *imminent*. This judgment is near in the sense it can occur at any moment. Imminent means *likely to occur at any moment; impending,³ threatening to occur immediately, impending*. An imminent event doesn't necessarily occur immediately, but it could. Therefore one must be ready for it. Maybe this illustration will help.

Imagine a preacher is preaching at his church & that, as he begins, he places his Bible on the pulpit so it's hanging over the edge. This Bible is very precariously balanced. Although the preacher isn't aware of it, the congregation notices what has happened & is anxiously wondering when the Bible will fall. No one knows when it will happen. It might sit there throughout the sermon without moving. But, on the other hand, the preacher might bump the pulpit or speak a little too loudly. The situation is critical. When the preacher is speaking quietly & isn't touching the pulpit, the congregation relaxes somewhat. When he gets louder & begins to thump the pulpit, they become worried.

² MacArthur, J. F. Jr., *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, p 141

³ www.dictionary.com/browse/imminent

That's the way it is with **the day of the Lord**. Once it comes, the time of judgment, which Obadiah & the other prophets speak of, will begin. This is the sense in which God's judgment is near. There are times when things are quiet & we don't think about God's judgment so much. At other times we hear of wars & rumors of wars, & we wonder if God's final intervention in history may be just around the corner. But judgment is no less near in quiet times than in stormy ones. At any moment God may set the wheels of His final reckoning in order. That's why we must prepare for **the day of the Lord** & be ready through faith in Jesus our Savior. Jesus himself said, **Keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come** (Mt 24:42). A thorough study of **the day of the Lord** would take more time than we have today. For now, turn to 1 Thes 5.

Paul had preached the sobering truth about **the day of the Lord** to the Thessalonians during his stay in their city (2 Thes 2:5). After he left, questions arose in their minds about both the Rapture & **the day of the Lord**. Having answered their questions about the rapture in chpt 4 (13–18), Paul now deals with their concerns about **the day of the Lord**. From the catching away of the church, Paul turned to the horrible event that follows it: The destruction of those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The Thessalonians were confused about the rapture of the church & **the day of the Lord**. How does the coming of Christ for His church relate itself to **the day of the Lord** which precedes the 2nd coming of Christ by a number of years? This **day of the Lord** will come suddenly & unexpectedly. What's the point? The point is that just as the translation of the church is the end of the day of grace it also marks the beginning of **the day of the Lord**. In other words, the one event seems to do 2 things. It serves as the closing of one day & the beginning of another. If that is true, it teaches the church will be taken out of the world before the day of trial & trouble overtakes the world. The Thessalonian Christians wanted to know when the rapture & **the day of the Lord** would take place. They were worried they'd somehow missed the rapture & were in **the Day of the Lord** (2 Thes 2:1–2). In vs 4 Paul assures them they wouldn't experience **the day of the Lord**. But to their question as to when **the day of the Lord** would come, Paul replied, **you have no need of anything to be written to you** (1). They didn't need to know the *when* because they already knew all God intended them to know. Look at it this way: If we knew when Jesus was

coming to rapture His people & when He was going to come in judgment, could make us spiritually indifferent if it were a long way away or put us in a position of panic if it were near. We're to live in an expectant anticipation at all times. What the Thessalonians already knew **full well** was **the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night** (5:2). What does that mean? Suddenly, unexpectedly, unwelcomed, & harmfully. Obviously, the time of its arrival won't be revealed; no thief that's any good announces when he plans to rob someone. My car has been broken into a couple of times. On both occasions the thief never let me know he was coming & what his plan was. Shocking, right? Jesus Himself used the imagery of a **thief in the night** to refer to the unexpectedness of His return in Mt 24. **Be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert & would not have allowed his house to be broken into** (43; cf Rev 16:15). Like **the day of the Lord**, the exact time of His 2nd Coming won't be revealed. Jesus put every generation on notice that they must live in expectation of His return & the events of **the day of the Lord** that lead up to it. I find it interesting that the imagery of a thief coming is never used to refer to the rapture of the church. It describes the coming of the Lord in judgment (2 Pt 3:10). A thief coming isn't a hopeful, joyful event of deliverance, but an unexpected calamity.

Biblically, **the day of the Lord** describes God's dreadful future judgment on the wicked. It's mentioned clearly 19x the OT (Is 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Zech 14:1; Mal 4:5) & 4x in the NT (Acts 2:20; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Pt 3:10), & is alluded to in many other passages. It will be the time when God pours out His fury on the wicked; in fact, Scripture 3x calls **the Day of the Lord** the **day of vengeance** (Is 34:8; 61:2; 63:4). But it's a little confusing as we read the prophets to determine which part of their prophecy is going to be fulfilled in the near future & which will be fulfilled during the end times. The OT prophets often didn't distinguish between soon coming historical days of the Lord that would preview the final, ultimate, yet to come **day of the Lord**. God often used things such as using one nation to destroy another, or natural disasters, as instruments of His judgment. But those historical days of the Lord were merely a prelude, a taste of the final & ultimate **day of the**

Lord, which will be far greater in extent & more terrible in its destruction. That's why we see Obadiah talking about Edom's doom then immediately he's talking about all the nations. The references to Edom's destruction would be the near fulfillment & the reference to all the nations would be the far fulfillment. Vs 15 begins by saying **the day of the Lord** draws near on all the nations (far fulfillment). Then it focuses on Edom with a singular **you** (near fulfillment). Just as Edom had cut off Jerusalem, so they would be cut off. Again, Obadiah 1-14 is talking about judgment on Edom. God's going to judge them. He said, *I'm going to send My judgment on you, Edom, & it's a day of the Lord kind of judgment.* But as we come to vs 15, he says **the day of the Lord** draws near for all the nations. He jumps ahead to the end of time & starts describing the end times & how all the nations are going to be brought into judgment. Before the whole thing is done, the end of vs 21, **the kingdom will be the Lord's** & the Lord will reign after that final judgment. Obadiah's prophecies of the judgment on Edom are a sample, a little foretaste of the ultimate **day of the Lord**. Jeremiah also broadens the scope of judgment, describing calamity that will fall upon the entire earth on the supreme **day of the Lord** (13:10-13). This increasing scope suggests that judgment isn't only directed toward particular peoples or even the collective nations, but toward evil in general. Thus, **the day of the Lord** is properly spoken of as bringing judgment to evil wherever it may be found in fallen creation. In other words, the OT **day of the Lord** passages often have both a near & a far fulfillment, as does much OT prophecy. For example, in Ps 69:9 David wrote, **Zeal for Your house has consumed me, & the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.** But after Jesus cleansed the temple we read, **His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for Your house will consume me'** (Jn 2:17). This was true of David but it ultimately was true of Jesus. Ps 22 has in view both David's suffering & the crucifixion of Christ. Is 7:14 refers both to the historical birth of Isaiah's son & prophetically to the virgin birth of Jesus. Similarly, Is 13:6 points to a historical **day of the Lord**, while vs 9 has the final **day of the Lord** in view. Joel 1:15; 2:1, & 11 describe a historical day of the Lord while in 3:1-14 it's the final **day of the Lord**. Obadiah 1-14 is about the historical **day of the Lord** in which Edom was judged while vss 15-21 describe **the day of the Lord** on all nations. Likewise, Zeph 1:7-

14 predicts an imminent, historical day of the Lord's judgment on Judah, which was fulfilled shortly afterward in the Babylonian captivity. Chpt 3:8–20 predicts the final **day of the Lord**. Summarizing the interplay of the historical & future days of the Lord in the writings of the OT prophets, George Eldon Ladd writes,

The Day of the Lord was near because God was about to act; & the historical event was in a real sense an anticipation of the final eschatological deed.... The historical imminence of the Day of the Lord did not include all that the Day of the Lord meant; history & eschatology were held in dynamic tension, for both were the Day of the Lord.⁴

What's this *day* going to be like? &, we all realize that the usage of **day** here refers to a period of time, right? It's not just 24 hours. We say that the present age is a day of grace. We don't mean there was no grace shown by God in the previous dispensations. Obviously, many of God's dealings with man from the Garden of Eden down to the present day have manifested the grace of God. But God in this present age has especially singled out the doctrine of grace for display, revealing grace as a basis for salvation. Grace speaks of God's unmerited favor to us through Christ who loved us & who died for us. The Scriptures picture that after this day of grace has come to its close, which may be simultaneous with the translation of the church, **the day of the Lord** will begin. **The day of the Lord** is a period of time in which God will deal with wicked men directly & dramatically in fearful judgment. What will it be like? Paul says, **then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child** (5:3b). The climax of the day of the Lord, as far as judgment on the nations is concerned, comes at Armageddon & is furthered by the destruction of the armies at the 2nd coming in Rev 19. Many believe it's brought to its climax in the judgment of the nations after the 2nd coming, as recorded in Mt 25:31-46. Rev 6:12–17 graphically depicts the destructiveness of **the day of the Lord** as John writes:

I looked when He broke the sixth seal, & there was a great earthquake; & the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, & the whole moon became like blood; & the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, & every mountain & island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth & the great men & the commanders & the rich & the strong & every slave & free man hid themselves in the caves & among the rocks of the mountains; & they said to the mountains & to the rocks, "Fall on us & hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, & from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, & who is able to stand?"

⁴ *The Presence of the Future*, p 320. Emphasis in original.

Acts 2:19–20 describes **the Day of the Lord** as a time of **wonders in the sky above & signs on the earth below, blood, & fire, & vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness & the moon into blood, before the great & glorious day of the Lord shall come.**

In 1 Thes 5:3, by using the terms **they & them** (unbelievers), Paul reassured the Thessalonians they won't face destruction. As he states plainly in vs 4, the Thessalonians won't experience **the day of the Lord**; they'll be raptured before it begins. **The day of the Lord** will come suddenly & unexpectedly on unbelievers, just as labor pains coming upon a woman with child warn her that the birth of her child is imminent.

What's the end result of God's judgment on unbelievers on this *day*? **They will not escape** (5:3c). They will be judged just as Edom was judged so many years ago. As believers, we should be comforted by the reality that we'll be raptured before the coming of **the day of the Lord** & not experience its horrors. Yet the knowledge that that event looms large on the future horizon should also motivate us to reach out with the gospel to the lost. The tragic reality is that those who reject Jesus will experience God's eternal wrath. As you know, there are only 2 kinds of people in the world, male & female. But that's a whole different subject. Only 2 kinds of people, believers & unbelievers. The redeemed & the unredeemed. The saved & the lost. The children of God & the children of the devil. Those who are in the kingdom of God & those in the kingdom of darkness. Those who are in Adam & those who are in Christ. Those who love God & those who hate Him. Those who go into eternal life & those who go into eternal punishment. Those who will be forever with the Lord & those who will be forever apart from the Lord. Those clothed with the righteousness of Christ & those clothed with their own supposed righteousness. Or, as someone put it, *the saints & the aint's*. Here (1 Thes 5:4-8) Paul contrasts night people (unbelievers) with day people (believers). Night people are associated with darkness, sleep, & drunkenness; day people with light, alertness, & soberness. The truth that unbelievers are in the darkness & believers in the light has its roots in the OT. In Ps 107:10–12 the psalmist describes unbelievers as **those who dwelt in darkness & in the shadow of death, prisoners in misery & chains, because they had rebelled against the words of God & spurned the counsel of the Most High. Therefore He**

humbled their heart with labor; they stumbled & there was none to help. Then in vss 13–16 he described the transformation of those night people into day people:

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness & the shadow of death & broke their bands apart. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His lovingkindness, & for His wonders to the sons of men! For He has shattered gates of bronze & cut bars of iron asunder.

Is 9:2 also describes the transformation from spiritual darkness to light: **The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.** Vss 6-7 reveal that the light is the Messiah:

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; & the government will rest on His shoulders; & His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David & over his kingdom, to establish it & to uphold it with justice & righteousness from then on & forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Zacharias, the father of the Messiah's forerunner John the Baptist, prophesied,

& you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness & the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Lk 1:76–79).

Matthew recorded the fulfillment of the OT prophecy that the Messiah would be a light not only for His people but also for the Gentiles.

When Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; & leaving Nazareth, He came & settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun & Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: **"The land of Zebulun & the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, & those who were sitting in the land & shadow of death, upon them a light dawned"** (Mt 4:12–16).

In Jn 8:12 Jesus declared, **I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life** (cf 3:19; 12:35, 46). How do people turn from darkness to light? Recounting the dramatic story of his conversion, Paul told King Agrippa that Jesus had sent him to the Gentiles **to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light & from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins & an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me** (Acts 26:18). To leave the darkness of sin & unbelief & become a redeemed day person, one must be **sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ**. Those who put

their faith in Him are **rescued ... from the domain of darkness, & transferred ... to the kingdom of His beloved Son** (Col 1:13); those who **were formerly darkness, ... now ... are Light in the Lord** (Eph 5:8); God **has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1 Pt 2:9). Paul's purpose in contrasting the saved & the lost in 1 Thes was to comfort the Thessalonians (4:18; 5:11). His use of the pronouns **they & them** (5:3) distinguishes the Thessalonians from the unbelievers who will experience God's wrath. He did so by presenting a series of contrasts between night people & day people. Paul gave the Thessalonians a multi-layered description of the distinction between believers & unbelievers, & the implications for each concerning **the day of the Lord**. By so doing, he made it plain that the Thessalonians' fears that they were already in **the day of the Lord** were groundless. Believers are light people & will not experience the darkness of **the day of the Lord**. Because God has judged us in Christ & imputed His righteousness to us, the final **day of the Lord** for us won't be the day of wrath it will be for those who don't know Jesus (1 Thes 1:10). By His grace, God in Christ intervened in history before the final **day of the Lord** to save us from the Lord's wrath to come (1 Thes 1:10). The Christian's appointment is to be caught up to be with Christ. The appointment of the world is for **the day of the Lord**, the day of God's wrath. One can't keep both of these appointments. Certainly, there will be some after the church is gone who will turn to Christ & in Rev 7 it's stated there will be an innumerable company of martyrs. Many will be saved after the church has been raptured, but they will experience the awfulness of that time. As the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth, they will suffer in it. But those who've trusted in Christ Jesus, those who've believed in Jesus as their Savior, aren't appointed to that day of wrath. We're appointed to the day of grace to meet Jesus in the air & be forever with the Lord. Jesus is coming for His church before **the day of the Lord** begins, before the day of trouble pictured in Revelation & all through the Bible, overtakes the world. We are not appointed to wrath, but to salvation. Aren't you glad for that?

As he did with his discussion of the Rapture (4:18), Paul concluded his discussion of **the day of the Lord** by exhorting the Thessalonians to encourage & build up one another. Based on the truth he'd given them, they were to reassure the anxious & fearful that they wouldn't experience **the**

day of the Lord. His concluding phrase, **just as you also are doing**, affirms they were already committed to encouraging each other. Ever the faithful pastor, passionately concerned for his people, Paul wanted them to **excel still more** (4:1) in their doing of this.

In summary, 1 of 2 possible destinies awaits every member of the human race. Those who stubbornly remain in spiritual darkness will ultimately **be cast out into the outer darkness** of eternal hell (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). But those who through faith in Jesus Christ come to the light of salvation (Acts 13:47; Jn 8:12; 9:5; 11:9; 12:46) will **share in the inheritance of the saints in Light** (Col 1:12). They will live forever in God's glorious presence, where **there will no longer be any night; & they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; & they will reign forever & ever** (Rev 22:5). While we eagerly await our Lord's snatching us up out of this world, we cannot pray, *Come, Lord Jesus*, we can't long for & pray for the 2nd Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ without, in effect, praying for the judgment of the unbelieving nations, because that's what He'll bring to pass when He returns. There's a good reason JRR Tolkien referred to Christ's 2nd Advent as *the good catastrophe*.⁵ What will be wonderful beyond words for the people of God will be calamity beyond words for those who have rejected God.

⁵ *The Tolkien Reader*, p 86