

My Favorite Thing About OBADIAH, JONAH, & NAHUM

Obadiah 1:1

Nahum 1:14

August 14, 2021

Today we are going to do the *“Minor Prophet Shuffle”*. We are skipping over Micah and will come back to it next week.

1 Peter 4:17 reminds us that *“Judgment Begins in the House of God...”*, therefore, the overwhelming focus of the Old Testament is on the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – The Chosen People of God. Their stories of Fidelity and Infidelity, Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness, Rebellion, Judgment and Restoration.

It would be easy to assume, then, that the nations who do not acknowledge God or His right to rule over them are off the hook.

However, **1 Peter 4:17** also says, *“...if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”*

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About OBADIAH, JONAH and NAHUM – The Sovereignty of God Over the Whole Earth.**

These are not the only books in the Old Testament that document God’s dealings with the nations that surround Israel, but our three books today are unique in that they are addressed **EXCLUSIVELY** to Edom and/or Assyria.

OBADIAH

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament – just 21 verses – and speaks directly to Edom {located South of Judah and the Dead Sea}.

As direct descendants of Abraham and Isaac, the **Edomites**, would have been included in the covenant God made with their forefathers, but they rejected it. Despite their shared ancestry, Edom and Israel lived in almost perpetual conflict and there are more than 120 references to these descendants of Esau in the Old Testament:

- They refused to allow Israel to pass through their territory enroute to the Promised Land - Numbers 20:14-21
- David successfully defeated them - 2 Samuel 8:13-14.
- They rebelled against King Jehoram - 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8.
- King Amaziah made a successful raid into their territory - 2 Chronicles 25:11-12.

“This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom”

Through Obadiah, God was calling Edom to account for 2 issues:

Pride {vv. 3-9} – *“The pride of your heart has deceived you....”*

This pride was much more than just self-importance/self-absorption — it was the sense of complete independence from God.

- They had **PRIDE** in their SECURITY - vv. 3-4
- They had **PRIDE** in their WEALTH - vv. 5-6
- They had **PRIDE** in their ALLIES - vv. 7
- They had **PRIDE** in their WISDOM - vv. 8
- They had **PRIDE** in their MILITARY - vv.9

They felt no need for the God of their fathers.

Their treatment of Israel {vv. 10-14} – *“Because of the violence against your brother Jacob....”*

Not only did Edom flex their military muscle against Israel, they stood by and did nothing as other nations attacked and pillaged Israel.

- “You should not have looked down on your brother in the day of his misfortune”- vv. 12
- “You should not have marched through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster”- vv. 13.
- “You should not have waited at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives”- vv. 14

It was for their **PRIDE** and **CRUELTY** that Edom was being judged.

“Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD. – vv. 4

“The Day of the Lord is near – as you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.”- vv. 15

If you look at a current map of Palestine you will note that Edom no longer exists.

Question: Do you think if Edom had turned around that their threatened destruction might have been delayed or even withdrawn?

- **Ezekiel 18:23** - Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

I believe our next book will help answer that question.

JONAH

Jonah lived in the Northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II {see 2 Kings 14:23-25}.

On the surface, Jonah’s book is about a reluctant prophet, but in reality, its pages reveal the heart of God and His desire to save the people of Nineveh {the capital of Assyria} – even though they did not acknowledge Him as God. Because He desires to save as many people as possible, God put in a call to Jonah:

- **Jonah 1:1** - The word of the LORD came to Jonah, son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

At the peak of her power, Assyria stretched from Egypt to Persian Gulf. They built their vast empire by terror and violence and were well known for their cruelty: amputating hands and feet, gouging out eyes, pulling out tongues, decapitations, skinning and impaling their captives, sacking cities and exiling entire populations. Note the following quote from a relief found in the palace of Sennacherib: “Mr. Mannu-ki-ahhe and Mr. Nabuusalli spoke great insults against Assur, the god, my creator. Their tongues I tore out, their skins I flayed”

Jonah knew the reputation of Nineveh and as a resident of Israel, he would have experienced their cruelty firsthand – and if truth be told, he looked down his nose at them just a little bit. You would think, then, that he would have jumped at the chance to tell them their cup was full and that they were going to be destroyed. **Sign me UP!!! Woo! Hoo!**

But NOOOOO!!! God said, *“Jonah - go east.”* and Jonah.... *went west.*

Jonah had no desire to go to Nineveh. Why? Why would the world's worst missionary run from God?

Jonah knew God was:

- gracious.
- compassionate.
- slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness.

He also knew what would happen if Nineveh repented:

- God would forgive them.
- God would pardon them.
- God would extend Mercy and Grace to them....

GOD WOULD LET THEM OFF THE HOOK!!

Jonah didn’t want that. In fact, the very worst possible scenario Jonah could think of was Nineveh repenting and God forgiving them.

I wonder if that's why **Christians** spend more time condemning **non-Christians** and less time introducing them to a God who loves them, because we look down our noses at them and are secretly hoping they'll get exactly what we think they deserve? Hmmm...

Good thing God is not like us. He extends Grace better than we do. We are perfectly happy to receive His Grace but we are reluctant to pass that Grace on or we extend it through gritted teeth. We hoard God's Grace, but God looks at **EVERY HUMAN** through glasses tinted with grace. **{I'd like to say I came up with that fantastic line, but I didn't – Thanks Adult Sabbath School Quarterly!!}**

How do I know that? My Bible tells me so.....

- **Isaiah 42:6-8** - I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, ⁷ to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. ⁸ "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.
- **Romans 5:6-8** - You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- **1 John 4:9-10** - This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

After an interesting cruise around the Mediterranean, Jonah found himself as fish bait, but after three days, the fish had had enough and spit him out.

Had God moved on to another poor sap? **NOPE!!!**

- **Jonah 3:2** - Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and proclaim to it the proclamation which I am going to tell you."

God **STILL** desired to save Nineveh and He **STILL** wanted Jonah to deliver the message. This time Jonah obeyed.

- **Jonah 3:4** - and he cried out and said, **"Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."**

It took Jonah 3 days to preach the world's shortest sermon. When he was finished, Horror of horrors **{see 3:5-8}** His worst possible scenario had come true ---- Nineveh repented and God forgave them **AND** spared them!!

The greatest revival in history happened because of a one-sentence sermon preached by the worst **EVER** missionary. Unfortunately, the conversion of Nineveh did not last..... God knew that would happen, but He went out of his way **ANYWAY** because God is in the saving business.

NAHUM

Some 150 years after the great **"Jonah Revival"**, here comes Nahum, with one final warning for Nineveh.

Assyria had had unprecedented success against Israel – totally destroying it – so there is little doubt that the Assyrians viewed the God of that little nation as small and impotent - unable to protect His people.

"Allow Me to introduce Myself", God said **"You will have no descendants to bear your name. I will destroy the carved images and cast idols that are in the temple of your gods. I will prepare your grave, for you are vile."** ¹⁵ **Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked invade you; they will be completely destroyed.** {Nahum 1:14-15}

HOW is He going to do it? A great army – a very specific army {Nahum 2:1-13}:

I am against you, declares the LORD Almighty. I will burn up your chariots in smoke, and the sword will devour your young lions. I will leave you no prey on the earth. The voices of your messengers will no longer be heard."

WHY is He going to do it? Because of her cruelty, wanton destruction and idolatry {Nahum 3:1-19}.

"O king of Assyria, your shepherds' slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. ¹⁹ Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal. Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?"

At the time of Nahum's prophecy, Babylon was an insignificant vassal state. However, some **50 years** later, in **612 BC**, after laying siege to Nineveh for 3 months, the combined forces of the **Babylonians, Medes and Scythians** led by Nabopolassar (Nebuchadnezzar's father) broke

through the defenses and plundered the city, leaving nothing of value. The river gates were opened and the city was flooded, completing its destruction. The king was killed/committed suicide and his palace was burned to the ground. Nineveh was no more – not a stone remained visible.

So complete was Nineveh's destruction that historians and archaeologists didn't believe the Biblical account because the city could not be located. In **1842** the remains of Nineveh were finally discovered in modern-day Iraq, but it wasn't until **1989**, when the Halzi Gate was excavated and 16 skeletons discovered, that the graphic details of scripture were confirmed.

God looks at EVERY HUMAN through glasses tinted with grace, but that doesn't mean He tolerates sin. It is because of His great love that He must deal with sin and rebellion. He is also a God who values freedom of choice, so He never pours out His wrath on sin without giving clear warnings and providing every opportunity for repentance and escape. The book of Jonah demonstrates clearly that God is eager to pardon.

Additionally, our books today show us that a lack of acknowledgement OF God does not remove accountability TO God. He is Sovereign and ALL are accountable to Him.

- **Romans 14:11-12** - It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.
- **Revelation 20:11-13** - Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.

Ultimately, the reason Edom and Assyria no longer exist is because they rejected God's pleas for them to come to Him – to step back from the edge – before it was too late. They refused to come to the only place where they would find healing and restoration.

- **Isaiah 26:10** - Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the LORD.

That's why **The Sovereignty of God** is My Favorite Thing About **OBADIAH, JONAH and NAHUM**.