

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
September 13, 2016

Obadiah 1:1–21. Divine judgement on arrogant Edom.

Acts 11:19–12:25. Peter’s faith and peace in the midst of impending death.

Job 21:17–34. The wicked are often exempted from calamity.

COMMENTS:

Obadiah 1:1–21. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Like Nahum, which is addressed to Assyria, it is addressed not to Israel but to a foreign people, Edom. The land of Edom was a small mountainous area east of the Dead Sea. Its people were descendants of Esau (Gen. 36). The Edomites were noted for their pride, treachery, greed, and violence—note the pride in **verses 3-4** and violence against Israel in **verses 10-14**. Edom and Israel fought through most of their history. More than just Israel’s archenemy, Edom became a symbol of all the arrogant nations who oppose God and will meet destruction on the day of the Lord (Isa. 34:5–7; 63:1–6). Moreover, in postbiblical Jewish writings Edom was used as a symbol for Rome. Outline of Obadiah: (1) Edom’s judgment (**1:1-9**), Edom’s sins (**1:10-14**), and Edom’s judgment (**1:15-21**). After promising judgment on Edom, God promises Israel that He will deliver her (**1:17-18**), defeat her enemies (**1:19-20**), and establish her kingdom (**1:21**).

By knowledge and by love. As human beings, by nature we are designed to seek the greatest good. The greatest good is God. We were created to love God. At salvation we were regenerated to give us capacity for proper knowledge and proper love of God. Loving God is the greatest reward in life. Love for God is its own reward. Love for God translates to living in His presence, which means living to please Him, and living to please Him protects the believer from living a life that is dependent upon human praise. We live to please the Lord, not men (Eph. 5:10, 6:7; Col. 3:22; Gal 1:10). There are two things that the passage above reveals to us about what pleases the Lord. The first is how much the Lord despises anti-Semitism. The Jews, though hardened during the Church Age, are still God’s people when it comes to national entities. To respect and love the Jews pleases the Lord. A second thing that Obadiah teaches us is in the area of rewards of having special privileges with Him in the Kingdom. While love for the Lord is its own reward *in this life*, when it comes to the next life, love for the Lord translates to longing for special intimacy with Him in the next life. This is why the Lord provides temporal and eternal incentives for putting Him first and loving Him as our greatest good—note in Rev. 3:20 the temporal reward of a loving relationship with the Lord in this life followed by Rev. 3:21 where the reward is the special privilege of sitting with Christ on His throne. As far as what this has to do with Obadiah, note in the last verse (**21**) the prophecy that King Messiah will have “saviors” (**מוֹשְׁעִים**) assist Him in His rule over the nations. This fact should be studied with reference to our Lord’s promises to His apostles (Matt. 19:27–30) and those who are faithful to Him today (24:42–51; 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27). Jesus teaches that faithfulness to Him today will mean reigning with Him in the kingdom. Lovers of God look forward to the day when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord, and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15). Strangely enough, Christ’s offers of ruling with Him in the kingdom does not interest

many modern believers precisely because their lives are so anchored in their temporal lives, an attitude that destroys any possibility of developing an eternal perspective. I maintain that apart from living in the eternal perspective, which includes preparing for the next life, one cannot live the spiritual life. A life that treasures this temporal life with all of its “goods” over the goods that the Lord offers, is a life that will always prefer this world to Christ’s and His coming kingdom. Such a life is also void of the Hope for the future that purifies the believer’s life: **1 John 3:2** *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*³ *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Acts 11:19–12:25. Luke provides a record of the spread of Christianity to the north and west of Judea. Scattered by the persecution which followed the death of Stephen, the believers travel to Phoenicia (now Lebanon), Cyprus and Antioch. In **11:19-26** we can see God establishing a Hellenistic church in Antioch, where believers are first called “Christian” (**11:26**). In **11:27-30** we see the love of Saul, Barnabas, and the Antioch church as they demonstrate their love for Jewish believers by providing famine relief. In **12:1-24** we see persecution of the church as King Herod Agrippa I attacks the church leaders—executing James and arresting Peter. It is Passover—the same time of year that Jesus was arrested and crucified. The death of James is a tragedy. Just four years after Jesus called him and his brother John from their fishing boats, he becomes the first apostle to die for his faith. John will live to a great age and die a peaceful death in Ephesus. In **12:1–19** we see Peter in prison and strongly guarded as the church prays most fervently for his release. Unless God rescues him, he will be executed. But this very night an angel sets him free! It would have been convenient for Luke to say that one of the guards helped him, but he insists it was an angel. When Peter knocks on John Mark’s door, the Christians can hardly believe that their prayer has been answered so promptly and so completely.

By knowledge and by love. As we daily seek the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love, let us remember that God has a different plan for each believer, some believers live very long lives and some are given but a short time on this Earth. It is always the Lord’s call. God allows James to be executed while He delivers Peter. Note that Peter was asleep during a time of impending execution. It is very possible that this is an indication of his great faith and peace. If we were chained to two Roman soldiers and facing the possibility of being executed the next day, would we sleep very soundly? Peter was so sound asleep that the angel had to strike him on the side to wake him up! What gave Peter such confidence and peace? To begin with, many believers were praying for him (Acts 12:12), and kept it up day and night for a week; and this helped to bring him peace (Phil. 4:6–7). Prayer has a way of reminding us of the promises of God’s Word, such as, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41:10). It is very likely that Peter was living in the peace of the reality that Herod could not kill him. Jesus had promised Peter that he would live to be an old man and end his life crucified on a Roman cross (John 21:18–19). Peter simply laid hold of that promise and committed the entire situation to the Lord, and God gave him peace and rest. He did not know how or when God would deliver him, but he did know that deliverance was coming. By reflecting on Christ’s promise to Him, Peter could

simply recall what his loving Lord told him and thus *by knowledge and by love* relax and sleep soundly even in the midst of what otherwise would seem as impending death.

Job 21:17–34. Job continues to challenge his friends’ tedious self-righteous sermons that the wicked always suffer, implying that Job must be wicked since he was suffering. How often, he demanded, had they ever really seen it like this? Job points out that far more often the reverse was true: the wicked prospered—just consider the millions of dollars some of our political rulers earn while some believers struggle to make ends meet and suffer from poor health. Note the outline of Job 21: after appealing once more for their understanding and sympathy (Job 21:1–6), Job replied to Zophar’s statements and refuted each of them. Job stated that, from his point of view, it appears that the wicked have long lives (21:7–16), they are not often sent calamity (21:17–21), and the death of the wicked is no different from the death of other men (21:22–34). Point by point, Job took Zophar’s speech and shredded it into bits. Observation tells Job that some people die when they are in the fullness of life and apparently in excellent health, while others die after long and painful illnesses. Some people enjoy a long and happy life while others spend their days in misery, *but death is the same for all of them*. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as “infant death” or “tragic death” or “unexpected death” because *death is death no matter when or how it comes*. The rich man dies, the poor man dies; the believer dies, the unbeliever dies; and “side by side they lie in the dust, and worms cover them both” (21:26). Of course, Job is talking about the *physical* side of death and not the *spiritual*. When death comes, it obviously makes a great deal of difference *in the next life* whether or not the person had faith in Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:27)

By knowledge and by love. As we grow in proper knowledge and proper love of the Lord daily, it is important to remember that as far as this temporal life, it is often not fair/just, that is, things do not always work out in perfect righteousness and justice *in this life*. This is still the devil’s world, but there will come a time when God will rule in righteousness, but in the meantime there is plenty of examples of injustices *in this life*. Job’s closing words in **21:34** let the three friends know that he had no confidence in what they said. Their comfort was in vain/nonsense, and their answers were nothing but falsehood. The Hebrew word translated “falsehood” means “a deliberate violation of God’s Law, an act of treachery.” It is often translated “trespass.” When the three friends attacked Job, they were breaking faith and trespassing against God. Instead of helping Job, they were leading him astray. Each one of us represents Christ to all who are around us, let us do all that we can to bring the love and grace of Christ to every situation.

Life in the Lord by proper knowledge and by proper love.

Pastor Don