

Judgment Predicted on the Ungodly

by Aaron Dunlop

The sermon warns of the inevitable judgment against the ungodly, exemplified by the nation of Edom, and emphasizes the urgency of heeding God's message of destruction.

Duration: 30:52

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1, Obadiah 1:1

Topics: "Judgment"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the first verse of the book of Obadiah. The verse talks about a rumor from the Lord and an ambassador being sent to gather nations against Edom in battle. The speaker emphasizes the atmosphere of judgment and destruction that permeates the air in those Middle Eastern countries. The sermon is divided into three parts: the rumor heard among the people, the action set in motion among the nations, and the judgment that will be done to the heathen. The speaker also discusses the reverberating rumor that is sent from God against sin and heathenism, which will ultimately lead to the destruction of Edom.

Transcript

I want to look tonight at the first verse again, and I want to look at the phrase or the sentences towards the end of the first verse. We have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen. Arise ye, and let us arise up against her in battle.

That's what I want to look at tonight. In 1948, Winston Churchill published his first in a series of books chronicling the events of World War II. He entitled it, The Gathering Storm.

He had completed already three books on World War I, in which he had a subordinate role, and now he begins on World War II, during which he was the head of his majesty's government, and on his head lay the major responsibility. After World War I, there was an air of optimism in the world, not only in Britain, but across the world. There was an air of optimism, and the hope that peace would reign was throughout the world.

It was dubbed the War to End Wars, and with the declaration of Versailles, and the organization then of the League of Nations, this helped in the idea of peace across the world. There was a great peace in 1918. In the view of Winston Churchill, World War II could have been prevented.

Indeed, his first chapter in *The Gathering Storm* is entitled, *The Follies of the Victors*. And one day, while speaking to President Roosevelt, Roosevelt was relaying to him a story, telling him that he was asked publicly what this war should be, what the Second World War should be called, and Churchill immediately interjected with a phrase, it should be called the Unnecessary War. He thought, he maintained, it could have been prevented.

As we open the book of Obadiah, and we read the first verse of this prophecy, the words of Churchill's book comes to mind, *The Gathering Storm*. Indeed, the opening chapter, the opening few verses of this book, also is pertinent to the subject, because this war against Edom, and this prediction against Edom, was a war that could have been prevented. The prediction of judgment on Edom was indeed unnecessary in the sense, as we saw the last time, Edom was a nation of privilege.

The nation was privileged above all nations. They had all the opportunity, they had all the advantages of the people of God, and yet in the first verse, there hangs over this nation an ominous oracle, a gathering storm. The manner in which this judgment comes is very interesting.

It came like all the judgments of God, with a warning. It came also with such a certainty that the Edomites had no way of escape. The Edomites were known for their prudence, for their wisdom, and their skill as described in verse 8. They were known throughout the nations as a prudent and skillful and wise nation, and yet the Lord says in verse 8, Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and the understanding out of the mount of Esau? And for all their wisdom, and for all their skill, the Lord gives here a prediction that is going to outsmart the Edomites.

The Lord gives a prediction that involves all the nations round about Edom. A prediction that certifies the complete destruction of this tiny nation sitting in the hills south of the Dead Sea. The text that I want to consider is that in verse 1, We have heard a rumor from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen.

Arise ye, and let us arise up against her in battle. I have used Churchill's title to illustrate this book, and I think it is a very pertinent title, *The Gathering Storm*, because I want us to sense tonight the spirit and the atmosphere of this verse that we have read. I want us to seek to sense the atmosphere and the spirit, not only of the verse, but if we could sense the spirit and the atmosphere of Edom, and the nations round about them at this time, we would surely know that there was a gathering storm against sin in these words that we have read.

It could be summed up in these words, that the Lord breathed and permeated the atmosphere against Edom with a spirit and a sense of destruction. The nations round about Edom, and Edom itself, and Israel. God breathed and permeated into the very atmosphere in those Middle Eastern countries, an atmosphere of war, an atmosphere of destruction, and a spirit and sense of utter chaos and destruction against Edom.

There are three points, there are three parts to this introductory judgment that I want to look at. That which they heard among the people, that which is set in motion among the nations, and that which will be done among the heathen. That which is heard among the people, we have heard a rumor, that which is set in motion among the nations.

An ambassador has been sent, and that which will be done among the heathen, or to the heathen. Arise ye, let us arise against her in battle. This ominous spirit, this ominous atmosphere of judgment and destruction that permeates the very air around about Edom.

We are going to see and get a sense of that tonight as we go through this message. The first thing I want us to notice tonight, as we discuss these three points, I have two major points that I want to discuss in dealing with these three areas. The first one is, there is a reverberating rumor, a reverberating rumor, we have heard, we have heard a rumor from the Lord.

It's a rumor that reverberates around the nations as we are going to see. It's a rumor that is in the tongue of everyone in the nations, and it is a rumor that is going to, in the end, destroy Edom. This reverberating rumor that is sent from God against sin and heathenism.

We have heard, there is much discussion as to who exactly is intended by the plural pronoun we. Obadiah is the writer of the prophecy, why would he then write we have heard a rumor from the Lord. There are many suggestions as to what exactly it means.

One commentator uses it and describes it as the editorial we. That is that the prophet wanted to avoid drawing attention to himself, and therefore he uses this pronoun. It is used in other places of scripture, such as 1 John, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which our hands have handled.

1 John uses it, and some people refer to that as an editorial we. It's just a pronoun that is general and does not draw attention to any particular individual. Another view is that of Calvin.

Calvin thinks that it more likely is speaking about the tumultuous rumors which commonly pervade wars and precede wars and calamities. That tumultuous rumor, that air, that atmosphere of destruction that pervades and precedes war. You read the history of the second world war in Churchill's book and he tells about him traveling in Europe and the sense of war and the atmosphere of war is thick throughout Europe.

And the nations France and Poland and the other nations around about the allies as they would become, are counting the cost and seeing how strong their armies are. Because the rumor of war precedes war. Calvin takes that position.

According to Jeremiah chapter 49 verse 14, Jeremiah 49 verse 14 is the same prophecy against Edom as Obadiah had, but Jeremiah uses the singular pronoun, I have heard a rumor from the Lord. It's the same sense, it's the same language, only Jeremiah uses the singular pronoun, I have heard a rumor from the Lord. And so some people think that Jeremiah and the other prophets are included in this.

It's a prophetic message. They have heard from God as the prophets of God. Another commentator said, strictly the message came to the prophet, but it reached him as a representative of the people.

It was for his ears alone. That is, that it was, it came to the people, but it came to him as a representative of the people. Therefore he could say, we have heard.

In defense of this interpretation, we have in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 1, the verse is very well known and we are going to come to it a little later on. Who hath believed our report? Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? And this passage uses the very same wording as our passage here in Obadiah. And Isaiah chapter 53 verse 1 could be translated, who hath believed that which we have heard? Who hath believed that which we have heard? And Jeremiah or Isaiah was the prophet and it was a prophetic message coming to the prophets.

It was the message of prophecy specific to the prophets. Having considered these views and a good many more, I have to say that Calvin is the most obvious view to take. And it is most likely, as Calvin put it, the tumultuous rumors which commonly precede wars and calamities.

The sense of war that is in the air, that is on everyone's lips. And I say this for two reasons, two main reasons. Number one, because of the spread of the message.

Because of the spread of the message, this rumor is already among the heathen. It is among the heathen already, verse 1 tells us. Second reason I have for this interpretation, that the we is speaking of everyone we have heard, because of the nature of the message.

This is a message that is not for Adam only. It is a message that is not for Israel only. This is a message that is going to every one of the nations around the Bible.

The messenger, we are going to come to a little later on. We have heard a rumor from the Lord and an ambassador is sent among the heathen. It is a message for everyone.

It is the we then, the rumor, is that tumultuous, calamitous, ominous atmosphere of war that pervades the nations round about. This then I believe is that reverberating rumor, that reverberating cry throughout all the nations around about the country, that there is war in the air, that destruction is on the lips of the nations. We come, we are in the world today.

And Isaiah said, as we are going to come to a little later on, who has believed our report? This rumor of destruction, this rumor, this word, this oracle of destruction that is coming at the end of the world, this oracle of destruction in the flames of hell is a rumor or word that is heard throughout the world. It is on the lips of many across the nations. We have heard a rumor from the Lord and an ambassador has been sent among the heathen.

My friend, there is a message and there is a rumor that has gone out through all the world tonight that there is coming a destruction, that there is coming war and destruction upon sin. And it is that atmosphere, that sense of destruction that is eminent that Edom felt in their day. Something to remark concerning this reverberating rumor, number one, it is from the Lord.

It is from the Lord. This is no random war against Edom. The nations at that time were in war here and there among each other.

But this is no random war. Edom was at peace with the other nations. Verse 7 tells us they had a confederacy.

They were at peace. But here is a war that is from the Lord. This atmosphere of destruction and judgment against sin was instigated by God, was instigated by God.

The word has come from the Lord. It is therefore not mere speculation. It is not mere speculation.

And my friend, the judgment of God against sin is not mere speculation. This rumor that is across the world that speaks of destruction against sin, that speaks of a punishment, an eternal punishment of sin, is not mere speculation. It is a rumor from the Lord.

God has set in place plans to destroy Edom and is going to use the nations round about. He is going to use the nations round about. Not only is this from the Lord, but secondly it is among the nations.

The messenger has been sent among the heathen. Let me identify who the messenger is. I think we can rule out that it was an individual messenger.

Obadiah did not send out an individual messenger like a postman. I think we can also rule out that it was not a postal messenger. As in the days of Esther, when Queen of Hattiereth sent out messengers on horseback and on mule into the provinces, 127 provinces.

Matthew Henry refers to this messenger. What is this messenger? How do the nations round about get this message? How do the nations round about get this message that Edom is to be destroyed? That is the question. Who is the messenger? Matthew Henry identifies and refers to the messenger as the messenger of providence, meaning that there was some providential occurrence that stirred up the nations against Edom.

Calvin says that they were stirred up by one another to destroy Edom. Another commentator sees the messenger as a local event that impressed the prophet as striking confirmation of his message, i.e. that there was something that happened locally that impressed Obadiah concerning this destruction of Edom. This is in effect saying what Calvin and Henry said, that there was something in providence.

There was something happened. This is a rumor, an oracle, the message that was circulated around and the nations got the message. God in his providence, God in his providence breathed a spirit of destruction among the nations and stirred up the nations against Edom as he did in the days when Israel were carried captive into Babylon.

God lifted his protection from Israel. He stirred up Nebuchadnezzar 1 Chronicles 6, verse 15. And Jehoshaddak went into captivity when the Lord carried Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Bible tells us that the heart of the king is in the hand of God and he turneth it whithersoever he will. Cyrus, an ungodly king, is referred to in Isaiah 45, verse 1, as the Lord's anointed, the Messiah. That's the word that's used.

Cyrus is referred to as the Lord's Messiah. Why? Whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him and I will loose the loins of kings and open before him the two lathed gates and the gates shall not be shut. Cyrus was used by God, not only to bring Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians down, but Cyrus was used by God to send Israel back to their land.

The same is true here. The Lord breathed and moved the heart and stirred up the heart of the nations against Edom. This rumor that is from the Lord and among the heathen, as we have said, is a rumor and an oracle of destruction.

If I could address the unbeliever tonight, this oracle and this message concerning the destruction of sin, concerning the judgment of God and the punishment of God upon sin is a rumor that the Lord has instigated in the world and he has permeated this world with it. You think back in the days of Noah. For 120 years Noah preached the gospel and he spread the word around that there is coming judgment, that there is coming destruction.

The Bible tells me that the last days of this world in which I believe we are in, the last days, they are going to be days such as the days of Noah were. They were eating and drinking. They were given in marriage.

In other words, they were going about life as normal. Normal life. Just going about their everyday tasks while the spirit and atmosphere of destruction was all around them.

No matter how plainly you speak to unbelievers regarding the gospel, no matter how pointedly you speak regarding the destruction that is on its way for the unbeliever, no matter how permeated the atmosphere is with the spirit of destruction, Isaiah says, Who hath believed what we have heard? The hardness of men's hearts is so hard that they are deaf, that they are insensitized to the destruction that is all around them. And Isaiah said, Who hath believed what we have heard? We see it in the world. We can recognize it.

We can see the judgment of God in all of these areas. But the unbeliever is so dead in his sins and so hard against the gospel that he does not see it. And Noah preached for 120 years and he went into the ark with his family.

Why? Because of the hardness of men's hearts. No one believed what Noah heard. My friend, we have heard a rumor from the Lord and an ambassador has been sent throughout the nations.

The messenger was to rise and to stir up the nations to do battle with Edom, to destroy Edom. This reverberating rumor. They never heeded.

Secondly, there is a resounding resolution. We have heard a rumor from the Lord. An ambassador has been sent among the heathen.

Arise ye and let us arise. This is the message. This is the resolution of God.

And this is the resounding word that has gone out among the nations. And although perched on the apparently secure top of Mount Seir, Edom in effect, although they don't recognize it, Edom in effect is walking through the valley of the shadow of death. Eternal death.

We need to understand from this tonight that God has a divine purpose for the ungodly. God has a divine purpose for the ungodly. He says in Jeremiah chapter 29 verse 11 regarding his own people.

For I know the thoughts that I have toward you. Thoughts of peace and not of evil. But here in Obadiah 1, God's thoughts toward sins and sin and the heathenism are thoughts of evil and not of good.

And I want you to understand tonight that God has a purpose for the ungodly. God has a purpose against those who reject him. God has a purpose against those who are out of Christ and without a Savior.

And although the believer can say, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. The unbeliever cannot say that. Indeed, the unbeliever walks through the valley of the shadow of death right into the jaws of eternal death because they have not heard what we have heard.

They have not heard and believed our report. The unbeliever walks through the valley of the shadow of death into destruction. He lives his life enveloped by the imminent destruction of hell.

I want you to understand that. Unbeliever, you live your life enveloped and shrouded by the imminent destruction of hell. This is what Jonathan Edwards in his famous sermon, Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God, brought out.

The unbeliever is hanging over hell. He's hanging over hell. And there is God that is holding him over hell.

And it's only in the mercy of God that God does not let him drop into hell. But God in his mercy prevents him. And he has set him on a slippery slope.

God has set sinners on a slippery slope. And it is only his mercy that keeps them from sliding into hell. This is what Isaiah, or Amos, the prophet, also said that the believers are as firebrands plucked out of the burning.

The picture there is that the believer lives already as if he were in hell. He was plucked out of the burning. Hell was so imminent.

Destruction was so real. The atmosphere of destruction was so close, knit round about him, that Amos describes the believer as being plucked as a firebrand out of the burning. That's what salvation is.

That's what salvation is. And now, God having given Eden opportunity to repent, and advantages toward repentance, God now determines destruction. After many years of arrogance against him, God has resolved to set in motion and to do.

An ambassador has been sent. An ambassador has been sent. The action has already been set in motion, and the method of destruction, my friend, for the unbeliever has already been created.

And I wish you could understand tonight the reality, the reality of such a destruction, and the imminency of such a destruction. The plans for your destruction, unbeliever, have already been set in motion. The ambassador has been sent.

The method of your destruction is already in place, and you're hanging as a thread by a thread over the precipice of hell, and God in his mercy holds you out of it. And there's not one here tonight can answer what stops God from dropping you into hell, but his mercy, his mercy. Not only has God resolved and set in motion what to do, but God emphatically identifies himself as the enemy of the ungodly.

And notice that God identifies himself with the nations here. He said, Arise ye, and let us arise. Now God is using the nations right about Eden to destroy Eden, but he's identifying himself with these nations in their destruction, and he's saying, I am arising with you, because I have instigated and stirred up you to arise, and I am identifying you with you.

He is identifying himself then as the enemy of the ungodly. It's not merely the nations that is speaking here. This is the words of the messenger, and it identifies God, the God of heaven, with those who are against Eden.

Little did the Edomites know that included in the number of their enemies, as the nations came upon them, and as they looked down from Mount Seir on the horizon, they could see the nations and their banners coming towards Eden. Little did they think that God in essence was among those armies in their destruction. It was then, it was, nothing their wisdom or prudence could prevent, because Eden was in confrontation with the Almighty.

In Micah chapter 4 verses 11 and 12, the Lord declares that he is against Samaria and Jerusalem, and he says, Now also many nations are gathered together against thee, that saith, Let her be defiled, and let her eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel, for he shall gather them as the sheaves of the floor. Samaria and Jerusalem, the Lord did exactly the same thing.

He went among the nations with them to the destruction of Jerusalem and Samaria, and the Lord says, They knew not the thoughts of the Lord. They didn't know that he was among them. This resolution therefore that the messenger took to the nations to arise against Eden was a resounding one.

It had its genesis in heaven. It echoed around the nations until Eden was laid waste. My friend, your destruction tonight is an unbeliever.

As the words of Psalm 68 verse 1, Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, let them also that hate him flee before him. Your destruction tonight has its genesis in heaven. It has reverberated and resounded around this earth, and it will echo until you are forever in the flames of God's eternal hell.

That is the judgment predicted on the ungodly. We have heard a rumor from the Lord. An ambassador hath been sent among the heathen.

Let us arise, arise ye, let us arise up against her in battle. I trust tonight that you will, in answer to Isaiah's prophecy, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed, that you might believe what we have heard tonight. And that you might believe what you have heard tonight, that it might go beyond your ears and enter into your heart.

Let's bow in prayer.

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