

The Books of Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 1: The Pride of Edom Brought Low

Obadiah 1-21

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson establishes two truths that run through all three of these prophets. First, God is the sovereign Judge of the nations, not merely of Israel. He sees what every people and every person does, He measures justice exactly (“as you have done, it shall be done to you”), and human pride cannot put anyone beyond His reach. Second, the closing promise that “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” must be handled carefully. This is not a prediction of a future earthly, political restoration of national Israel or a coming thousand-year reign. It is the assured triumph of God’s reign, fulfilled in Christ and established in His church, the kingdom that the God of heaven set up and which shall never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Acts 2; Colossians 1:13). Help your class hear the prophets as pointing forward to Christ, not to modern political maps.

Guard against a reading that lets us merely enjoy Edom’s downfall. The book is a mirror. Edom’s signature sin, gloating over a brother’s trouble, is a temptation in every human heart, and the surest way to miss Obadiah is to read it with a faint sense of superiority over those terrible Edomites. The pride Obadiah condemns is often quiet, respectable, and religious.

This passage was never meant only to inform us about an ancient grudge. It aims at the formation of the student. Obadiah confronts the pride that whispers “who can bring me down,” the self-sufficiency that forgets God, and the secret satisfaction we take in others’ failures. Teach toward repentance and humility, and toward a hope that rests not in our own fortresses but in the unshakable reign of Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

The vision opens with God declaring that He has made Edom “small among the nations” and that they will be “utterly despised” (vv. 1-2). What does it tell us about God that He sets Himself against national pride and arrogance, and how does this opening set the tone for everything that follows?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open by setting the scene, because the geography preaches. Edom lived in the high red rock country south of the Dead Sea, in cliff fortresses like the later city of Petra, carved into stone and reached through narrow gorges. They felt invincible. God’s first word is to puncture that illusion: “I will make you small among the nations; you shall be utterly despised” (vv. 1-2). The God who

speaks here is not a tribal deity rooting for one team; He is the Lord of all nations who opposes the proud wherever they are found.

Stress that this is a vision, a word God has caused to be heard among the nations (v. 1). The judgment is not Israel's wishful thinking; it is the verdict of heaven. This matters for the whole study: these three books present God as the universal Judge whose justice reaches Edom, Nineveh, and Judah alike.

Draw out the theme that God sets Himself against arrogance as such. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 both quote that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Edom is a case study in a principle that touches every life. The opening verses establish that the rest of the book is the unfolding of what happens when a proud people meets a holy God.

Help the class feel the tone. This is courtroom language, sober and certain. It is not God losing His temper; it is God rendering a just verdict. That steadiness will matter when you reach the Day of the Lord later in the book.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God is the sovereign Judge of all nations, not only of His covenant people.
- God actively opposes pride and arrogance (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).
- Human security apart from God is an illusion, however high the fortress.
- God's judgments are just verdicts, not fits of temper.
- The certainty of God's word stands over every nation's self-confidence.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God single out pride for such direct opposition? What is it about pride that is so dangerous to the soul?
- How does it change our view of current events to remember that God judges nations, not just individuals?
- Where do we see the modern equivalent of Edom's cliff fortresses, the things that make people feel untouchable?

Question 2

Student Question:

Edom said in their heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" (v. 3). Where are you most tempted to feel self-sufficient and untouchable, quietly assuming you have your life secured without much need of God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the first self-examining question, and it presses Edom's boast ("who will bring me down to the ground?") into the student's own heart. The aim is not vague guilt but honest recognition.

Most of us do not say such things out loud, yet we live as functional self-sufficients, planning as though God were optional and our security were our own achievement.

Help students locate the specific arenas where this shows up: finances, health, reputation, competence at work, even spiritual track record. Pride rarely announces itself; it hides inside ordinary confidence. The question “where do I feel untouchable?” often surfaces exactly where our deepest idols live.

Keep the tone pastoral. The goal is not to shame people for having accomplishments or stability, but to expose the quiet shift from gratitude (“all I have is a gift”) to entitlement (“I built this and no one can take it”). James 4:13–16 is a perfect companion text here.

Move toward something concrete. Invite each person to name one area where they have been leaning on their own strength, and to turn it back into dependence on God, perhaps through a specific prayer of surrender this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Self-sufficiency is practical pride, living as though we do not need God.
- Pride hides inside ordinary confidence and competence.
- All that we have is received as a gift, not achieved as a right (1 Corinthians 4:7).
- Boasting about tomorrow ignores our dependence on God (James 4:13–16).
- Humility begins with honest self-examination before God.

Discussion Prompts

- In what area of life are you most tempted to feel that you have things handled on your own?
- What is the difference between healthy confidence and the pride God opposes?
- What would it look like, this week, to return one area of self-reliance back to God in prayer?

Question 3

Student Question:

God says the pride of Edom’s heart has “deceived” them (v. 3), and that even though they soar like an eagle and nest among the stars, He will bring them down (v. 4). How does pride deceive a person, and why is no height of human achievement or security actually beyond God’s reach?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 3–4 expose the mechanism of pride: “The pride of your heart has deceived you.” Pride is not just a sin; it is a liar. It tells us we are higher, safer, and more deserving than we are. Edom soared “like an eagle” and set its nest “among the stars,” and still God says, “from there I will bring you down.”

Help the class see how deception works. Pride distorts our perception of ourselves (we overestimate our strength), of others (we underestimate their worth), and of God (we forget He is there). Every proud fall in Scripture, from Babel to Nebuchadnezzar to Herod in Acts 12, follows this pattern.

Underline the reach of God's hand. There is no height (achievement, wealth, status) so high that it escapes His authority. This is sobering for the proud and deeply comforting for the oppressed, who often watch arrogance climb without consequence. God says the climb does not change the outcome.

Connect to Christ, who is the great reversal of Edom. Where Edom exalted itself and was brought low, Jesus humbled Himself and was exalted (Philippians 2:5–11). The way up, in God's kingdom, is down.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Pride deceives us about ourselves, others, and God.
- No human height places anyone beyond God's authority.
- God's pattern is to bring down the self-exalted (Luke 14:11).
- The way up in God's kingdom is the way of humility (Philippians 2:5–11).
- Self-deception is one of pride's most dangerous effects.

Discussion Prompts

- How specifically does pride distort the way we see ourselves and others?
- Why is it comforting, not just frightening, that nothing is beyond God's reach?
- How does the humility of Jesus stand as the opposite of Edom's arrogance?

Question 4

Student Question:

Verse 4 pictures Edom nesting "among the stars," only to be brought down by God. What is one "high place" of accomplishment, reputation, or self-reliance where you would do well to remember that everything you have is held in God's hand?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes Edom's "among the stars" and turns it on the student. Everyone has some high place: a credential, a savings account, a body that has always cooperated, a marriage that looks solid, a reputation carefully maintained. None of these are evil. The danger is treating them as load-bearing walls for our security instead of gifts held in an open hand.

Encourage specificity. Vague humility is easy and useless. Ask people to name the one thing they would be most shaken to lose, because that is often where their trust quietly resides.

Offer the reframe of stewardship. Everything we have is on loan from God for a time. Holding our “high places” loosely is not anxiety; it is freedom. We can enjoy good gifts without clutching them as if they were ours to guarantee.

Point toward gratitude as the antidote to entitlement. The person who remembers that every good thing is a gift is far less likely to gloat over those who have less, which sets up the next movement of the book.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Good gifts become idols when we treat them as our security.
- Stewardship means holding God’s gifts in an open hand.
- Gratitude is the antidote to entitlement.
- What we most fear losing often reveals where we truly trust.
- Freedom comes from trusting God rather than clutching gifts.

Discussion Prompts

- What is the one thing you would be most shaken to lose, and what does that reveal?
- How does seeing your blessings as gifts on loan change the way you hold them?
- How can gratitude protect us from looking down on those who have less?

Question 5

Student Question:

Edom is condemned not only for what they did but for what they did to family: “because of the violence done to your brother Jacob” (v. 10). Why does God take the betrayal of a brother so seriously, and what does this reveal about His concern for how we treat those bound to us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 10 names the heart of Edom’s guilt: “because of the violence done to your brother Jacob.” The word “brother” is deliberate. Edom and Israel were not strangers; they were family, descended from twin brothers. The old rivalry of Esau and Jacob had calcified into national hatred, and when Judah fell, Edom felt only satisfaction.

Stress that betrayal within a family or covenant community is treated with special seriousness throughout Scripture. To wound those bound to us by blood or by faith is to violate a sacred bond. This anticipates the New Testament’s strong language about loving the brethren (1 John 3:15–17).

Help the class apply this to the household of faith. The church is a family. Gossip, rivalry, schadenfreude, and quiet delight when a brother or sister stumbles are the Edom-spirit reappearing among God’s people. Edom’s sin is not safely ancient; it can wear a pew.

Note God's tenderness underneath the verdict. He calls Judah "your brother Jacob" from Edom's side, naming the relationship Edom despised. God honors the bonds we break. That is part of why He judges their violation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Betrayal of family and covenant bonds is especially grievous to God.
- The church is a family; how we treat one another matters to God.
- Hatred of a brother is spiritually serious (1 John 3:15).
- Gloating over a fellow believer's fall is the Edom-spirit among us.
- God honors the very bonds that the proud despise.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God treat the betrayal of a brother more severely than other wrongs?
- Where can the Edom-spirit show up inside the church family today?
- How should remembering that fellow Christians are family reshape our reactions to their failures?

Question 6

Student Question:

Verses 11–14 describe Edom standing aloof, gloating, looting, and even handing over survivors on the day of Judah's disaster. Which of these responses to another person's trouble (standing aloof, quietly gloating, taking advantage, or making things worse) do you most need to guard your own heart against?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verses 11–14 are a slow-motion replay of Edom's behavior on the day of Judah's disaster, and they form a ladder of escalating sin. Edom stood aloof (v. 11), gloated and rejoiced (v. 12), entered the gates to loot (v. 13), and finally stood at the crossroads to cut down fugitives and hand survivors over to the enemy (v. 14). Passive indifference slid into active cruelty.

Help the class see the progression, because it is the progression of our own hearts. Sin against a neighbor often begins with simply doing nothing. Standing aloof feels innocent, but it is the first rung. From there it is a short climb to quiet satisfaction, then to taking advantage, then to active harm.

Apply this honestly. Most of us are not tempted to literal violence, but we know the milder rungs well: scrolling past someone's pain, feeling a flicker of pleasure at a rival's setback, repeating a juicy report, declining to help when helping would cost us. Edom shows where that road leads if unchecked.

Set up the turn. Verse 15 is about to announce that all of this returns on the doer's own head. The way we respond to others' trouble is not morally neutral; it is being recorded.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Sin against others often begins with passive indifference.
- Standing aloof from a neighbor's trouble is not innocent.
- There is a downward ladder from indifference to cruelty.
- Quiet gloating is a real and serious sin of the heart.
- How we respond to others' suffering reveals our character.

Discussion Prompts

- Which rung of Edom's ladder (aloofness, gloating, taking advantage, harm) do you most need to watch?
- Why is doing nothing in the face of another's trouble not as harmless as it feels?
- How can we train ourselves to move toward people in trouble rather than away?

Question 7

Student Question:

At the center of the book stands a sober principle: "As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head" (v. 15). How does this truth about reaping what we sow run throughout Scripture, and how does it function as both a warning and a comfort?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 15 is the hinge of the book: "As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." This is the law of the harvest, stated as plainly as anywhere in Scripture. Edom dealt out gloating and looting, and the same measure would be measured back to them.

Show how widely this principle runs: Galatians 6:7 (a man reaps what he sows), Matthew 7:2 (with the measure you use it will be measured to you), Luke 6:38. It is not a mechanical karma; it is the moral order of a universe governed by a just God. He is not mocked.

Handle the comfort side as well as the warning. For victims of injustice, this verse is good news: God keeps the books, and evil does not get the last word. We do not have to take vengeance into our own hands precisely because God will set things right (Romans 12:19).

Be careful not to flatten this into a promise that every wrong is repaid visibly in this life. The full settling of accounts belongs to the Day of the Lord, which the next question takes up. The principle is certain even when the timing is not immediate.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We reap what we sow; God's moral order is reliable (Galatians 6:7).
- The measure we use will be measured back to us (Matthew 7:2).
- Divine justice frees us from the need for personal vengeance (Romans 12:19).
- God keeps accurate books even when justice is not immediate.
- This principle is both a warning to the proud and a comfort to the wronged.

Discussion Prompts

- How is "your deeds shall return on your own head" both a warning and a comfort?
- How does trusting God's justice free us from the need to get even?
- Why is it important that this principle is not always settled visibly in this life?

Question 8

Student Question:

Obadiah warns about "the day of the Lord" drawing near on all the nations (v. 15). How does living with an awareness that God will one day call every person and nation to account reshape the way you treat people now, especially those who cannot pay you back?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question takes "the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations" (v. 15) and asks what difference it makes now. The day of the Lord is a recurring prophetic theme: a coming time when God acts decisively to judge sin and vindicate His purposes. For Edom it was bad news; for the humble it is hope.

Help the class connect future accountability to present behavior. If God will one day call every nation and person to account, then the people who can do nothing for us, and even the people we resent, are people God watches us treat. How we live in the meantime is being seen.

Draw the New Testament line. The day of the Lord ultimately points to the final judgment through Christ (Acts 17:31; 2 Peter 3:10–13). Peter draws the same practical conclusion: since these things are coming, "what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?"

Keep it formational, not merely fearful. Living before the face of a God who sees produces a particular kind of person: humble, kind to the powerless, slow to gloat, quick to help. The doctrine is meant to shape a life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The day of the Lord is God's decisive intervention to judge and to vindicate.
- Future accountability should shape present conduct (2 Peter 3:11).
- God ultimately judges the world through Christ (Acts 17:31).
- How we treat the powerless is seen and remembered by God.

- Awareness of judgment produces humility and kindness, not just fear.

Discussion Prompts

- How does knowing that God will judge all things change how you treat people who cannot repay you?
- What kind of person does living before the face of God tend to produce?
- How does Peter connect the coming day of the Lord with holy living (2 Peter 3:11)?

Question 9

Student Question:

The book ends with a stunning reversal: “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (v. 21). Edom trusted in fortresses and gloated over a fallen city, but the last word belongs to God’s reign, not to human empires. How is this promise fulfilled in Christ and His church rather than in any earthly, political kingdom, and why does that distinction matter for how we read the prophets?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it lands on the book’s final words: “and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (v. 21). After all the judgment, Obadiah ends not with Edom but with God’s reign. The proud fortresses fall; the kingdom of God stands. The teacher’s task is to fix the meaning of that kingdom rightly.

Address the premillennial and dispensational misreading directly but graciously. The restoration language in the prophets (Israel possessing the land, the kingdom established) is not a forecast of a future earthly, political nation-state or a literal thousand-year reign centered on national Israel. Daniel 2:44 already told us the God of heaven would set up a kingdom in the days of the Roman emperors that would never be destroyed. Jesus announced that kingdom as at hand (Mark 1:14–15), said some standing there would see it come with power (Mark 9:1), and it was established when the church began at Pentecost (Acts 2; Colossians 1:13).

So Obadiah’s promise is fulfilled in Christ and His church, the spiritual Israel made up of all who belong to Christ by faith and obedience (Galatians 3:26–29). Christ reigns now from the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33–36; 1 Corinthians 15:24–25). The hope of God’s people is not a rebuilt political kingdom but a present and eternal reign of Christ that no empire can topple.

Explain why this matters pastorally. If we pin our hope on earthly kingdoms and political outcomes, we will ride an endless roller coaster of fear and triumph. If our hope is the unshakable reign of Christ, we can be steady and humble even when the Edoms of the world seem to be winning. The last word in history is not human pride; it is God on the throne.

Help the class feel the sweep: the book that began with one proud nation ends with the King of all nations. That is the trajectory of the whole Bible, and it is exactly where the gospel lands.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- “The kingdom shall be the Lord’s” is fulfilled in Christ and His church, not a future political Israel.
- The kingdom of God was established at Pentecost (Daniel 2:44; Mark 9:1; Acts 2).
- Christ reigns now from the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33–36).
- Premillennialism and dispensationalism misread prophetic restoration language.
- The church is the spiritual Israel, made of all who belong to Christ (Galatians 3:26–29).
- Our hope rests on Christ’s unshakable reign, not on earthly kingdoms.
- The whole book moves from human pride to the reign of God.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to say Obadiah’s kingdom promise is fulfilled in Christ and His church?
- Why is it important not to read these prophecies as predicting a future political kingdom?
- How does resting your hope on Christ’s present reign steady you when the proud seem to win?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole of Obadiah, from Edom’s proud security to the Lord’s unshakable kingdom. Name one specific way Jesus is using this small book to form humility in you, to soften any gloating in your heart, and to anchor your hope in His reign rather than in anything you could build for yourself.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question asks the student to look back across the whole book and name one specific way Christ is forming them through it. Resist letting this stay general. Push for a sentence each person could actually write down.

Gather the threads: the danger of pride and self-sufficiency, the seriousness of gloating over a brother, the certainty that we reap what we sow, and the unshakable hope of God’s reign in Christ. Each of these is a place where the Spirit reshapes a life.

Help different people land in different places. For one, the lesson is repenting of a secret satisfaction at someone’s failure. For another, it is loosening their grip on a “high place” of security. For another, it is trading anxiety about the world’s chaos for confidence in Christ’s reign.

Close in prayer that moves from Edom’s mirror to Christ’s likeness, asking God to grow humility, mercy toward fallen brothers, and a hope anchored in the kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine transformation is specific, not vague.
- Humility, mercy, and hope are the chief graces this book forms.
- The Spirit applies the same text differently to different hearts.
- Christ is both the model of humility and the King of the unshakable kingdom.
- Self-examination should end in prayer and concrete change.

Discussion Prompts

- Name one specific way Christ is forming humility or mercy in you through Obadiah.
- Which threat does this book expose most in your life: pride, gloating, or misplaced hope?
- What is one concrete change you will make this week in response to this lesson?