

Obadiah

Jehovah's discrimination between Jacob and Esau,
between the resulting nations of Israel and Edom,
and between the Kingdom of God and the World

He burned Edom to the ground for clapping at the wrong time (Ps 137:7).

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.”

Obadiah 1:1-2

“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.”

Obadiah 1:10

“But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

Obadiah 1:17

“And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.”

Obadiah 1:21

“I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.”

Jeremiah 49:14-15

“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

Malachi 1:1-5

Introduction:

1. Here is the shortest book of the Old Testament; but every word of God is pure, and we must live by each one.
2. There are a number of important things we can learn by studying this shortest book of the Old Testament.
 - a. The importance of context large and small in understanding the full setting of an Old Testament prophet.
 - b. The character of our God and His dealings with and for His people and against their enemies is glorious!
 - c. There are spiritual fulfillments past the natural fulfillments that include the Gentiles, New Testament, etc.
3. There are many other prophecies more or less similar to the one in Obadiah of God's judgment against Edom (Ps 60:1-12; 83:1-18; 108:1-13; 137:1-9; Is 34:5-8; 63:1-4; Jer 9:25-26; 27:21; 49:7-22; Lam 4:21-22; Ezek 25:8-14; 32:29; 35:15; 36:5; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 1:6-12; 9:11-15; Mal 1:1-5).
4. It is remarkable that Jeremiah 49:7-22 includes the same sentiments, but also the same words and verses!

Who is Obadiah?

- A. Obadiah was a prophet of God sent with a vision from the LORD Jehovah against Edom (1:1).
- B. We know nothing for certain about Obadiah, except he was a prophet of God by virtue of this book.
- C. His Hebrew name means the “servant of the LORD,” indicated by *abad*, to serve, and *iah*, Jehovah.

- D. We know nothing more about this man, and anything beyond the first sentence is mere speculation.
- E. If God wanted us to know more about Obadiah, He would have told us. All profitable is revealed.
- F. The book was part of the Jewish canon and received in all ages as part of the Holy Scriptures.

Who is Edom?

- A. God told Rebekah before she gave birth to Jacob and Esau that Esau would serve Jacob (Gen 25:23).
- B. Edom is Esau, which he was called after buying Jacob's red pottage with his birthright (Gen 25:30).
- C. Esau was therefore the father of the Edomites, which was quite a nation (Genesis 36:1,8,9,19,43).
- D. Mount Seir of the Horites is Edom, a mountainous area God gave Esau for his family's possession (Gen 14:6; 32:3; 36:8,20,30; Deut 2:12; Josh 24:4; Judges 5:4; II Chron 25:14; Ezek 35:15).
- E. Idumea, also meaning red, is Edom (Isaiah 34:5-6; Ezekiel 35:15; 36:5).
- F. Edom had major cities, by which it was also addressed – Bozrah (Is 34:6; 63:1; Jer 49:22), Teman (Jer 49:7,20; Ezek 25:13; Amos 1:12), Dedan (Jer 49:8; Ezek 25:13), and Selah (II Kgs 14:7).
- G. Their national history may be summarized briefly to assist understanding their relationship to Israel.
 1. Esau and his eleven sons, the dukes of Edom, took the land of Seir of the Horites (Gen 36:1-43).
 2. Israel tried to pass through Edom on the way to Canaan, but they were rejected (Num 20:14-21).
 3. Balaam the prophet prophesied of both David and Jesus Christ defeating Edom (Num 24:15-19).
 4. They could be received into the congregation after only three generations (Deuteronomy 23:3-8).
 5. For over 400 years, the period of the judges, there is no mention of Edom or the Edomites.
 6. King Saul, Israel's first king, at the height of his power, defeated them in battle (I Samuel 14:47).
 7. About forty years later, David defeated them more fully (II Samuel 8:13-14; I Chron 18:12-13).
 8. God raised up Hadad the Edomite to be an adversary to Solomon for his sins (I Kings 11:14-22).
 9. Judah had put deputies over the land of Edom in place of their kings since David (I Kings 22:47).
 10. During Jehoshaphat's reign, the Edomites tried to invade, but failed (II Chronicles 20:22-23).
 11. During Jehoram's wicked reign, though he defeated them once, they rebelled (II Chron 21:8-10).
 12. During Amaziah's reign, God blessed Judah to defeat the Edomites (II Chr 25:1-13; II Kgs 14:7).
 13. They were idolaters that God hated, and even this was a thorn in Israel's side (II Chr 25:14-20).
 14. During Ahaz's reign, the Edomites invaded Judah and took captives away (II Chron 28:16-17).
 15. They joined with Nebuchadnezzar in the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps 137:7-9; Ezek 25:8-14).
 16. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over them in God's general disposition of the nations (Jeremiah 27:1-11).
 17. While Judah was desolate during the captivity, Nabathian Arabs oppressed Edom (I Chr 1:29).
 18. After the return of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel, the Jews again became a mighty nation.
 19. During the Greek period, the Maccabees crushed the Edomites and incorporated them into Israel.
 20. Herod the Great, an appointee of the Roman Senate as King of Judea, was an Idumean by birth.
 21. Following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, there is little to nothing heard of Edom again.

What is the prophecy?

- A. It is a singular denunciation of Edom for treachery against Israel, with the Lord's kingdom winning!
- B. It is a warning of God's long memory and great indignation against those who touch His people.
- C. It is a promise of the eventual victory, success, and prosperity of the kingdom of God over enemies.
- D. God burned Edom down for clapping at the wrong time – when He chastened His beloved Jews.
- E. They celebrated God chastening the Jews with, *Rase it! Rase it!* (Ps 137:7). They should not have.

When was the prophecy?

- A. There is much controversy surrounding the date of this prophecy, but the confusion is not necessary.
- B. Psalm 137 closely connects the very issue of this prophecy with the captivity of Judah by Babylon.
- C. Jeremiah, a prophet associated with the Babylonian captivity, uses identical words (Jer 49:7-22).
- D. Ezekiel, a prophet after the destruction of Jerusalem, describes Edom's destruction (Ezek 25:12-14).
- E. The prophecy speaks in particular terms about the return of Jews to their possession – from Babylon.

- F. Edom had treacherously appreciated, celebrated, and aided the destruction of Jerusalem, for which God would punish them severely.

Where was the prophecy?

- A. Edom, or Idumea, or Mount Seir, was 100 miles long and 20 wide, along the eastern side of the Arabah, from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the northern end of the Gulf of Elath, or Aqaba.
- B. It was a very mountainous country, where the people lived in caves and mountain strongholds, and felt themselves quite invincible to typical military assault.
- C. Edom had several major cities, by which it is called in Scripture – Bozrah (Is 34:6; 63:1; Jer 49:22) and Teman (Jer 49:7,20; Ezek 25:13; Amos 1:12) and Dedan (Jer 49:8; Ezek 25:13).
- D. They had ports on the Gulf of Elath for the Red Sea and Indian Ocean (I Kings 9:26; II Chron 8:17).
- E. The Kings' Highway ran through their country, from Egypt to Damascus, which provided trade.

Why was the prophecy?

- A. Before the children were born, God had chosen Jacob and rejected Esau (Mal 1:1-5; Rom 9:6-16).
- B. From the earliest hatred of Esau for Jacob, the two nations had fought and warred against each other.
- C. When Israel tried to pass through Edom on the way to Canaan, they were rejected (Num 20:14-21).
- D. The prophecy was to comfort the Jews with Edom's vengeful destruction and their final victory.

The Vision of Obadiah (1-2)

- A. The LORD GOD speaks and things happen. Obadiah communicated news from heaven about Edom.
- B. A rumor from the LORD is better than facts, for He will surely bring it to pass (Is 37:32; Rom 4:17).
- C. God purposed to raise up enemies against Edom from among heathen nations – Babylon and others.
- D. When nations choose to go to war at anytime for any reason, God caused it (Is 10:5-15; Rev 17:17).
- E. The ambassador that brings thoughts of war may be angels or God's hand (Dan 10:20; Prov 21:1).
- F. God mocked Edom for their insignificance among the nations and His disdain for them (Mal 1:1-5).
- G. The enemies of God and His people may appear to be something, but they are nothing (Ps 37:34-38).

The Certain Destruction of Edom (3-9)

- A. God mocked the confidence that Edom put in their mountain strongholds, caves, and forts (3-4).
- B. There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord: He will win (Proverbs 21:30).
- C. Contrary to the ordinary methods of thieves, God would go beyond in His desolation of Edom (5-6).
- D. He promised to confound and confuse confederations and counsel to bring them to total ruin (7-9).
 - 1. It was by these confederacies that they were moved out of their strongholds to the borders.
 - 2. They were clear friends with Babylon at the destruction of Jerusalem, which then ruled them.
 - 3. The best friends and confederates in profiting from the king's highway were Nebaiothean Arabs.
 - 4. These "friends," shortly after Jerusalem's fall, drove the Edomites from Seir into southern Judah.
 - 5. Check I Chronicles 1:29 for Nebaioth, one of the sons of Ishmael, one of the tribes of Arabs.

The Cause of their Destruction (10-16)

- A. God promised perpetual destruction and shame for Edom's violence against Israel and Judah (10).
 - 1. Violence against Jacob, metonymy for Israel, had occurred for nearly 1500 years. See above.
 - 2. Jacob and Esau were brothers; Edom and Israel were brothers; there should have been mercy.
 - 3. But the principal issue here is the Babylonian taking of Jerusalem. Read Psalm 137 carefully.
- B. The Edomites stood on the side of the strangers that came up against Jerusalem and Judah (11).
- C. The Edomites then viewed the war, rejoiced at Judah's defeat, and then spoke proudly about it (12).
- D. The Edomites then took advantage of Judah's calamity and took of their things as their own (13).
- E. The Edomites also stood in the way to capture and rob escapees and turn them over to Babylon (14).

- F. Obadiah warned Edom and the other nations in Judah's vicinity of judgment coming on them (15).
 1. Consider God's great jealousy for His land, even the valleys and hills of His land (Eze 36:1-15)!
 2. God had raised up His servant, Nebuchadnezzar, to rule over all of them (Jeremiah 27:1-11).
 3. And the Nabathian Arabs became a horrible scourge shortly thereafter, driving them from Seir.
- G. Other heathen nations would consume Edom as if they were nothing; they would cease to exist (16).

The Victory of the Lord and Israel (17-21)

- A. When we come to the restorative promises of Israel and Judah, we should remember two things.
 1. There is usually a literal, natural fulfillment that can be ascertained from Scripture or history.
 2. There is often a figurative, spiritual fulfillment that can be ascertained from Scripture or history.
- B. God did restore Judah and some of the ten tribes to the land of Israel under several great leaders.
 1. Are you at least vaguely familiar with Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua the high priest?
 2. The city of Jerusalem was rebuilt, and the temple of the Lord was rebuilt, even in hard times.
- C. God delivered Jews from Babylon to reclaim their possessions and set holiness in Mount Zion (17).
- D. The house of Jacob waxed greater and greater until they consumed the house of Esau (18). Amen!
- E. God would expand Israel's borders once again to encompass much of their former territories (19).
 1. They of the south, which was Judah, would possess the mount of Esau, the land of Edom.
 2. They of the plain, which was other tribes, would possess the Philistine lands in their recovery.
 3. Israel would again possess the fields of Ephraim, Samaria, and even Gilead, over Jordan.
- F. The recovered Israelites, who were taken 130 years before the Jews, would reclaim Canaan; and the recovered Jews, who had spent 70 years in Babylon, would take the cities of the south again (20).
 1. Zarephath is a very northern city, midway between Tyre and Sidon, in what had been Phoenicia.
 2. Captive Jews would return from Sepharad, an unknown place of deportation by Nebuchadnezzar.
- G. God would raise up saviors, mighty men of valor that feared God, who would defeat Esau (21).
 1. We may consider those mentioned: Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and their descendants.
 2. We may also consider John Hyrcanus and the Maccabees, who forced the Edomites out of Seir.
 3. The Lord Himself would have the final victory, and the kingdom ruling would be the Lord's.
- H. However, there is more to be seen of a spiritual fulfillment that can be gathered from these words.
 1. When we read of Mount Zion, we must also remember the heavenly city (Heb 12:22; Rev 14:1).
 2. When we read of the Lord's kingdom, we must remember Christ's kingdom (Dan 2:44; Mat 3:2).
 3. And by looking around, nearby in O.T. location, we find Amos concluding with a promise about Edom that is to be understood very differently from a militaristic victory (Amos 9:11-15).
 4. James, presiding over the council at Jerusalem, applied this prophecy to the conversion of Gentiles and the building again of the house of David in a spiritual sense (Acts 15:16-17). Glory!
 5. Did Edom, or Idumea, participate in building again Mount Zion in holiness (Mark 3:8)? Glory!
 6. Balaam also saw two phases of God raising up a Savior to defeat Edom (Num 24:17-19). Glory!

Application for Saints in the 21st Century

- A. God is sovereign over nations. He puts down one and lifts up another, but always for His people. There is no reason for you to fear, worry about, or even inquire into the political schemes or conspiracies at the governmental level, for there is a whole spirit world above them (Dan 10:20).
- B. God has distinguishing love for His people and perpetual hatred for His enemies, and the differences God makes He expects you to observe and appreciate (Malachi 1:1-5; Isaiah 43:3-4).
- C. There is a reward for the righteous, for the Lord will never forsake His own (Psalm 58:1-11; Mal 3:16-18); though He may chasten them, it is far different from their condemnation (I Cor 11:29-32).
- D. There is revenge for the righteous, for the Lord will never forget their suffering: when the Lord says vengeance is His and He will repay, believe Him! (Ex 2:23-25; 12:35-36; 17:14-16; Num 24:20; Deut 25:17-19; I Sam 15:1-3; Matt 23:34-36; II Thess 1:5-6; Rev 6:9-11).

- E. There are several indirect or minor lessons that we may also take from a study of Obadiah.
1. You had better not touch one of God's anointed, both His people and His servants (Ps 105:15).
 2. Pride in your abilities, or defenses, or secret sins will not amount to anything when God judges.
 3. Once you take the wrong side, what will keep you from going all the way into sin (Prov 13:20).
 4. God keeps His word. He is ever faithful. You can trust every word in your King James Bibles.
 5. Even when God chastens you for your sins, He is still protecting you and remembering enemies.

For Further Study:

1. Exposition of Malachi 1 (especially lesson #1) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/malachi-1.pdf>
2. Exposition of Romans 9:10-13 ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/romans-nine.pdf>.
3. God's Distinguishing Love ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/distinguishing-love-of-god.pdf>.
4. I Gave Egypt for thy Ransom ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/egypt-for-thy-ransom.pdf>.
5. Proverb Commentary of 21:18 ... http://www.letgodbetrue.com/proverbs/commentaries/21_18.php.
6. Dispensational Abuse of Acts 15:13-16 (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/dispensationalists-best-verse.pdf>.
7. The Maccabees (slides) ... <http://www.letgodbetrue.com/pdf/maccabees.pdf>.