

OBADIAH 1

Looking into the Future through the Eyes of a Prophet

Outline

The prophecy of Obadiah is naturally divided into three sections.

- The Ruin of Edom
Obadiah 1:1-9
- The Cause of the Ruin of the Edomites
Obadiah 1:10-16
- The Kingdom of the Lord Established
Obadiah 1:17-21

Introduction

The writing of Obadiah concerns a single prophecy against Edom because of their treatment of the people of God. The prophecy begins with a pronouncement of God's determination to destroy the Edomites who were relying upon the safety of their rocky mountains for national security (Obadiah 1:1-9).

A further cause of the impending Divine judgment was the way the Edomites had united with the enemies of Judah to plunder Jerusalem (Obadiah 1:10-24). Not only Edom but also her allied nations will know Divine wrath in the Day of the Lord (Obadiah 1:15,16).

However, in the midst of all the carnage, some will be delivered upon Mt. Zion and the mountain will be holy. In the Day of the Lord there would be a reversal of fortune. The house of Jacob was to take possession of the settlement of the Gentiles and destroy the Edomites who had become the enemies of God's

people while expanding its own territory on all sides (Obadiah 1:17-19).

The position of the nation of Judah, which has been scattered in heathen lands, will return to an enlarged homeland (Obadiah 1:20). Upon Mt. Zion will saviours arise to judge Edom; then the kingdoms of this world will be the kingdoms of the Lords (Obadiah 1:21).

In the judgment upon Edom there is to be found the principle that all nations hostile to God and or to God's people (i.e., the church) will be overthrown. Three great themes emerge.

- The Church will be vindicated.
- The Gentiles will be judged.
- The glory of God will be realized.

1 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.

1:1 The date of the Vision. The timing of Obadiah is uncertain. The oracle has been attributed to the days of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. However, it should not be limited to this period for Jerusalem was taken and plundered by its enemies several times before its final fall in 586 BC.

- Jerusalem was plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt in the fifth year of Rehoboam who reigned from c. 931 – 913 BC (1 Kings 14:25,26; 2 Chron. 12:2).

- The Philistines and Arabians plundered Jerusalem in the time of Jehoram who reigned 852 – 841 BC (2 Chron. 21:16,17).
- Jerusalem was plundered by the Israelite king Joash in the reign of Amaziah 796 to 767 BC (2 Kings 14:13,14; 2 Chron. 25:23,24).
- The Chaldeans plundered Jerusalem, again in the reign of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:10ff; 2 Chron. 36:10). c. 597 BC

The great Hebrew commentators of the Old Testament, Keil-Delitzsch, conclude that the best time period for the prophet Obadiah is when the Edomites, in the reign of King Jehoram (848-841 BC), threw off the Judean yoke of bondage (cf. 2 Kings 8:20-22; 2 Chron. 21:8-10) and then planned a great massacre upon the citizens of Judah who were in their land at the time (cf. Joel 3:19 with Amos 1:11). Edom would have had natural allies in their bloody work because the nation of Libnah also broke away from Judah at this time while the Philistines and Arabians penetrated victoriously into Judah (2 Kings 8:22; 2 Chron. 21:10).

According to 2 Chronicles 2:17, the combined forces of the Philistines and Arabians burst into the land, forced their way into Jerusalem, plundered the royal palaces, and carried away the children and wives of the king so that only the youngest son, Jehoahaz or Ahaziah, was left behind. In this raid, gold, silver, and jewels were taken from the Holy Temple (Joel 3:5). The vilest trade was made with the men and women of Judah who were sold as slaves and prostitutes (Joel 3:3,6).

The Phoenicians and the Edomites acted as the middlemen in this merchandising of flesh (cf. Amos 1:6-9 with Obadiah 1:10-14).

In all of this, the Edomites were not the enemies who conquered Jerusalem and plundered its treasures but simply accomplices or partners in crime who took advantage of the situation to profit.

1:1 **Obadiah.** The name Obadiah means "*servant or worshipper of Jehovah.*" It was a very common name in the ancient world. Obadiah was the name of a variety of individuals in the ancient world. Like so many of the prophets, little is known of Obadiah.

- Some think that Obadiah was a steward in the household of King Ahab (1 Kings 18:3).
- Some believe that Obadiah was a contemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos (8th century BC).
- Some believe that he lived at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC).

Really, it does not matter for the message is more important than the man.

1:1 In Obadiah 1:1 the word of the LORD came to the prophet announcing that Israel in general and Obadiah in particular had heard a report from the Lord concerning Edom. The report was simple and alarming. God had sent His ambassador to the nations of the earth to tell them that they should gather to wage war against Edom. Such a message would encourage the heart of Israel while causing concern for Edom. It was intended to.

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen [nations]: thou art greatly despised.

3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

1:2-3 The Lord threatens Edom with war because God is determined to reduce and to humble that proud nation which regarded itself as invincible due to its high and well fortified position (Obadiah 1:2-3). There is more than a mere threat in the prophetic words. There is Divine revelation. This will happen. God will humble Edom and the nation will be unable to avoid this fate despite her proud thoughts and self-conceit.

From this it is noted that nations do not have to be big and powerful to have inordinate pride. God deals with the small as well as the great.

Edom was a small nation but full of pride because of her strategic geographical position. The Edomites inhabited the mountains of Seir which are on the eastern side of the Arabah. This long range of mountains is made of might rocks of granite.

The area is not easily inhabited or passed through. Many natural and artificial caves can be found and used. Despite the difficulty of conquering those who inhabited these rocky cliffs, it would be done by the will of God.

4 Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

1:4

God hates unholy inordinate pride. Pride is what plunged the angels into sin (Isaiah 14). Someone has said that we are the closest to the devil when we are lifted up with pride. Ungodly pride is an exalted view of one's self. Ungodly pride holds all others in contempt.

- There is economic pride which breeds class envy.
- There is military pride which David manifested when he numbered Israel.
- There is intellectual pride of a superior intellect.
- There is political pride which can create wars in the name of nationalism illustrated in WW I.
- There is racial pride of whites against blacks.
- There is religious pride such as the Pharisees displayed.
- There is sexual pride reflected in the Playboy philosophy of hedonism.
- There is bodily pride illustrated in the muscle builders.
- There is oratorical pride.
- There is musical pride.
- There is artistic pride.
- There is literary pride.
- There is financial pride whereby individuals feel superior at their ability to make money.

Edom had so much pride that she was deceived and destroyed by it. Edom thought that she was secure in her defenses so she began to boast (Obadiah 1:3). God responded to Edom's boast with a divine promise, "*I will bring thee down.*"

The spiritual lesson is important. Men may trust in many things to get them to heaven such as good works, great deeds (etc.) but they will be brought low for God is at war with all who do not meet Him on gospel terms.

5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? If the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave *some* grapes?

1:4-5

Obadiah presents two cases of plundering to illustrate just how completely the enemies of Edom will destroy her.

The first illustration is that of thieves by night (Obadiah 1:5a). Thieves will come to steal what they can and then leave. However, when God moves the enemies of Edom against her, they shall be worse than thieves. They shall not cease to plunder until only garbage is left.

The second illustration of ultimate destruction is drawn from those who gather grapes. The gatherers select what they can and then leave. However, with Edom, those who come to gather her possessions, those who come to plunder her homes, will go beyond normal military boundaries. Valuable items that

have been hidden will be brought out into the open.

6 How are *the things* of Esau searched out! *How* are his hidden things sought up!

7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, *and* prevailed [fought] against thee; *they that eat* thy bread have laid a wound under thee: *there is none* understanding in him.

1:7 In verse 7 Obadiah declares the political friends of Edom would betray the nation. Edom had made treaties with the Ammonites and the Moabites. These nations took food supplies from Edom. They enjoyed free housing for their soldiers and they took pay as mercenaries. These nations were very respectful until the day came when it was to their advantage to attack Edom. The friendships of the world did not last; they never do.

The worst part is that these allied nations "*laid a wound*" under Edom. In other words, Edom rested upon the validity of her foreign treaties for comfort. However, beneath the political bed in which Edom lay there was the sword of death. The hand of betrayal was caressing Edom. It is far better to trust in the strength of the Lord and have His arms of love underneath us.

The fact is that the political rulers of Edom "*have no understanding*" or they would never had trusted their enemies to such an extent much like Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain foolishly trusted German Chancellor Adolf Hitler. By this misplaced trust it was certain WW II would begin.

8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise *men* out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

1:8 In the Day of Judgment the Lord declares that He will target the wise men of Edom. He will make the wisdom of men to become foolish. And the Lord will target the mighty men or the men of war in Teman (verse 9). Courage will fail them. The spiritual lessons must not be lost.

- The church must be careful not to make alliances with historical enemies such as the cults or those systems of religion that deny salvation is by grace alone through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 1:17).
- The heart must be guarded against unbiblical pride.
- The Lord needs to be glorified for the way He works on behalf of His people.
- The church must cultivate a sense of need and dependency upon the Lord and not upon the rich or powerful or the friends of this world.

9 And thy mighty *men*, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

10 For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.

1:10 Another specific reason for the judgment of Edom is enlarged upon in Obadiah 1:10-16. In addition to pride and self-conceit, the Edomites had hurt their "*brother*" in that they had helped to damage the kingdom of Judah. It was not a stranger that the Edomites took up their swords against but their own blood brother, their nearest relation. It was the covenanted people that the Edomites had hurt. Whatever faults the nation might have had, the Jews, as the church of the *Old Testament*, were still chosen by God. The Lord identifies Himself with His people even in their justified judgment. Therefore, "*shame*" shall come to cover the Edomites.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

1:12 The Edomites learned what they should have done by being told what they should not have done (Obadiah 1:12-14).

The Edomites should not have been happy when it was obvious that Judah was being disciplined by God (Obadiah 1:12). It is the nature of the heart to be happy when the people not liked begin to know adversity.

In spiritual relationships, the LORD has told His people to love their enemies and to pray for those who use and persecute them. The Lord does this because He is very interested in the reaction of His people to the actions of others. When Jerusalem was under siege, the Edomites looked upon the situation with pleasure and rejoiced over the pain of the children of Judea and boasted of their own position and privileges! They should not have done that.

13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity [disaster]; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity;

1:13 The Edomites should not have united with the enemies of Judah and taken advantage of Judah's weakened condition to exploit the people (Obadiah 1:13). Though the Edomites did not help in the initial conquest of the Jews, they did help to plunder the people and so became partners in sin. You do not build your happiness upon someone else's unhappiness. The Edomites were trying to build their happiness upon the misery and unhappiness of the Jews and so they compounded sin upon sin. That is the nature of evil. One inappropriate action always leads to a greater transgression unless it is confessed and forsaken.

14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.

1:14 From looking and rejoicing the Edomites moved to plundering and from there they grew bold enough to physically hurt their brethren (Obadiah 1:14). They did this by standing in the crossroads to cut off any escape route thereby making sure the Jews would be captured and butchered. Prisoners were taken so that the Edomites could ingratiate themselves with the enemies of the Jews.

When we read of such actions like this, when the Lord looks down and witnesses this type of behavior, two things happen.

First, there is a high degree of compassion for those who are being slaughtered without hope.

Second, there is a high degree of indignation towards those who could have helped but the milk of human kindness had dried up.

15 For the day of the LORD *is* near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

1:15 In His holy wrath, the Lord will deal with the Edomites by giving to them the same judgment they rejoiced and participated in towards the Jews (Obadiah 1:15).

Applying this concept to the church, God's people can take hope for the Lord will judge those who laugh at the church, rob the church, and try to destroy it directly or indirectly.

By way of personal application, Christians need to be reminded to guard their heart and tongues against their enemies.

- Christians must be careful not to look or consider with pleasure when they hear of their difficulties and misfortunes.
- Christians must be careful not to rejoice when the day of their judgment comes upon others.
- Christians must be careful not to speak proudly or self-righteously against others. One common form is to sit and judgment and says that God is through with such and such a place and people. I have always been amazed at who God is not through with.
- Christians must be careful not to join those who are inflicting verbal and physical pain upon those who are down. If the Lord sees Christians doing these things, then His wrath will be turned away from others and turned back upon them and they shall soon find themselves under the rod.

16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, *so* shall all the *heathen* [nations] drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down [eat], and they shall be as though they had not been.

Precious Promises 1:17-21

Beginning in verse 17 several precious promises are given that concern the salvation of the church symbolized by Judah. The prophet declares in verse 17, "*But upon Mt. Zion shall be deliverance.*" Here is the first promise.

For Jews in captivity, this would be a wonderful promise of hope. Mt. Zion was where the Holy Temple was located. Mt. Zion was the place of worship. Mt. Zion was where God met with His people. There was salvation to be found in Mt. Zion.

Historically, the Jews of the Babylonian Captivity took hope when they read the words of the prophet and they did return. Wave upon wave went back to Jerusalem from the land of bondage after seventy years of captivity.

Other generations also took hope during difficult days. For example, had a Jew, after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, read the prophet Obadiah, the heart might have been encouraged that yet again, the time would come when the Jews would return to the land. And they would have been right! Since 1948, many Jews have literally found deliverance and safety in Mt. Zion.

In a larger sense, the deliverance of the Jews is typical of the redemption the church enjoys in Christ. Spiritually, Mt. Zion speaks of heaven in eternity and worship in time. A remnant shall always be found upon the holy mountain. As a spiritual nation, the church might know something of temporary conquest.

In Britain, the Church of England is being surrounded by Islamic Fundamentalism. Still, God has a remnant that worships the true God.

In America, formalism, ritualism, and ecumenicalism have united with liberalism to encroach upon the church. Nevertheless, God has a remnant and a multitude more have found salvation upon Mt. Zion.

No matter how dark the days may become politically, socially, or spiritually, the church can look to the future with confidence that there will be deliverance upon Mt. Zion.

As there will be salvation so there will be sanctification. The Bible text says, *"and there shall be holiness" (1:17).*

It is easy to despair over sin. We struggle and struggle against sin. We make resolutions. We read books. We weep at the altar. And still we sin.

We grow afraid for we have read that without holiness no one shall see God. Sometimes we despair for we sense that sin has made a hypocrite of our faith. There is public behavior but private sin.

We feel we are a spiritual schizophrenic. Our heart is divided. Our lives are compartmentalized so that there is spiritually but there is also shame because of sin. We believe that we are alone in our struggles. All others seem to be so much better. And we wonder if we know anything of true salvation.

It seems as if Satan can take us captive at his will while on other occasions there is resistance to sin and great love for the Lord. We wonder what the future holds. The prophet encourages our heart for the promise is given, *"And there shall be holiness."*

This could not be said unless there is to be a divine operation. Our hearts take courage. If salvation is of the Lord, so is sanctification. As Christ works our salvation, so our sanctification will be according to grace. 1 Corinthians 1:30 declares, *"But of him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* All God's people can look to the future for holiness. While the struggle against sin continues in the flesh, the promise is given, *"And there shall be holiness."* God has spoken. It will come to pass.

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

1:17 The second promise Obadiah gives to the church is that both salvation and sanctification shall spread for, *"the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."* God is determined to save both Jew and Gentile. And so the day came when the heart of the Gentile lady named Lydia was opened and her whole household was saved. The woman at the well of Samaria drank from the Living Water and went and told the men of the city how to be saved. Peter and then Paul met Jesus and later preached to the Gentiles who brought their honor and glory into the New Jerusalem. *"And the nations of them, which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the Earth do bring their glory and honor into it (Rev. 21:24).*

And there is more. God has promised an inheritance for His people.

- A new home.
- Eternal life.
- A new name.
- A new body.
- A new heaven and a new earth.
- A new government of righteousness.
- A reunion with loved ones.
- The promise of seeing Christ.
- The promise of sitting at a banquet table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

After each one of these things it could be written, *"And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."*

18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a

flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be *any* remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken *it*.

1:8 **There is a third promise.** In the future, as Obadiah saw, the church shall judge its enemies (1:18). "*And the house of Jacob shall be a fire [of judgment], and the house of Joseph a flame, and Esau [the enemy], for stubble.*" All the *New Testament* writers agree the church shall one day judge the angels, and judge the world.

Finally, the church shall not only be saved, sanctified, secure in its possessions and sit in judgment, it shall also see its borders expand, verses 19-20.

19 And *they of* the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and *they of* the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead.

20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel *shall* possess that of the Canaanites, *even* unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

21 And saviours [judges] shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

1:19-21 Historically, the prophet Obadiah predicted that Judah would one day return to the land and expand her

territory in the South (Edom), West (Philistines), North (Ephraim and Samaria) and East (Benjamin, on the other side of the Jordan).

Spiritually, the prophet sees that the church shall know great triumph too. And it has! Starting small in Jerusalem, the church has gone into Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the world.

This has happened because, according to Obadiah 1:21, God has already sent forth saviours in the form of preachers of the gospel. While unbelievers are judged by the gospel, it is still salvation to all that believe.

According to Obadiah, the future is full of hope and glory for the church. We are invited to see the future through the eyes of the prophet.

The geographical locations mentioned by the prophet Obadiah

- Edom 1:1
- Teman 1:9
- Jerusalem 1:11
- Judah 1:12

- Mount Zion 1:17
- Mount of Esau 1:19
- Plain of the Philistines 1:19
- Ephraim 1:19
- Samaria 1:19
- Benjamin 1:19
- Gilead 1:19
- Canaan(ites) 1:20
- Zarephath 1:20
- Sepharad 1:20

Simple Studies in the Scriptures
**The Book of
Obadiah**

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Dr. Stanford E. Murrell

Leader's Study Guide

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Questions for Obadiah 1

1. Summarize the prophecy of Obadiah.
2. List at least 5 forms of pride.
3. What should Edom NOT have done?
4. In verses 10 – 16 what other charge was made against Edom?

5. In the midst of divine judgment list three promises of God.

Answers on Obadiah 1

1. The writing of Obadiah concerns a single prophecy against Edom because of their treatment of the people of God. Though God will judge Edom for their pride out of cursing will come blessing.
2. There are many sources for inordinate pride.
 - There is economic pride which breeds class envy.
 - There is military pride which David manifested when he numbered Israel.
 - There is intellectual pride of a superior intellect.
 - There is political pride which can create wars in the name of nationalism illustrated in WW I.
 - There is racial pride of whites against blacks and the Nazis with their racial Aryanism or the Japanese believing their leader descended from the sun god.
 - There is religious pride such as the Pharisees displayed.
 - There is sexual pride reflected in the Playboy philosophy of hedonism.
 - There is bodily pride illustrated in the muscle builders.

- There is oratorical pride.
 - There is musical pride.
 - There is artistic pride.
 - There is literary pride.
 - There is financial pride whereby individuals feel superior at their ability to make money.
3. The Edomites should not have been happy when it was obvious that Judah was being disciplined by God (Obadiah 1:12). In addition, the Edomites should not have united with the enemies of Judah and taken advantage of Judah's weakened condition to exploit the people (Obadiah 1:13).
 4. 1:10 Another specific reason for the judgment of Edom is enlarged upon in Obadiah 1:10-16. In addition to pride and self-conceit, the Edomites had hurt their "*brother*" in that they had helped to damage the kingdom of Judah. It was not a stranger that the Edomites took up their swords against but their own blood
 5. In the midst of divine judgment God promises there will be salvation in the form of deliverers, sanctification for, "*the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions*" and judgment upon the enemies of God and His people.

Personal Application and Reflection

1. Why is it not wrong to understand the events of the *Old Testament* saints as being applicable to the

church today by way of spiritual application? (see Luke 24:27; 2 Timothy 3:16; Heb.12: 1).

2. Though a righteous anger is justified why it is wrong to perpetuate an angry spirit and not mingle justice with mercy and grace as God does? Do you think it is hard to show grace when so much has been received?
3. Why do you think God hates the sin of pride so much (Proverbs 6:16-19)?
4. The temptation comes to the heart to rejoice at the downfall of others that we are angry or upset with. How can this transgression be avoided?
5. When God administers divine discipline do you believe He is fair and just in what He does? Did the sins of Edom warrant genocide? Does the punishment fit the crime in time and in eternity? Explain.