

THE MINOR PROPHETS

OBADIAH

Neil Gallagher

Obadiah the prophet is the writer of the shortest book in the Old Testament (a mere one chapter book, consisting of 21 verses, and 440 words), called “*The most highly predictive book in the entire Bible*” (because everything mentioned had to do with the future of Judah and Edom). Obadiah shares with (Jonah and Nahum) the distinction of having addressed his message not to Israel or Judah but to (or about) foreign nations exclusively.

Year: Shortly after 586BC, after the Edomites’ had helped the Babylonians to devour Jerusalem.

Author: (v1) ‘*The Vision Of Obadiah*’.

The name Obadiah means “Servant of the LORD” or “Worshiper of the Lord.” Obadiah was a popular name in Old Testament times, as 12 other distinct people bear the same name. The book of Obadiah/bible does not reveal any personal insights about the prophet himself. It only emphasises his message to Edom itself.

Key words: Day, Day of the Lord, Possess, and Kingdom

The Outline Of The Book Of Obadiah

The first two thirds of the book (1-14) is a declaration of God’s judgement upon Edom. Verses (15-16) then proceed to move onto how God’s judgement applies to ‘all nations.’ In the last part of the book, (16-21) God reassures Israel through Obadiah, that He has not forgotten them and affirms His promise that He will eventually restore His people in their own land.

Part One (1-14): God’s Message Of Judgement Concerning Edom

V1: ‘*Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom.*’

Fourteen times (more than any other nation mentioned in the Old Testament), Edom is the supreme object of God’s wrath. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Malachi also prophesied against Edom.

Who Were The Edomites?

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:43). They were located in the rocky country south of the Dead Sea, (modern day Jordan). They were famous for building themselves homes, temples out of rock, up to 2,700 feet. The capital of Edom was a place called Petra (meaning rock).

The Backstory Of Edom’s Difficult And Tense Relationship With Israel

Malachi 1:2-3 “*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? Says the Lord, yet Jacob I have loved. But Esau I have hated.*” The saga between the two nations began in earnest through the line of the twin brothers Esau (Edom) and Jacob (Israel) some 1,250 years prior to the prophecy of Obadiah, and their bitter feud continued through their descendent’s right throughout the Old Testament.

- A. Strife in the womb. (Gen. 25:22-23)
- B. Strife over the birth rite. (Gen. 25:29-34)
- C. Strife over their fathers blessing. (Gen. 27:41)
- D. The Edomites denied Israel the right to pass through their land on their way to Canaan. (Num. 20.3-21)
- E. Further recorded conflicts. (2 Kgs. 8:21; 1 Chron. 18:12-13; 2 Chron. 21:8-10; 25:14-19; 28:17)
- F. Edom behaved treacherously against their brother Israel in the day of adversity. (Ob. 11-14)

Obadiah Prophesied That God Would Judge Edom Because Of Their Following Transgressions

- The sin of pride. (v3) *'The pride of your heart has deceived you.'*
- Self- sufficiency. (v3, v6) *'Whose habitation is high. You who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground?'*
- The unholy alliances that they had formed. (v7) *'All the men in your confederacy'*
- Trusting their own human wisdom. (v8) *'Even destroy the wise men from Edom.'*
- Treachery towards their brother Israel in time of need as they: (v10-14)
 1. Inflicted violence against their brother Israel (v10) *'For violence against your brother Jacob'*
 2. Refused to help their brother Israel in their time of need (v11) *'In that day you stood on the other side.'*
 3. Joined forces with the Babylonians in aiding them to devour Israel. (v11) *'Even you were as one of them'*
 4. Took great delight in Israel's afflictions. (v12-13) *'Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction.'*
 5. Had stolen from their brother Israel. (v13) *'Nor laid hands on their substance.'*

Part Two (V15-16): God's Message To All Nations

V15 *'For the day of the Lord upon all nations is near'* 'The Day of the Lord' signifies a time in the history of mankind when God directly intervenes to bring, promise, hope salvation to the people of God, and other times of judgement to the unrighteous. Eight Old Testament prophets used the term 'The Day of the Lord', on 19 separate occasions:

Isaiah x3, Ezekiel x2, Joel x5, Amos x2, Obadiah x1, Zephaniah x3, Zechariah x1, Malachi 4:5x1

Part Three (17-21): God's Message Of Restoration To Israel

Regardless of the devastation that went before Israel, God promised to turn the situation around by giving the Israelites the places their enemies had taken from them, as well as those where they had been held captive.

The Paradox Of The Book Of Obadiah In The New Testament

Verses from The Book of Obadiah	Similar Paradox Verses Revealed in the New Testament
(v4) <i>'And though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down says the Lord'</i>	(Matt. 23:12) <i>'And whoever exalts himself will be humbled.'</i>
(v6) <i>'How his hidden treasures shall be sought after.'</i>	(Matt. 6:19) <i>'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal'</i>
(v8) <i>'Even destroy the wise men from Edom,</i>	<i>The apostle Paul empathises how God will destroy the vanity of human wisdom. (1 Cor. 1:19-20)</i>
(v12) <i>' But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother.'</i>	(1 John 3:17) <i>'But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?'</i>
(v15) <i>'The Day of the Lord'</i>	When Jesus Christ is revealed in that day will herald punishment for the unbelievers and great rejoicing for believers. (2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 Thess. 5:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:11-12; 1Cor. 1:8; Rom. 2:5; Rom. 2:16)

(v15) <i>'Upon all the nations is near</i>	Jesus Christ will judge all the nations of the earth (Matt. 25:32)
(v15) <i>'As you have done, it shall be done for you'</i>	(Gal. 6:7) <i>Do not be deceived; God is not to be mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.</i>
(v17) <i>'But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance'</i>	Mount Zion is symbolic of the glorious church bringing about deliverance/salvation to the nations. (Heb. 12:22-23)
(v21) <i>The kingdom shall be the LORD'S</i>	The ultimate earthly reign of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 11:15, Rev. 20:4)

What Lessons Can I Apply From The Book Of Obadiah In My Own Life?

1. To guard my heart from against the sin of pride.
Pride opens us up to a great deception. (v3) *'The pride of your heart has deceived you.'*
Pride brings with it a great downfall. (v4) *'From there I will bring you down," says the Lord'*
2. To build my life upon the rock of Christ rather than the crumbling systems of this world. (v3)
3. To guard myself from allowing the enemy to use me to aid his work. (v18)
4. To be fully prepared for the Day of the Lord, as ready to stand and give an account before God (v15)
5. I will seek and pursue holiness so I will not miss out on laying hold of God's blessings. (v17)
6. I will allow God Himself to fight for me and vindicate me from all that my enemies have meant for evil for me, as He will turn it around for my good.
7. I will step up and step into all that God has got for me to possess in the following: (V17b)
 - a) **The strongholds of my enemies:** v19: *'The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, And the lowlands shall possess Philistia'*
 - b) **The harvest fields of souls:** v19' *And the fields of Samaria'* (Acts1: 8 Witness of me in Samaria)
 - c) **The testimonies of God:** v20 *"Benjamin shall possess Gilead'*
(Gilead was a rich pasture, wooded area. The name Gilead means 'hill of testimony')
 - d) **The promises of God:** v20 *'And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites.'* (Canaan is referred to in the Bible as the land God promised Abraham, and the land he had called the children of Israel to possess.)

'A Rock That Fails And A Kingdom That Endures'

Obadiah 20:18 - *'But the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame. But the house of Esau shall be stubble. They shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken'.*

The counterpart to judgement on God's enemies is blessing on God's elect. By 312 B.C. an Arab people, the Nabataeans, had displaced the Edomites' from Petra, and dispelled them into obscurity. Thus, the sentence on Edom was executed, and Obadiah's prophecy fulfilled. Every stronghold/oppression of the enemy will eventually at God's appointed time diminish and fade out, whilst God's elect people (the church) no matter what it may seem like, will continue to prevail, shine and extend the kingdom of God, which can never be shaken.