

CONCISE BIBLE NOTES

THE PROPHET

OBADIAH

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The Prophet Obadiah Looks Over Edom



The Prophet Obadiah
James Tissot, c. 1880

OBADIAH 1

Date: 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).

Theme: The prophecy of Obadiah concerns the judgment of God upon Edom. Three great themes emerge:

- The Church will be Vindicated
- The Gentiles will be Judged
- The Glory of God will be Realized

Time: 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.

The Ruin of Edom Obadiah 1:1-9

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. 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a godly governor of King Ahab • a prince of Judah under Jehoshaphat • a brave Gadite warrior under David • a Benjamite • a man from the tribe of Issachar • a man from the tribe of Zebulun • several Levities • different men after the captivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Kings 18:3 2 Chronicles 17:7 1 Chronicles 12:9 1 Chronicles 8:38 1 Chronicles 7:3 1 Chronicles 27:19 1 Chronicles 9:16 2 Chronicles 34:12 1 Chronicles 3:21; Ezra 8:9; Nehemiah 10:6
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1:1. In Obadiah 1:1 the word of the LORD came to Obadiah 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: 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 pride of thine heart. 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.

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. thou exalt *thyself*. It is to be 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 mighty 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. Obadiah presents two cases of plundering to illustrate just how completely the enemies of Edom will destroy her.

Two Illustrations of Destruction

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 grape gatherers came to thee, would they not leave *some* grapes?

1:5. thieves...grapes. The first illustration of divine destruction 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!

1:6. Esau. 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).

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 against thee; *they that eat thy bread* have laid a wound under thee: *there is* none understanding in him.

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?

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.

The Cause of the Ruin of the Edomites
Obadiah 1:10-16

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

1:10-16. shame. More specific reasons for the judgment of Edom are 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.

1:10. For *thy* violence. 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).

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.

What Edom Should Not Have Done
Obadiah 1:12-13

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. thou have rejoiced. 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!

13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; 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. their calamity. 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. thou have stood in the crossway. 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.

1:14. thou have delivered up. 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. There is a high degree of compassion for those who are being slaughtered without hope. 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. thy reward shall return. 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.

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

The Kingdom of the Lord Established
Obadiah 1:17-21

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

1:17. shall be deliverance. 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).

1:17. shall possess. Obadiah prophesied that both salvation and sanctification would spread. "*The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.*" And so it has come to pass. The centuries passed and Lydia's heart was open and her whole household was saved. The woman at the well drank from the Living Water and went and told the men of the city how to be saved. Peter 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). God has promised an inheritance for His people which include 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, and 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*.

1:18. shall be a fire. Fire is often in Scripture a symbol of judgment. Obadiah sees Judah judging her enemies and by way of application, all the New Testament writers agree that the church shall one day judge even the angels and the world.

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.

1:19. shall possess. Obadiah sees Judah saved, sanctified, and secure its possessions as it sits in judgment and then is blessed to see its borders expanded. Spiritually, the church too is to be saved and sanctified. It shall be secure in its possession as it sits in judgment and then will be blessed to see its borders expanded so that from every tribe and tongue, from every nation souls will bow before the King of kings and Lord of lords.

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.

1:20. the children of Israel *shall possess*. Historically, the prophet predicted that Judah would one day return to the land and expand her territory in the South (Edom), the West (Philistines), the North (Ephraim and Samaria), and the East (Benjamin/other side of the Jordan). Spiritually, the prophet sees that the church shall know great triumph. And she has! Starting small in Jerusalem, the church has gone into Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the world. This has happened because (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.

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

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

**Practical Application and
Spiritual Lessons to be Learned
from the Book of Obadiah**

1. Every nation which is hostile to God and or to God's people (i.e., the church) will be overthrown in time as well as in eternity.
2. Christians need to be reminded to guard their heart and tongues against their enemies.
3. Christians must be careful not to look or consider with pleasure when they hear of their difficulties and misfortunes.
4. Christians must be careful not to rejoice when the day of their judgment comes upon others.
5. 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.
6. 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.

Supplemental Material

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).
- Jerusalem was plundered by the Philistines and Arabians 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).
- Jerusalem was plundered by the Chaldeans, again in the reign of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:10ff; 2 Chron. 36:10). c. 597 BC