

## **Obadiah**

### **God is Going to Right All Wrongs**

#### **I. History**

- A. **Date** — It seems best to place Obadiah around the time of Judah’s fall in 586 B.C. As we study the book it will become clear that Edom took advantage of their brother Judah during a time of weakness. This is likely the time during or after Babylon brought the majority of them into captivity.
- B. **Author** — The author of Obadiah is in fact, Obadiah. Who is he? Well, there are twelve other people throughout the Old Testament with his name. Yet, his name means “one who serves/worships Yahweh.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, “Obadiah” could either be a proper name or a description of who he is.
- C. **Audience** — It would appear that Obadiah was speaking primarily to the people of Judah about the judgment coming on Edom. There is no evidence that Obadiah ever took this message directly to Edom.<sup>2</sup> If this was a message for Edom but given to Judah, how does that change the way we look at the book?
- D. **Edom and Israel**<sup>3</sup> — **How might we describe the relationship between Israel and Edom?**
1. Esau and Jacob were brothers (Gen 25:19-29)
  2. Jacob stole Esau’s birthright (Gen 25:29-34)
  3. Jacob received the blessing through deception that should have been given to Esau (Gen 27)
  4. Jacob and Esau mended their relationship (Gen 33)
  5. Edom refused Israel passage through their land (Num 20:14-21)
  6. Saul fought with Edom (1 Sam 14:47)
  7. David conquered Edom (2 Sam 8:13-14)
  8. Edom eventually rebelled and set up their own king (2 Kings 8:20-22)
- E. **Geography and topography** — Edom is located south south-east of the dead sea. With the dessert as a natural barrier on their eastern and southern borders, the Zered Brook as a barrier on their northern border against Moab, and steep cliffs as their natural barrier on their western boarder, Edom would naturally feel secure. They were on a plateau and were well protected by the topography from enemies.

#### **II. Literature**

- A. **The book of Twelve** — Hosea introduced to us the topic of spiritual adultery. Israel had failed to remain faithful to God and instead committed “spiritual adultery” with the foreign gods of the land. Joel introduced us to the Day of the Lord. With its many references we saw that Joel describes this Day as judgment and blessing; judgment on those who reject Yahweh’s offer of repentance and blessing to those who call on the name of the Lord in repentance. Though we bypassed Amos, we see that Amos uses a rhetorical method to draw in the Israelite readers by pointing out the judgment that would fall on the surrounding nations. The Israelites would, no doubt, cheer on these oracles. However, Amos then points the finger at Israel and describes the judgment coming upon them.

Obadiah follows Amos. Obadiah narrows in on Edom and explains the reason why judgment is coming for them. Yet, Obadiah also speaks of judgment on the nations and future blessing for Judah. We will cover Jonah in the years to come, but it is interesting to see Obadiah and Jonah next to one another. Whereas Obadiah is a message of judgment of Edom and the nations, Jonah is a message of mercy for the nations. For those who are willing to call on the name of the Lord, there is hope that God will relent.

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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets, 569.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Obadiah, 173.

<sup>3</sup> The following information is provided at length in Smith’s commentary on Obadiah (p. 174).

B. **Structure** — There are many ways that the book can be structured. The following is my attempt.

1. **1-14 — *The charge against Edom***

- a) 1-4 — The pride of Edom
- b) 5-9 — The promised destruction of Edom
- c) 10-14 — The problem with Edom

2. **15-21 — *The Day of the Lord***

- a) 15-18 — Judgment on the nations
- b) 19-21 — Blessing on Judah

### III. Theology

A. **Message of the book — God is going to right all wrongs.** Judah has seen the people of Edom take advantage of them in their weak state and they are wondering if God is going to do anything. In Edom's pride they assumed they were invincible and they abused their brothers by kicking them while they were down. Consequently, Obadiah tells us that God is going to judge Edom and the nations. But Obadiah is about more than this. Obadiah is about the restoration of Judah as well. Those who heard Obadiah's message would have been encouraged to know that God is going to right all the wrongs — This is the Day of the Lord.

### IV. The Charge Against Edom

#### A. 1-4 The pride of Edom

**1** — Obadiah recounts the message from the “Lord GOD.”<sup>4</sup> In a display of Yahweh's sovereignty, He sends a messenger among the nations to bring them against Edom with this charge, “Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!”<sup>5</sup>

**2** — Obadiah brings our attention to this verse with “behold.” God is going to make Edom small. As we will see in verse 3 this is in contrast to their perception of themselves.

With what some call a “prophetic perfect” God is making the point that He has essentially already done it.<sup>6</sup> It's as good as done. According to Jeffrey Niehaus Edom would no longer be a nation by 312 B.C., thus a fulfillment of God's promise to bring them low.<sup>7</sup>

**3** — The reason for Edom's punishment becomes more clear. Placed emphatically in the text, they had hearts filled with pride that deceived them. How might pride be deceptive? They had a false assurance of their own safety and greatness. Positioned in the rocks in the mountains, they assumed that they were invincible from enemy attack. Thus they raised the question, “Who will bring me down to the ground?” There is a good answer for this, Yahweh can and Yahweh will (Proverbs 16:18 — “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”).

There is another angle to consider. We can probably assume they raised that question because no one had brought them down yet. However, would that not have been a misinterpretation of delayed judgment? Delayed judgment, according to Peter, is so that all might come in repentance not continue in sin (2 Peter 3:9).

**4** — They are compared to an eagle and a star, because of their lofty position and the way that they use it. Like an eagle would be able to spot its prey and soar down to attack, so too Edom was able to look down on their brother Judah and come down to attack them. This had gone on long enough and they had grown comfortable with their security.

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<sup>4</sup> Literally, “lord, LORD” With the use of Adoni and Yahweh.

<sup>5</sup> It could be that the message extends to the end of the book.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart, 415.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Niehaus, 516.

Consequently, Yahweh promises that He will bring them down from their heights and He will deal with them according to what they have done to His people.

**B. How might we describe the pride of Edom? In what did they take pride?**

**C. What is God's view of pride?<sup>8</sup>**

1. God hates haughty eyes (Proverbs 6:16-17)
2. God hates a proud look (Proverbs 6:16-17)
3. God hates the proud in heart (Proverbs 16:5, 8:13)
4. Pride is practical atheism (Psalm 10:4)
5. Christ models humility (Philippians 2:6-11)
6. God humbles those who exalt themselves (Isaiah 10:12, Daniel 4:20)
7. God exalts the humble (James 4:10)

**D. What are the implications for us as we consider how God views pride?**

**V. 5-9 The Promised Destruction of Edom**

**A. 5-7 — The nations will ransack Edom**

**5-6 — Consider for a moment what happens when a thief comes to steal in the night. How much would they steal?** While thieves come in and steal what's most valuable to them, they don't always take everything. They leave some things as they can only take so much, and only so much has value to them. In this case the one being robbed only loses some.

What do you make of this statement inserted in the middle of the discussion about robbers, "how you have been destroyed!" It's as if Obadiah couldn't keep his excitement about their judgment hidden.<sup>9</sup>

Picture grape gatherers going through the vineyard, would they take every grape? Consider especially the day in which Obadiah writes, when leaving behind some grapes is a way to provide for the poor. The rhetorical question is answered for us. They would leave something behind.

Then we come to verse 6. With the thief and the grape gleaner in the back of our minds, what is Obadiah saying will happen to Edom? They would search through Edom's cliffs and be so thorough that they would find all their treasure.<sup>10</sup> There would be nothing unturned, nothing that is left behind. They would be completely pillaged.

**7** — In verse 2 we saw that God had sent a messenger throughout the nations to call them to rise up and attack Edom. Now we see those nations rising up and attacking them.

What statements describe the relationship that Edom has with these nations? They were literally "men of your covenant," and "men of your peace," and "those who eat bread with you." In their grand wisdom, Edom thought they were secure in those relationships.

Their false confidence destroyed them. Their allies pushed them away from their homeland, deceived them, prevailed over them, and set a trap for them. They failed to take into account that they were not as wise nor as secure as they thought. But most of all, they failed to realize that the Sovereign God was not intimidated by their "wisdom" and "understanding."

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<sup>8</sup> Tim Challies, *God Hates Pride*.

<sup>9</sup> Billy Smith, 186.

<sup>10</sup> Chisholm, 114.

## **B. 8-9 — God destroys those they place their confidence in**

**8** — Verse 8 comes unexpectedly. It would have felt more natural if Obadiah would have talked about the destruction that God would bring on Edom, but instead of that he promises that he will destroy the wise men and their understanding.

In some sense the wise men have destroyed themselves. Chisholm writes this, “*Despite their reputation for discernment, these wise men were self-deceived (v. 3) and incapable of detecting the deception of others (v. 7).*”<sup>11</sup> They may have claimed to be wise and even have been the pride of Edom, but they were no match for the Sovereign One who is able to work where they cannot see, able to bypass what they consider invincible, and able to unravel their perfect situation.

Stop and consider again the statement, “declares the LORD.” This is not something we want to just skim over, but instead to feel the weight of the authority and power that is behind those words. This is something God has decreed and there is no stopping it.

**9 — Who has Edom placed their confidence in?** Now the decree stretches to the mighty men. All those that Edom is hoping in, their allies, their wise men, their mighty men, all of them have failed. The result is that every man in Edom will be cut off.

Who or what is Teman? This is a grandson of Esau (Gen 36:11). It is used in this passage as a means of representing the whole of Edom.<sup>12</sup>

Notice the words “every man...will be cut off by slaughter.” There is no exception made. All of them will be destroyed leaving no one left.

## **VI. Application**

- A. What are some common ways Christians can be prideful?
- B. How do we deal with the pride in our lives?
- C. What does this passage teach us about the character of God?

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<sup>11</sup> Chisholm, 114.

<sup>12</sup> NET Notes, “*Teman*, like Sela, was a prominent city of Edom. The name Teman is derived from the name of a grandson of Esau (cf. Gen 36:11). Here it is a synecdoche of part for whole, standing for all of Edom.”