

Obadiah Chapter 1

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

It is primarily speaking of the condemnation and destruction of Edom from God.

The prophet Obadiah was the penman.

The name "Obadiah" means servant of Yahweh.

The Herods of the New Testament are of Edomite heritage.

Edom was enemies of Israel, even though they were related by blood.

Their hatred for them went back to Esau losing his birthright to Jacob.

Obadiah 1:1 "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle."

"The vision":

The prophetic word often came from God in the form of a vision (Hab. 1:1).

"Thus saith the Lord":

Although the background of the prophet is obscure, the source of his message is not.

It was supernaturally given by God, and was not motivated by unholy vengeance.

"Edom": Descendants of Esau (Gen. 25:30; 36:1), the Edomites settled in the region south of the Dead sea.

Edom refers to the territory settled by Esau's descendants.

It is a mountainous desert extending for about one hundred miles from the wadi Zered to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The Edomites enjoyed the security of their mountain stronghold and the prosperity obtained by taxing caravans traveling through their territory (See the note on Genesis 36:1-43).

"Arise ... rise up against her":

The prophet heard of a God-ordained international plot to overthrow Edom.

The selfish motives of Edom's enemies were divinely controlled by the LORD's "envoy" to serve His sovereign purposes (Psalm 104:4).

The one message that Obadiah was sent to deliver was actually sent to Israel, but was about Edom.

Obadiah had a vision from God which revealed this to him.

The heathen nations are called to battle against Edom.

When God gives someone a vision of this nature, he is compelled to tell it.

Notice, "Thus saith the Lord GOD":

The words that Obadiah speaks are not his own, but the Words of God in Obadiah's mouth.

Edom, in the spiritual sense, is representing the power of the world that is in opposition to true religion.

It appears in the vision, that Obadiah actually saw the heathen world summoned to come against Edom.

Obadiah 1:2 "Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised."

"I have made thee small":

Thy reduction to insignificance is as sure as if it were already accomplished; therefore, the past tense is used (Maurer).

Edom then extended from Dedan of Arabia to Bozrah in the north (Jer. 49:8, 13).

Calvin explains it, "Whereas thou wast made by Me an insignificant people, why art thou so proud?"

But if so, why should the heathen peoples need to subdue one so insignificant? (Jer. 49:15 confirms Maurer's view).

They were physically small, but perhaps, this goes further than that.

The world around had observed their bitter hatred for their relatives the Israelites, and especially Judah.

They had even sided against Judah when the Babylonians attacked.

It seemed they took every opportunity to do evil to Israel.

Obadiah 1:3 "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?"

“Rock” (Hebrew Sela), is the name of the Edomite capital, Sela.

The name emphasizes the security the Edomites enjoyed because of the narrow canyons that led in and out of Edom.

“The clefts of the rock”:

Dwelling in difficult mountain terrain, Edom’s imposing; impregnable capital city of Petra was virtually inaccessible, giving her a sense of security and self-sufficiency.

Deep, terrifying gorges emanating from peaks reaching 5,700 feet surrounded here like a fortress, generating a proud, false sense of security.

Their pride went back to their belief, that the birthright was theirs through Esau.

They forgot that Esau had no regard for his birthright, and sold it to his brother Jacob for a bowl of soup.

They were deceived with their hatred.

They dwelled in the mountains where they thought they were safe from the enemy.

The word that "clefts" was translated from, means refuge.

They arrogantly thought they were impossible to defeat.

They had forgotten the power of Almighty God.

No one can defend against a judgment of God.

Obadiah 1:4 "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."

“Though thou set thy nest among the stars”:

This figure of speech emphasizes the inaccessibility and natural security of their city.

However, their natural security is no match for God’s determination.

“Thence will I bring thee down”:

Edom’s pride was answered decisively by the Sovereign Ruler (Matt. 23:12).

The calamity against Edom, though brought about by her enemies, was truly God's judgment of her pride (Prov. 16:18; 1 Cor. 10:12).

An eagle makes his nest in the highest place he can find.

There is no place so high, that God cannot bring it down.

Even the eagle's nest can be reached, if it is God who wants it.

Obadiah 1:5 "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?"

As a general rule, when "thieves" or "grape gatherers" work, they do not search out and take everything; they merely take their fill.

However, God will so thoroughly judge Esau that He makes it bare (Jer. 49:9-10).

"Robbers by night":

Because of the rugged terrain and very narrow access through the gorges, predatory attack could only come at night.

In this verse, Obadiah is showing that in a raid, the robbers do not take everything.

They just take what they want and run.

When grasshoppers come on the crop, it is the same thing.

They do not destroy the root of the plant, just the vegetation on top.

They would even leave some grapes on the vine, if it were just a plague of grasshoppers.

This is given to contrast the greatness of the destruction that will come on Edom, as a judgment of God.

Obadiah 1:6 "How are [the things] of Esau searched out! [how] are his hidden things sought up!"

Edom's attackers, by divine judgment, would not stop where normal thieves would when they have enough.

Instead, they would leave nothing.

The natural enemy might not find the secret places, where Esau had hidden things, but God is aware of all those secret places.

Verses 7-9

“Teman” was one of the cities of “Edom. Dismayed” (Hebrew chatat, literally “to shatter, terrify, or dismay”).

With her wise counselors and mighty men gone, proud Edom is doomed.

Obadiah 1:7 "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."

Those conspiring against Edom (verse 1), were her allies (“men allied with you”), her neighbors (“men at peace with you”), and even the outlying tribes who benefited from Edom’s prosperity (“They who eat your bread”).

The people, who Edom thought to be their friends, will now be their enemies.

Edom was a treacherous country itself and it would reap that same treachery.

The allies spoken of here, are probably countries like Moab and Ammon.

The Ammonites and the Moabites were very evil themselves.

Obadiah 1:8 "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?"

“Wise men”:

Edom was known for her wise men and sages (Jer. 49:7).

Her location on the King’s Highway provided her with intellectual stimulation with India, Europe, and North Africa.

Wisdom is a gift from God.

It is God who destroys the wise in Edom.

Their counsel is of no use anymore.

When God removes their wisdom, they make terrible decisions.

This judgment is spoken of God.

Obadiah 1:9 "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."

“Teman”:

A name derived from a descendant of Esau (Gen. 36:11), it refers to a region in the northern part of Edom which was the home of Job’s friend, Eliphaz (Job 4:1).

One of Job's friends was a Temanite.

Generally speaking, the men of Teman would have stopped the attacking army, before it got to the mountain stronghold.

Nothing will stop this destroying army that the LORD sends against Edom.

They will be slaughtered.

Verses 10-14: No particular historical occasion may be intended here; Obadiah is probably referring to all of Edom’s transgressions against Israel.

Past (2 Chron. 21:8-10, 16-17), present (2 Chron. 26:6-7; Joel 3:4-6, 19; Amos 1:6-12), and future (Psalm 137:7).

Obadiah 1:10 "For [thy] violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever."

“Violence against ... Jacob”:

Edom’s opposition is in view, which began as Israel approached the land (Num. 20:14-21), and continued to Habakkuk’s day.

“Slaughter” (verse 9), and shame for Edom, will be just retribution for Edom’s violence and slaughter against her brother’s people.

The bitter feelings of Edom went back to Esau's hate for his brother Jacob.

They had even refused the Israelites passage through their land into the Promised Land.

They even sided in with Babylon against Judah.

They were eager to destroy their relative Judah, anytime they could.

God did not look kindly upon them for this hatred.

After this battle, Edom, as a nation, fades from history and is heard from no more.

Verses 11-14

The charge of verse 10 is here amplified:

- (1) They “stood aloof,” withholding assistance (verse 11);
- (2) They rejoiced over Judah’s downfall (verse 12; Psalms 83:4-6; 137:4-6);
- (3) They plundered the city (verse 13); and
- (4) They prevented the escape of her fugitives (verse 14).

Obadiah 1:11 "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."

“In the day thou stoodest on the other side”:

Aloof, as a spectator of the ruin of Jerusalem, and that with delight and pleasure.

When they should, as brethren and neighbors, assisted against the common enemy.

But instead of this they stood at a distance; or they went over to the other side, and joined the enemy, and stood in opposition to their brethren the Jews.

“In the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces” that is, at the time that the Chaldeans took Jerusalem, and carried captive as many of the forces of the Jews as fell into their hands; or when;

"The people spoiled his substance," as the Targum; plundered the city of all its wealth and riches;

“And foreigners entered into his gates”:

The gates of their cities, particularly Jerusalem; even such who came from a far country, the Babylonians, who were aliens and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel.

Whereas the Edomites were their near neighbors, and allied to them by blood, though not of the same religion.

And by whom they helped against a foreign enemy, instead of being used by them as they were.

“And cast lots upon Jerusalem”:

Either to know when they should make their attack upon it; or else, having taken it, the generals of the Chaldean army cast lots upon the captives, to divide them among them.

So Kimchi (see Joel 3:3); or rather, the soldiers cast lots for the division of the plunder of the city, as was usual at such times.

“Even thou wast as one of them”:

The Edomites joined the Chaldeans, entered into the city with them, showed as much wrath, spite, and malice, as they did, and were as busy in dividing the spoil.

So Aben Ezra interprets these and the following verses of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

This again, is speaking of their joining in with Babylon to destroy Judah.

Obadiah 1:12 "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."

"But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother":

The day of his calamity, distress, and destruction, as afterwards explained.

That is, with delight and satisfaction, as pleased with it, and rejoicing at it.

But rather should have grieved and mourned, and as fearing their turn would be next.

Or, "do not look"; so some read it in the imperative.

"In the day that he became a stranger":

Were carried into a strange country, and became strangers to their own.

Or, "in the day of his alienation"; from their country, city, houses, and the house and worship of God. And when strange, surprising, and unheard of things were done unto them, and, among them.

"Neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction":

The destruction of the Jews, of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, by the Chaldeans.

This explains what is meant by the Edomites looking upon the day of the calamity of the Jews.

That it was with pleasure and complacency, having had a good will to have destroyed them themselves.

But it was not in the power of their hands; and now being done by a foreign enemy, they could not forbear expressing their joy on that occasion, which was very cruel and brutal.

And this also shows that Obadiah prophesied after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

"Neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress":

Or "magnified thy mouth".

Opened it wide in virulent scoffing, and insulting language; saying with the greatest fervor and vehemence, as loud as it could be said, "rase it, rase it to the foundation thereof" (Psalm 137:7).

They should have mourned over the problems that Judah had, instead of being glad.

Matthew 5:22 "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

God will not overlook their hatred against Judah.

Obadiah 1:13 "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;"

"Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity":

Or gates, as the Targum.

The gates of any of their cities, and particularly those of Jerusalem; into which the Edomites entered along with the Chaldeans.

Exulting over the Jews, and insulting them, and joining with the enemy in distressing and plundering them.

"Yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity":

Which is repeated, as being exceeding cruel and inhuman, and what was highly resented by the LORD.

That instead of looking upon the affliction of his people and their brethren with an eye of pity and compassion, they looked upon it with the utmost pleasure and delight.

"Nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity":

Or "on their forces"; they laid violent hands on their armed men, and either killed or took them captive.

And they laid hands on their goods, their wealth and riches, and made a spoil of them.

The phrase, "in the day of their calamity":

This is three times used in this verse, to show the greatness of it.

And as an aggravation of the sin of the Edomites, in behaving and doing as they did at such a time.

Throughout these three verses, Obadiah uses the future only.

It is the voice of earnest, emphatic, advice against and request, not to do what would displease God, and what, if done, would be punished.

He advises them against malicious rejoicing at their brother's fall, first in look, then in word, then in act, in covetous participation of the spoil, and lastly in murder.

Malicious gazing on human calamity, forgetful of man's common origin and common liability to ill, is the worst form of human hate.

It was one of the treatments of the Cross, "they gaze, they look" with joy "upon Me" (Psalm 22:17).

The rejoicing over them was doubtless, as among savages, accompanied with grimaces (as in Psalm 35:19; Psalm 38:16).

Then follow words of insult.

The enlarging of the mouth is uttering a tide of large words, here against the people of God.

In Ezekiel, against Himself;

Ezekiel 35:13: "Thus with your mouth ye have enlarged against Me and have multiplied your words against Me. I have heard".

Not only had they gone in, after Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and Judah, but they actually took things belonging to Judah home with them.

They looted Jerusalem and Judah.

Obadiah 1:14 "Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress."

"Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway":

In a place where two or more roads met, to stop the Jews that fled.

Let them take which road they would: or, "in the breach"; that is, of the walls of the city.

"To cut off those of his that did escape":

Such of the Jews that escaped the sword of the Chaldeans in the city, and attempted to get away through the breaches of the walls of it.

Or that took different roads to make their escape.

These were intercepted and stopped by the Edomites, who posted themselves at these breaches, or at places where two or more ways met, and cut them off.

So that those that escaped the sword of the enemy fell by theirs; which was exceeding barbarous and cruel.

"Neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress":

Or "shut up"; they shut them up in their houses, or stopped up all the avenues and ways by which they might escape.

Even such as remained of those that were killed or carried captive.

These falling into the hands of the Edomites, some they cut off, and others they delivered up into the hands of the Chaldeans.

Of the joy and rejoicing of the mystical Edomites, those false brethren and anti-christians, at the destruction of the faithful witnesses and true Christians, and of their cruelty and inhumanity to them (see Rev. 11:7).

They lay in wait for those of Judah and Jerusalem, who were fleeing to safety.

They did not help them, as a near relative should have done.

They actually turned them back to the Babylonians.

Obadiah 1:15 "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."

“Day of the LORD”:

The Day of the LORD is that predicted time when God will intervene actively in the affairs of humanity and all creation, in both blessing and judgment.

This period begins following the kingdom age with the purging of heaven and earth.

God’s near judgment of Edom in history (verses 1-14), was a preview of His far judgment on all nations (verses 15-16), who refuse to bow to His sovereignty.

Throughout the Old Testament, this day was a recurring twofold theme of the prophets, identifying that time when the enemies of Israel would be defeated and God would bless the nation under the Davidic covenant.

But this day also covered the tribulation and punishment of Israel, as it is sometimes characterized by judgment and wrath.

For the Christian whose sins have already been judged on the Cross, the Day of the LORD is mainly a time of hope and blessing. (Isa. 2:12; Obad. 15; Hosea 3:5).

The Day of the LORD is pictured in Scripture as the time when God will judge the heathen.

Here the final Day of Judgment is in view.

Since they sided in with the heathen nations to destroy Judah and Jerusalem, they will suffer the same punishment as the heathen nations.

They deserve their destruction God has spoken upon them.

Obadiah 1:16 "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."

“My holy mountain”:

Zion, referring to Jerusalem (verse 17).

“Drink and they shall swallow” (compare Zech. 12:2), where the LORD will make His people as a “cup that causes reeling” from which His enemies will be made to drink.

This refers to the cup of God’s wrath.

Judah drank temporarily of judgment, Edom will drink continually.”

These heathen nations, they had sided with against God's people, are the very ones God will send to destroy them.

They had drunk on God's holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Now, God will send destruction to them.

They drink of the cup of the wrath of God, and are destroyed.

Verses 17-18

“Deliverance (Hebrew peletah), is better understood as “an escaped one” or “a fugitive,” hence “a remnant.”

Obadiah 1:17 "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

A reversal of Judah’s plight (in verses 10-14), will come about when Messiah intercedes and establishes His millennial kingdom and holiness prevails.

This is a complete change from the message against Edom.

This speaks of restoration to God's people.

Israel shall come home to Jerusalem and the holy mountain of Zion.

Zion also speaks of the church, spiritually.

This speaks of a spiritual restoration through Jesus Christ, which comes from God's holy mountain.

Deliverance comes through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Verses 18-20

Those of Judah who remain (verse 14), will be divinely empowered to “consume” (verse 18), and completely wipe out the “house of Esau” (Isa. 11:14; 34:5-17).

When Messiah sets up His kingdom, the boundaries of the Davidic and Solomonic kingdoms will once again expand to include that promised to Jacob in his dream at Beth-el (Gen. 28:14).

Which reaffirmed God’s promise to Abraham (Gen. 12).

This would include the south (mountains of Esau); the west (Philistia); the north (Ephraim ... Samaria); and the east (Gilead).

Obadiah 1:18 "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]."

"House of Jacob ... house of Joseph":

Representatives of Abraham's descendants.

In a spiritual sense, the house of Esau speaks of the world who is opposed to God and His people.

The fire of the house of Jacob is speaking of Israel being full of the fire of God.

When the house of Joseph is spoken of together with the house of Jacob, I believe it is speaking of physical Israel (Jews), and spiritual Israel (Christians).

This fire of God will destroy the enemy of God.

God Himself, destroys the enemy of His people.

Verses 19-20

"The south" (Hebrew negev), refers to those Jews who, in a time future to the prophet, will again occupy the southern regions of Judah.

"Zarephath" is a Phoenician town on the Mediterranean coast.

"Sepharad" has not been identified with certainty.

It was apparently in the south near Edom.

Obadiah 1:19 "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."

This is speaking of the land of Edom (Idumea), being turned over to Judah for a possession.

The land of Ephraim will be possessed by the Judeans.

Benjamin will possess the other side of the Jordan.

This is a re-apportioning of the land.

Obadiah 1:20 "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."

“Canaanites”:

Those peoples who occupied the land before the Exodus.

“Zarephath”:

Also known as Sarepta (Luke 4:26), this town was located on the Phoenician coast between Tyre and Sidon.

“Sepharad”:

Not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, the location is uncertain.

Most rabbis identify it with Spain; others have suggested Sparta or Sardis.

This is speaking of the Ephraimites coming back and possessing the land of Canaan.

This is happening in Israel today.

God restores His chosen people to their land and to their God.

Obadiah 1:21 "And saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."

“Saviors shall come up ... to judge”:

Just as the LORD raised up judges to deliver His people (Nehemiah 9:27), so will He establish similar leaders to help rule in the millennium kingdom (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 20:4).

Saviors are better read “those saved,” in distinction from the Masoretic text.

The closing verse looks forward to that time when the LORD’s people will come to “mount Zion” and “judge the mount of Esau” during the “kingdom” age (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 5:10).

“The kingdom shall be the LORD’S”:

When the nations are judged in the Day of the LORD, He will then set up His millennial kingdom, a theocracy in which He rules His people directly on earth (Zech. 14:4-9; Rev. 11:15).

This speaks of a time when God's children will take over this land.

This could be looking into the far future, when Jesus will reign as King of kings, and His followers will reign with Him.

This is speaking of that Lion of the tribe of Judah, who will come and reign upon this earth for one thousand years.

He will be headquartered in Jerusalem at that time.

This is that throne of David, which will be established forever.

This is that King of Peace, which rules the whole earth.

Our prayer should be, even now, Come quickly Lord Jesus.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

The One we know as Jesus will be KING of kings and LORD of lords. He will have absolute rule.

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Obadiah Chapter 1 Questions

1. Obadiah is the _____ book in the Old Testament.
2. What is this book primarily about?
3. Who was the penman?
4. Approximately, when was it penned?
5. The _____ in the New Testament were of Edomite heritage?
6. How far back did their hatred of Israel extend?
7. How did Obadiah get the message from God?
8. Who was the message sent to?
9. How do we know this message is from God?

10. Edom, in the spiritual sense, is representing whom?
11. Who would come against Edom?
12. Who had they sided with against Judah?
13. The _____ of thine heart hath deceived thee.
14. What does "clefts" mean?
15. Where does an eagle build his nest?
16. What is verse 5 given in contrast to?
17. Why did Edom not fear the people who came against them?
18. Wisdom is a _____ from God.
19. Where was Teman located?
20. Why will Edom be cut off forever?
21. What had they done, after Babylon took Judah?
22. What had they done to those that fled for safety?
23. Upon mount Zion shall be _____.
24. What is verse 17 speaking of?
25. What is the fire speaking of in verse 18?
26. Who are the saviors in verse 21?
27. How long will Jesus reign upon the earth?
28. Who will reign with Him?