

OBADIAH

THE BIG PICTURE – OBADIAH – “WORSHIPER OF YAHWEH”

- Christ – Jesus Christ is the ultimate and supreme embodiment and expression of pure and unadulterated worship. He radiates the glory of the Godhead. His people are “Christians.” As such, they are followers of Christ. They reflect His character to the world around them as worshipers.
- The New Testament Witness – “There are no quotations of Obadiah in the New Testament.”¹ “The prophecies of Obadiah and Nahum are the only books of the Law and the Prophets not quoted in the New Testament.”²

INTRODUCTION

Obadiah is proclaiming a judgment against the people of Edom (v1). "As for Obadiah's message of the judgment of God which is to come upon Edom, it should be remembered that the Edomites were regarded by the prophets as typical of the malignant foes of Israel who hated and opposed all that Israel stood for in their witness to the one true God."³

In the biblical storyline they would be part of the Serpent’s Seed.

In this economy [or dispensation], Obadiah stands as a word of warning to the enemies of the nation of Israel and a word of comfort to the people of Israel. God will fulfill His word to bless those who bless them and curse those who curse them (Gen. 12:3).

“The overwhelming theme found in Obadiah is the destruction of [those who oppose God’s people]. Unlike some other prophets, Obadiah does not present a ‘turn or burn’ message, simply a message of inevitable doom as a consequence of previous actions.”⁴

“A characteristic of this group of pre-exilic prophets is that they all predicted God’s retribution or judgment on the nations.”⁵

Obadiah speaks of the day that God will adjust the scales of justice. **Edom sat fat and satisfied with her haughty and almost impenetrable fortress in the midst of rock and cliff.** However, her haughtiness brought her down by the hand of Almighty God. Here is a classic Old Testament illustration of James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5.

James 4:6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

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1 Pet. 5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

“His ‘book’ of 21 verses is **the shortest of the minor prophets**.⁶ However, Jerome says of him: ‘a little prophet as far as words go, but not little in terms of ideas.’ Obadiah’s prophecy operates on two levels--that of **the chastisement of Edom** and that of **the ultimate triumph of Israel** on ‘the day of Yahweh.’⁷ The Edomites incurred the prophet’s anger because they had **foolishly applauded** the destruction of Jerusalem and had **gone to play a part in the sacking of the city** and the persecution of its refugees (Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 25:12ff). Parallel with the punishment of Edom, Judah will receive the reward of being restored and of recovering its treasures.”⁸

I. ITS PLACE WITHIN THE BIBLICAL CANON

In Christianity, the book of Obadiah is classified as a minor prophet of the Old Testament, due to its short length.⁹

In Judaism, Obadiah is considered a “later prophet” and this Masoretic Text is chronologically placed in the Tanakh under the section Nevi'im in the last category called *The Twelve Prophets*.¹⁰

The way the Hebrew text (BHS) is set up suggests that there are two forms in Obadiah. The bulk of the book (vv. 1-18) is poetic. Whereas, the final three verses (vv. 19-21) is prose.¹¹ In any case, Obadiah appears to have been a skilled writer. As Niehaus states, “Whoever Obadiah was, he possessed literary skills appropriate to his calling. He had a repertoire of poetic devices that earn him an honorable place among the writing prophets. Among the qualities of his work, we find not only facility with the various devices of parallelism, but also a capacity for imagery, rhetorical questions, irony, and repetition.”¹²

II. WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

A. His historical context

The date of 845 BC is a hotly contested date. Some place it at around 536 BC. However, these notes will use the date of 845 BC.¹³ Obadiah is one of the pre-exilic prophets preaching to the nation of Edom.

The specific historical setting is somewhat dependent on dating. However, the general setting of the animosity between Israel and Edom is not debated. The longstanding nature of the animosity is also not debated.¹⁴

"It was called forth by a plunder of Jerusalem, in which the Edomites participated. There were four such plunderings:

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1. In the reign of Jehoram, 850-843 BC (2 Chron. 21:8, 16, 17; Amos 1:6).
2. In the reign of Amaziah, 803-775 BC (2Chron. 25:11, 12, 23, 24).
3. In the reign of Ahaz, 741-726 BC (2 Chron. 28:16-21).
4. In the reign of Zedekiah, 597-586 BC (2 Chron. 36:11-21; Psalm 137:7).

There are various opinions as to which of these Obadiah belongs."¹⁵ Our date places it during the first plundering.

"The animosity between the Edomites and the Israelites is one of the oldest examples of discord in human relationships."¹⁶

"Judgment against Edom is mentioned in more Old Testament books than it is against any other foreign nation (cf. Isa. 11:14; 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer. 9:25-26; 25:17-26; 49:7-22; Lam. 4:21-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12; 9:11-12; Obad.; Mal. 1:4)."¹⁷

- Began in the womb (Gen 25:21-26)
- Esau's hunger caused him to trade the birthright (Gen. 25:30)
- Edom (Esau's descendents) refused to let the Israelites pass through their land when Israel was on the way to the Promised Land (Num 20:14-21)
- Hostility developed and continued for centuries (Ezek. 35:5)
- Saul (1 Sam. 14:47), David (2 Sam. 8:13, 14), Joab (1 Kings 11:16), and Solomon (1 Kings 11:17-22) all had problems with the sons of Edom.
- This hatred/conflict continued all the way "in the late sixth or early fifth century BC the Nabateans, from northern Arabia, worshipers of gods and goddesses of fertility and the celestial bodies, drove out most of the Edomites. Apparently, some remained in Edom and were absorbed by the Nabatean Arabs. The Nabateans were the renowned stone-carvers of Petra."¹⁸

B. His global context

C. His contemporaries

III. WHO WROTE THE BOOK?

Nothing is known of the author of this small prophetic profile except that his name means "worshiper of Yahweh." "Tradition of both Jews and Christians has ascribed this to Obadiah."

In Judaism and Christianity, its authorship is attributed to a prophet who lived in the *Assyrian Period*, Obadiah, whose name means "servant or worshipper of Yahweh".¹⁹

IV. TO WHOM DID THE PROPHET PREACH?

Those who rebel against God, trusting in themselves, will finally be destroyed. Those who trust in the Lord will finally be delivered for eternity. To whom do you think Obadiah is talking? To Edom? No, the prophet is not talking *to* Edom; he is talking *about* Edom to his own people.²⁰

Obadiah preaches his message against the inhabitants of Edom. "Edom was the rocky range of mountains east of the Arabah (South of the Dead Sea), stretching about 100 miles north and south, and about 20 miles east and west. It was well watered, with abundant pasturage. Sela (Petra), carved high in a perpendicular cliff, overlooking a valley of marvelous beauty, far back in the mountain canyons, was the capital. Edomites would go out on raiding expeditions, and then retreat to their impregnable strongholds high up in the rocky gorges."²¹

"Its only approach was through a deep rock cleft more than a mile long with massive cliffs more than seven hundred feet high rising on either side."²²

V. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK?

Obadiah preaches a message of judgment against the Edomites for their **crimes against Judah and Judah's ultimate restoration**. "Obadiah offered **a ray of hope** in Judah's darkest days. Obadiah functioned as God's messenger of comforting news."²³

Why is the judgment against Edom so severe? What makes the nation of Israel so favored? Is the object Israel or what Israel speaks of? I personally believe there is nothing intrinsic to the nation. Their standing as a favored nation status before God is sourced solely in who God is, not in what Israel does. God gave them and worked through them His promise of a Seed. It is the Seed Promise that made Israel a protected nation. Esau's (i.e. Edom) disdain of Jacob's (i.e. Israel) seed is one of Seed Promise and the ongoing assault of the serpent's seed against that of the woman. This is why the judgment by God on Edom is so severe.

VI. AN OUTLINE FOR OBADIAH

A. Obadiah as literature

B. Obadiah outlined

Obadiah, with its 21 verses, is the shortest Old Testament book. It is a Prophetic Oracle. "Its message is primarily one of doom and judgment."²⁴

- The Verdict: Edom Will Be Destroyed (vv. 1-9)

Edom is described as a nation despised (v. 2), deceived (vv. 3, 4), displayed (vv. 5, 6), deserted (v. 7) and dismayed (v. 9).

1. The Verdict Expressed (vv. 1-4)

2. The Verdict Explained (vv. 5-9)

- The Violation: Edom's Mistreatment of "Jacob" (vv. 10-14)

1. The Violation Expressed (vv. 10-11)

2. The Violation Explained (vv. 12-14)

Edom had betrayed Israel when the nation was being destroyed by her enemies. "The major reason for the judgment of Edom is: **"Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever"** (verse 10). The details of the violence against his brother are given in the next four verses:

- a. They stood withholding assistance (verse 11).
- b. They rejoiced over Judah's downfall (verse 12).
- c. They plundered the city, Jerusalem (verse 13).
- d. They prevented the escape of Judah's fugitives (verse 14).

Behind every persecution of God's people, there is pride and rebellion against God."²⁵

Jesus said:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me (John 15:18-21).

- The Victory: The Day of the Lord (vv. 15-21)

1. The Day of the Lord Brings Retribution (vv. 15-17)

2. The Day of the Lord Brings Restoration (vv. 18-21)

There shall be a reversal of 'fortunes' in the Day of the LORD. In **the Day of the LORD** Edom shall be put down and Israel shall be exalted.

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VII. KEY DOCTRINAL IDEAS IN OBADIAH

"The primary theological concern is the sovereign rule of Yahweh which is expressed in history. God's sovereign rule in this book is expressed in terms of judgment for Edom and salvation for Judah."

A. The message uttered by Obadiah came from the Lord God (v. 1)

The message Obadiah brought came from the Lord (vv. 1, 4, 8, 15, 18, and 21).

B. "The Day of the Lord" (v. 15)

As with most prophets, the Day of the Lord, figures prominently as a day of judgment and a day of blessing.

C. God judges those who sin against Him.

"The message of Obadiah is simple. Edom will be destroyed for its indifference, cowardice, and pride, as will all who choose to live in defiance of God."²⁶

APPLICATION:

There are universal "laws" present in the message of Obadiah.

- God will protect the Seed promise and bring it to completion.
- Sin is always judged.
- Sin is always exposed.
- Pride always leads to humiliation and the rejection of God for the salvation of your immortal soul from sin's judgment leads to ultimate condemnation/damnation.
- Believing solely and only in God for the salvation of your immortal soul from sin's judgment leads to ultimate glorification.

¹ <http://www.centerpointbibleinstitute.com/classnotes/Obadiah%20Handout%20CP.pdf>

² W.W. Sloan, *A Survey of the Old Testament* New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 299.

³ Gleason Archer, *Old Testament Introduction*, 302.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Obadiah

⁵ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament*, [Prince Press, 2007], 251.

⁶ The canonical Book of Obadiah is an *oracle* concerning the divine judgment of Edom and the restoration of Israel.^[1] The text consists of a single chapter, divided into 21 verses, making it the shortest book in the Hebrew Bible. (*Nelson's Compact Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978, 191).

⁷ "The shortest book in the Old Testament and among all the writing prophets, Obadiah provides an overview of

the message presented in each of the writing prophets: **God's judgment on the unbelieving Gentiles** who opposed God's chosen people Israel, and **God's grace and ultimate deliverance of the believing Israel**. This double thread is woven throughout every prophetic book in the Old Testament." [Emphasis added]

<http://bible.org/seriespage/book-obadiah> "The purpose of Obadiah is fairly straightforward. There are two basic purposes. First, the prophet prophesies of the judgment of Edom and those who seek to harm God's people. Second, the prophet prophesies of the eventual restoration and blessing of a remnant. Both of these purposes are to be understood in light of Yahweh's covenantal relationship with Israel."

<http://www.centerpointbibleinstitute.com/classnotes/Obadiah%20Handout%20CP.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1994/9402otg.asp>

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Obadiah

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Obadiah

¹¹ Rabbe suggests that, this distinction is supported by the use, or not, of the so-called prose particles. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 6-7.

¹² Jeffrey Niehaus, "Obadiah," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey, vol. 2. 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 503.

¹³ See BKC, p. 1454 for several excellent reasons why this date is the best of several options.

¹⁴ <http://www.centerpointbibleinstitute.com/classnotes/Obadiah%20Handout%20CP.pdf>

¹⁵ *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 361.

¹⁶ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament, 1454.

¹⁷ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament, 1453.

¹⁸ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament, 1455.

¹⁹ <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1994/9402otg.asp>

²⁰ <http://bible.org/seriespage/book-obadiah>

²¹ *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 361.

²² Henrietta C. Mears, *What the Bible is all about*, 297.

²³ Gary V. Smith, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets: The Prophets as Preachers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1994), 244.

²⁴ *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Old Testament, 1453.

²⁵ <http://bible.org/seriespage/book-obadiah>

²⁶ *The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, 231.

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Obadiah's Ministry @848-841 BC
Kings Of Israel: Jehoram – Kings Of Judah: Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah