

Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Obadiah

Historical Background

1. Timeline

- 1050-931 B.C. – United Kingdom: Saul, David, and Solomon
- 931 – Divided Kingdom Israel (northern) & Judah (southern)
- 930-830 – Elijah and Elisha
- 760ish – Amos predicts the fall of Israel and Judah
- 722 -- The northern kingdom of Israel falls to Syria
- 586 – The southern kingdom of Judah falls to Babylon. The temple is destroyed, the walls are destroyed, and all the people are exiled.
- It is just after the fall of Judah that the book of Obadiah is written. Sometime between 586-553. Here's how we know this...
 1. Israel fell to Babylon in 586 B.C. and Edom fell in 553 B.C.
 2. In the book of Obadiah, Jerusalem has already fallen (10-14) yet Edom has not yet fallen. Thus the date is most likely between 586-533.

2. A brief history of Israel and Edom



A tale of two brothers

- Israel and Edom are more than just the political names of ancient nations. They are the names of two brothers. Israel was the name given to Jacob by God in Genesis 35:10. Esau was named Edom, which means red, because he sold his birthright for some red stew in Genesis 25:30. These two brothers never got along. In fact, the conflict began in the womb when the Lord said of these two brothers...
 - ♣ Genesis 25:23--*"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."*
- At birth Jacob was already fighting with his brother to be first born (Genesis 25:25-26).
- Then of course is the account of Jacob purchasing Esau's birthright for a bowl of red stew (Genesis 25:30).
- Sometime after that, Jacob steals Esau's blessing by disguising himself as Esau and bringing his Father "delicious food" (Genesis 27:28-29).
- When Esau discovered that Jacob stole his blessing, he was devastated (Genesis 27:34-36). His devastation soon turned to rage and Esau vowed to kill his brother Jacob (Genesis 27:41)
- At this point in the story, people usually feel sorry for Esau. They tend to look at him as an innocent victim or a sweet bumbling simpleton who was outwitted by his crafty brother. While it is true that Jacob stole Esau's birthright, Esau is anything but an "innocent" or "sweet" victim. Esau was a wicked, evil man. He was violent, arrogant, and full of sexual immorality. So much so that the book of Hebrews uses him as the example of what it means to be sexually immoral or unholy...
 - ♣ Hebrews 12:16--*that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau,*

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- Their war with each other did not die with them. It continued through their descendants...



A tale of two nations

- Esau's descendants became known as Edomites (Genesis 36:9) and the descendants of Jacob became known as the Israelites. There was almost constant tension or hostility between these two nations.
 - After the Exodus, Moses asked the King of Edom permission to pass through his kingdom. Not only did he refuse, but he told him that he would kill them if they tried (Numbers 20:14-21).
 - King Saul made war upon the Edomites (1 Samuel 14:47)
 - King David made war upon the Edomites killing 18,000 men and enslaving the rest of them (2 Samuel 8:13-14).
 - King Solomon was constantly harassed by a fugitive Edomite prince named Hadad (1 Kings 11:14, 25).
 - King Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, faced a massive army of Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites. The Lord himself intervened and caused the invading army to wipe themselves out (2 Chronicles 20).
 - King Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, was not as fortunate as his father. The Edomites revolted against him set up a kingdom of their own for a time (2 Kings 8:20).
 - Amaziah, king of Judah, made war against the Edomites and killed 10,000 in a single battle (2 Kings 14:7)
 - During the reign of Ahaz, Edomites raided Judah and took many captives (2 Chronicles 28:17).
 - This is a portrait of the relationship between Israel and Edom. There was constant tension and frequent violence. Understanding this is vital to understanding the book of Obadiah.

Book Overview

1. God's Judgment upon Edom (1-10)



The proud will fall (1-4)

- ❖ Obadiah 1-2--*The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom: We have heard a report from the Lord, and a messenger has been sent among the nations: "Rise up! Let us rise against her for battle!" 2 Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be utterly despised.*
 - This is a portrait of God's absolute and total sovereignty. God isn't curled up on his heavenly couch with his fingers crossed watching what is happening hoping that all will turn out right. He is in complete control. Just as he says in Daniel...
 - ❖ Daniel 4:35--*all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"*

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- So he is doing. He is sovereign over the nations and is causing the nations to rise up against Edom. The worst part of this is that Edom won't even see it coming. Why? What will make them so blind? What is causing them to perceive reality so poorly?
- ❖ Obadiah 3-4--*The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" 4 Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.*
 - At this point in history, Edom is anything but a major military power. In spite of this, they are arrogant in assuming that no one could ever possibly conquer them. Why? Because the cliffs of Edom were as high as 5000 ft. and their rocky cliffs kept them safe from invaders.¹ They asked in their hearts, "Who will bring me down to the ground." Because they believed that no one was capable of answering...I will!
 - In verse 4, God's response is as if to say..."I don't care how high you build your house. Your mountains are nothing to me! Soar like an eagle and make your nest in the stars for all I care! Even there I will bring you down! You ask rhetorically in your hearts, 'who will bring me down?' The answer is I WILL!"
- ◆ It is easy for us to sit back and say of Edom, "what were they thinking!?" However, we are in real danger of doing the same thing. We are the richest of all nations, we are the mightiest nation that has ever existed, and we have eyes all over the whole world! If we are honest, we would admit that we have said in our hearts, "who could bring us down?" We must not let our pride cloud our judgement. We must always be mindful that God is infinite in might, we are nothing to him, and our continued existence is by his grace alone.



Plunder and Treachery (5-7)

- ❖ Obadiah 5-7--*If thieves came to you, if plunderers came by night — how you have been destroyed! — would they not steal only enough for themselves? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings? 6 How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out! 7 All your allies have driven you to your border; those at peace with you have deceived you; they have prevailed against you; those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you — you have no understanding.*
 - Here, he is saying if it were thieves, plunderers, or grape gatherers that were coming against you, you would be left with something. However, it is not these people, it is the Lord and therefore your destruction will be complete. He then goes on to describe a destruction that has not yet come as if it has come already. This is known as speaking in the prophetic perfect. A prophecy that is so certain that it can be spoken of in the past tense. He says, Your treasures are as good as gone! Your allies will become your invaders. Those whom you have shared table fellowship with are plotting your utter destruction!



Judgment Day (8-10)

- ❖ Obadiah 8-10--*Will I not on that day, declares the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau? 9 And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter. 10 Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.*

¹ Anthony Selvaggio, *The Prophets Speak of Him: Encountering Jesus in the Minor Prophets*. p.61.

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- The Lord is saying, a day of judgement is coming. A day in which your wisdom will not avail you, your might will fail you, you will all be slaughtered, you will be covered in shame, and it will last forever. The question is why? Why would such a doom ever befall anyone or any nation?

2. The reason for God's judgment (10-14)



You abandoned your brother (10-11)

- ❖ Obadiah 10-11--*Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. 11 On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them*
- In 586 B.C. Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. The temple was destroyed, the walls of the city were destroyed, and the people of Judah were taken from their homes and dispersed throughout the Babylonian empire to serve as slaves. This passage describes the Edomites at that time. We have already discussed how the two nations are descended from the two brothers (Jacob and Esau), yet the Edomites offered no help to their brother Jacob. Instead, they cheered at the destruction of their brother. The Psalmist recalls...
 - ❖ Psalm 137:7--*Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!"*



A series of rebukes (12-14)

- ❖ Obadiah 12-14--*But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress. 13 Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity; do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity. 14 Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.*
- The things that the Lord is commanding them to never do is exactly what they had done. They didn't weep over the destruction of their brother, they gloated and rejoiced. They didn't honor the memory of their brother nation, they entered the gated, mocked them, and looted them. They didn't help fugitives escape, they cut them off and handed them over to the Babylonians.
- We have already seen in our series that God brings vengeance upon those who stand against his people. We see it here again. The judgements of Obadiah 1-10 are the just punishment for standing against God's people. Edom will face judgement because they stood against God's people.

3. The day of the Lord (15-21)



A day of retribution (15-18)

- ❖ Obadiah 15-18--*15 For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head. 16 For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually; they shall drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been. 17 But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy, and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. 18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble; they shall burn them and consume them, and there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau, for the Lord has spoken.*

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- Here, the Lord says even as Edom drank to celebrate the defeat of God's chosen people, so to will they drink God's wrath for doing so. In fact, all the wicked nations of the earth along with Edom will have to continually drink and swallow from this cup. This is just as Jeremiah prophesied...
 - ❖ Jeremiah 25:15--*"Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it."*
- Included in this promise of retribution is the promise that some will escape this doom. People from every nation will find for themselves a refuge in Zion (more on this later).



A day of restoration (19-21)

- ❖ Obadiah 19-21--*Those of the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and those of the Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines; they shall possess the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20 The exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the Negeb. 21 Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.*
- Without getting into all the details of lineage and geography, this passage is basically saying three things...
 - (1) Jewish exiles will return to their lands someday
 - (2) Their borders will be extended
 - (3) The kingdom belongs to the Lord

In the book of Obadiah, Jesus is...

1. The one who repays

- ❖ Obadiah 15--*For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.*
- ❖ Revelation 22:12--*"Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."*

2. Our refuge in Zion

- In Obadiah 15, "the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations." The world will be judged. The standard is "As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head." This is terrible news for us! Why? Because all have sinned...
 - ❖ Romans 3:10--*"None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one"*
 - ❖ Isaiah 53:6--*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way*
- Thus, if we are to be judged for what we have done as Obadiah says...it is **NOT** going to go well. The penalty is clear...
 - ❖ Romans 6:23--*For the wages of sin is death*
 - ❖ Revelation 21:8--*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."*

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- Yet, Obadiah makes a promise that...
 - ❖ Obadiah 17-- *in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, and it shall be holy*
- So the question is, what is Mount Zion and how do I get there? Mount Zion is another name for Jerusalem, the city of God. Jerusalem is the city which represents the people of God. So in order to escape, we must make our dwelling in the city of God and belong to the people of God. How does this happen? In order to accomplish this, God sent his divine Son Jesus to become a human, live a sinless life, die upon the cross bearing upon himself the sins of all who would ever come to believe in him, rise from the dead conquering the power of death for us, and ascend into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for his people. If hearing this, you repent or turn away from sin and trust in Jesus Christ alone, you can know that you are one of his people, you belong to the people of God, you are one who abides in Mount Zion, you will escape the wrath to come, and you shall be made holy.
- This is the gospel of Jesus Christ, being whispered to us in shadows from the book of Obadiah.

3. The one true king

- In Obadiah 19-21, Obadiah speaks of a time when God's people shall reclaim the land that was lost, see their borders expanded, and rule with the Lord himself. This has never happened. In 538 B.C., many exiles returned to their lands, but they were not free. They were under the rule of Persia. They did not see their borders expanded and it wasn't what anyone would call "the Lord's kingdom." So what then, is Obadiah a false prophet? Should it be removed from the canon of scripture?
- No, the message of Obadiah 19-21 is bigger than that. Obadiah 19-21 speaks of the building of a kingdom. A kingdom made of those who were once enslaved. A kingdom that is bigger than these former slaves think is possible. A kingdom whose king is the Lord himself. The kingdom spoken of in Obadiah is the same kingdom that Jesus announced when he said...
 - ❖ Matthew 3:2--*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*
- In Christ, we who were once slaves to sin have been set free...
 - ❖ Romans 6:6--*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.*
- In Christ, we are a kingdom, a holy nation
 - ❖ 1 Peter 2:9--*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*
- A bigger nation than we ever could've dreamed
 - ❖ Revelation 7:9--*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb*
- And our king is none other than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords
 - ❖ Revelation 21:3--*"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God*



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- ❖ Revelation 21:22-23--*And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*