

OBADIAH

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Obadiah's name means servant of Jah and it is a common name in the Old Testament.

There was a steward of Ahab and during Jezebel's persecution this Obadiah hid a hundred prophets in a cave and provided for them (1 Kings 18). Another Obadiah was a descendant of David who may have been the son of Aman or that he was identical with Abiud a descendant of Zerubbabel of Matthew 1.13 or the Judah a descendant of Zerubbabel in Luke 3.26.

There was another of the same name who was the son of Izrahiah from the tribe of Issachar (1 Chronicles 7.3). Another Obadiah was a son of Azel, a descendant of Saul (1 Chronicles 8.38) There was a Levite with the same name (1 Chronicles 9.16) and another who joined David at Ziklag (1 Chronicles 12.9). Another was the father of Ishmaiah the head of the tribe of Zebulun in the time of David. Jehoshaphat sent princes including one Obadiah to teach the law in the cities of Judah (2 Chronicles 17.7).

When good king Josiah repaired the Temple, an overseer of the work was an Obadiah (2 Chronicles 34.12). There was a descendant of Joab who returned to Israel with Ezra (Ezra 8. 9). One of the priests who joined Nehemiah in signing a covenant was an Obadiah (Nehemiah 10. 5) and, presumably, the same man was one of the porters (Nehemiah 12.25)

The prophecy of Obadiah concerns the people of Edom who were descendants of Esau who were the enemies of the people of God. They were fearsome and ruthless people who defeated the Horites in the mountainous are of Seir caves hewn out of the red sandstone.

When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem in 586 BC they had the help of the Edomites who rejoiced in the troubles that befall their own enemies.

Obadiah's prophecy was partially fulfilled at the time of this Babylonian invasion but will be complete in the last days when Israel, restored to their land, will be attacked by Edom and kindred nations (Isaiah 34.5). Obadiah predicts that the Jews will bring about Edom's destruction which tallies with Daniel 11.14.

The book has seven sections in the following verses

- 1a introducing the prophet
- 1b-4 the destruction of Edom's fortress
- 5-9 Edom's punishment
- 10-14 violence against the people of God is the main reason for the judgment of Edom
- 15-16 judgment of all nations who are enemies of the Jews
- 17-20 God's people are saved and restored
- 21 the prediction of a millennial kingdom

The book indicates the sovereignty of God, that all the enemies of God will be punished and God's people will ultimately be blessed and restored. The world has always been against the Jews and today

Christians are both ridiculed and persecuted particularly under the left wing politics of Marxism, Communism and Socialism.

If you persecute God's people you are attacking God. God's people are the apple of His Eye (Zechariah 2.8). The apostle Paul persecuted Christians (Acts 9) but was also persecuting the Lord.

What must be remembered is that prophets are not with us today although they will be in the millennial reign of Christ in Jerusalem (see article on Joel). Paul wrote some twenty years after the resurrection that prophecy will fade away and the Revelation tells us not to add to the Scriptures. All that God wants us to know is in the Scriptures which are perfect which word means complete.

The book concentrates on condemnation of Edom and other nations who are against the Jews. Edom trusted in their stronghold being impregnable and said, Who will bring us down? And God replies, Though you live in the clefts of the rocks I will bring you down.

Edom controlled many of the trade routes and demanded money of the merchants hence the mention of their riches (verse 6).

The Edomites were a proud and pompous people and pride is one of the greatest sin in the human race and we do not learn the lessons from it.

Sadly today there are Christians who are proud and self promoting. They talk about themselves and what they have achieved and some use testimony to relish in their dreadful sinful past. What God has dealt with must not be brought up again is the clear Bible teaching.

The apostle James tells us that God resists the proud. He is against them and they must accept the Bible teaching that no one is to glory in God's presence and that must mean in the presence of God's people. The prophet Isaiah says that even our righteousness is as filthy rags. Paul says that we must not boast only in the glory of the Cross.

The Edomites had allies with the Chaldeans, the Babylonians against the Jews their enemies. Verse 7 speaks of Edom's allies would turn against them. After the Babylonians had defeated Jerusalem they turned against Edom, Moab and Ammon as stated in Jeremiah 27. 3. The hand of God was in this as verse 8 says, In that day says Jehovah will not destroy the wise men from Edom on the mount of Esau? The next verse speaks of Divine slaughter of Edom and that they will be cut off for ever because of their violence to Judah (verse 10) who is described as Jacob's brother. Incidentally, Teman is another name for the clan of the Edomites.

It has to be repeated that God will punish all who set themselves against His People. How the Jews have been persecuted throughout the centuries is appalling and left wing politics such as Socialism, Marxism and Communism have persecuted Christians

O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me
And all things else recede.
My heart be daily nearer Thee
From sin and self be daily freed.

The message of this book is that Edom will be made small and with other enemies of His people will be defeated. All who persecute and attack the Jews will inevitably be punished by God. It is sad to recount that some Christians show no consideration for the Jews and fight among themselves often over trivial things and personal empire building. How often does a sword destroy a brother, a fellow believer? How often are we permanently alienated because of unkind words and actions and the callous indifference and neglect by fellow believers? Cruelty against the Jews must be condemned but there

is a lack of love of Christians towards fellow Christians is also unacceptable. We are not to set our brother at naught.

All that Edom had worked for including their wealth has been taken by strangers (verse 11). Edom had rejoiced in the days of Judah suffering and their misfortunes with hatred and ridicule. Today, Jews and Christians still suffer but they will be vindicated and all their enemies will be punished without mercy. Verse 12 speaks of those who opened their mouths at the times when the people of God were in distress. God's' people are under the hammer even now and by politics, science, the occult and a secular society that does not follow the moral teachings of the Bible, but despise such teaching.

William Kelly has supplied a good commentary on verses 13 and 14 when he writes:

“There is nothing that exhibits more malice and wickedness than to take advantage of another when he is ruined or sorrow wastes the spirit and divine chastening. It is a heart altogether depraved that could take advantage of another's fall to trample yet more on him who is in the dust”

Edom gloated over their brother's tribulation. The Jews that escaped from the siege of Jerusalem were cut off by the Edomites.

Verses 15 and 16 introduces an eschatological significance with in the content of the last days with the expression the day of the Lord which refers to the end time and includes that all nations including Edom will be judged. This theme also appears in Amos 1 and Edom is one of many nations who will be judged. This is, of course, still future and we should remind ourselves that the day is coming when every knee shall bow to the Lord Jesus and confess that He is Lord, and that means everybody from monarchs, politicians, atheists, scientists, world leaders and the common man.

As Christians today we have to suffer persecution and ridicule on an increasing scale and we can be somewhat depressing. But, ultimately, we will be vindicated and all our tormentors will admit that they were wrong as they acknowledge Christ in a day to come. Atheism and other features will be shown as a complete lie and those who held anti-Christian views will be the dust at the Saviour's feet. Like the Edomites those who perform unhallowed revelry and have wild carousals at the expense of Jews and Christians.

When the final conflict God will empower His people to be victorious over all her enemies. There are those telling verses in Isaiah 63 where the Messiah in blood-stained garments will be seen coming from Bozrah, a major city in Idumea having trod the winepress of wrath alone. His anger at the nations who have damaged His people is spoken about graphically.

For the Lord's people after the Chaldean invasion there will be restoration and holiness and the house of Jacob shall have possessions and be restored. In the last days also the Jewish people will be vindicated and blessed. As we have said the Jews are still the apple of His eye.

Verse 18 speaks of the Jewish people being a fire and Esau being stubble and that there would be no survivors. The Lord will give His people a complete victory and ultimately that will be blessing of Jews and Christians alike.

When all my labours and trials are o'er
And I am safe on that beautiful shore
Just to be near the Lord I adore
Will thro' the ages be glory for me.

Light after darkness,
Gain after loss,

Strength after weakness,
Crown after cross,
Sweet after bitter,
Hope after fears,
Home after wanderings,
Praise after tears.

The climax of this book is when it says, The kingdom shall be the Lords since God is ultimately the Supreme Ruler and He is all in all.

While it may not always seem like it, we, as Christians are on the victory side.

This prophecy is also an indication of the state of the world today which is hostile to God and wants to be independent of Him.

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