

Old Testament Overview

Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

This afternoon, we will continue our study of the prophetic books

We have discussed the three (3) of the twelve (12) minor prophets

- Hosea, Joel, and Amos

We will look at three more this afternoon

- Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah

Let's pray and get started¹

Remember, the difference between the major prophets and minor prophets is based on length

- Not because they are somehow less important or less inspired

As early as the third century B.C., the Twelve were included together on one Hebrew scroll²

The twelve minor prophets cover a span of 400 hundred years from the 8th to the 5th century B.C.³

- The Twelve are not written in a strict chronological order

Obadiah

God is able to achieve His purpose in these twelve minor prophets

- His economy of words is amazing

We see that especially in the book of Obadiah

- One chapter
- 21 verses

What a contrast this is to some of the longer books of the OT

- Psalms
 - o 150 chapters
 - o 2,461 verses

¹ This lesson references material from Capitol Hill Baptist Church's core seminar on the Old Testament.
<http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/class-1-introduction-to-the-old-testament/>

² Mark Dever, *The Message of the Old Testament*, 229.

³ Dever, 673.

- Genesis
 - o 50 chapters
 - o 1,532 verses

For sure, it is the shortest book in the Old Testament

- But Obadiah isn't even the shortest book in the Bible
 - o 2 John has 13 verses

The name Obadiah means "servant of the LORD"⁴

- His name appears 20 times in the Old Testament
- It never occurs in the New Testament

Other men in the OT had the same name⁵

But Obadiah 1 is the only place in the OT that refers to this writing prophet

- So obviously, we don't know much about him

But the book of Obadiah is not known for the man

- The book is about the message that he brings

As with most prophetic books, there is a two-fold theme

- Judgment for sin
- Restoration of God's people

Obadiah is no different

- He will first deal with the sin of Edom
- Then he will discuss the restoration of God's people

Before we dive into the specifics of this book, a little background is needed

"Edom" is mentioned on two occasions in this book (1, 8)

- "Edom" means "red"
- Edom was the name given to the descendants of Esau (cf. Gen 36:1)

It shouldn't surprise us that "Esau" is mentioned seven (7) times in Obadiah (6, 8, 9, 18², 19, 21)

- Edom and Esau both refer to the same people group

Esau's twin brother was Jacob

- These two were polar opposites in disposition, appearance, and their parent's love

⁴ Dr. Alan B. Stringfellow, *Through the Bible in One Year*, 95.

⁵ Stringfellow, 95; Wilkinson & Boa, 251. Dever, 751. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1001.

There seemed to be an intense rivalry between these two

- Jacob was always wanting to have what Esau possessed

With the birthright, Jacob obtained this in an exchange for a bowl of soup

- You might remember that Jacob deceived his own father so that he, not Esau, received the blessing

So Jacob, the younger son, possessed both the birthright and the father's blessing

- These were supposed to be blessings reserved for the firstborn

So you can imagine how there would be some animosity and bitterness on the part of Esau toward Jacob

- And you could also understand how this animosity would be passed on to the descendants of Esau
- Similar to the feud between the Hatfields and McCoys

A story that began in the womb of Rebekah between two brothers would be perpetuated for years and years through their descendants⁶

- These brothers would be bitter enemies

Even as early as Genesis 32, the Bible tells us that the Edomites lived in the land of Seir (32:3)

- "Seir" is closely related to the Hebrew word for "hairy"

Part of the drama of this background is that Esau was a hairy man, even from birth (25:25; 27:11)

- Perhaps the Edomites named the place after the appearance of Esau

After Genesis, the Edomites show up only once in the book of Exodus

- But the book of Numbers is very significant as further background to the book of Obadiah

As you might remember, the book of Numbers is spent recalling the consequences of disobedience

- Israel had disobeyed the LORD
- As a result of this disobedience, the LORD made Israel spend 40 years in the wilderness

So as Israel is wandering around in the wilderness, they ask a favor from the king of Edom (Num 20:14-21)

- They want to pass through his land
- Apparently, this was a shortcut and Israel wanted to go from point A to point B in the most straightforward manner

⁶ Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 251.

The Israelites tell the king that they will stay on the main road

- They won't eat any of their food
- They won't drink any water
- They just want to cut through his land

Of course, the king of Edom blatantly refuses to grant this request

- Not just once
- But twice!

There was such bitterness and hatred between the Edomites and the Israelites that the Edomites wouldn't even allow the Israelites to pass through their land!

- This is really a bitter attitude!

This action on the part of the Edomites toward the Israelites will be brought up in the book of Obadiah

- The LORD will remind the Edomites of this sin against Israel

Yet it is interesting that in Deuteronomy 23, the LORD instructs Israel, "You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land" (23:7)

- Even though Edom had mistreated Israel, they were commanded not to mistreat them
- Revenge and retaliation were not an option

If you want an outline of Obadiah, here is a simple one⁷

- God's judgment on Edom (1-14)
- God's judgment on the nations (15-16)
- God's restoration of Israel (17-21)

I. God's judgment on Edom (1-14)

Obadiah opens with a very intimidating call to arms, "The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom – we have heard a report from the LORD, and an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, 'Arise and let us go against her for battle'" (1)

- Obadiah hears "a report from the LORD"
- This call from God is a call to battle
- The Lord Himself will go to war against the nations!

Why does the LORD go to war?

- What specific sin does God hate?

Throughout the book of Obadiah, there is one sin that is apparent

- Pride

⁷ MacArthur, 1003.

Edom's pride was a real problem for the nation

- This pride was shown to be at the heart of their sins⁸

Verse 3 says, "The arrogance of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in the loftiness of your dwelling place, who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?'"

- The Edomites lived in a very "safe" place in the rocks
- This place is called Petra

The Edomites thought that they were safe from attack since they were living in the rocks

- The only entrance to where they lived was a series of paths up the mountain
- Hence, it was not easy for someone to approach them without advanced notice

Northern and southern trade routes passed by Edom

- So times were good!⁹

Edom was placing their trust in something other than the LORD Himself

- They would soon discover just how foolish that was

Because of their desirable location in Petra, the Edomites became proud and arrogant

- They didn't think anyone could defeat them
- The result of this was that Edom thought they were invincible¹⁰

Yet the LORD promised to bring the nation down

- He was not restricted because they lived in a safe, rocky area

Notice what the LORD tells Edom

- Verse 2, "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you are greatly despised"
- Verse 4, "Though you build high like the eagle, though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD"

Edom may be unreachable to man and his armies

- But Edom was not inaccessible to God
- He could – and would – bring the nation down

Of course, pride has been a perennial problem throughout the ages

- Pride caused Lucifer to be banished from heaven
- Pride caused Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit
- Pride caused all manner of sins since the Fall

⁸ Gerard Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 373.

⁹ Dever, 752.

¹⁰ Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 126.

Because of the pride of Edom, God promised to destroy them

- If pride was their greatest problem, then humility was the greatest solution

Notice what the Lord tells Edom in verses 5-6, “If thieves came to you, if robbers by night – O how you will be ruined! – would they not steal *only* until they had enough? If grape gatherers came to you, would they not leave *some* gleanings? ⁶ O how Esau will be ransacked, and his hidden treasures searched out!”

When the LORD brings judgment on the nation of Edom, it won’t be partial

- It will be thorough, complete, and devastating

Verse 7 says that even the supposed friends and allies of Edom will turn against them, “All the men allied with you will send you forth to the border, and the men at peace with you will deceive you and overpower you. *They who eat your bread will set an ambush for you (there is no understanding in him.)*”

- How sad that no one will be there to help
- Edom can turn to no one in that day

Verses 8-9 speak of how God will remove the wise men and strong men

- Their wisdom won’t help
- Their strength won’t help

But why was God destroying them?

- He tells us why in verses 10-14

Twice in this passage, the LORD mentions Jacob as Edom’s “brother”

- There is mention of “violence” committed against Jacob

This wasn’t violence committed against strangers

- This was violence committed against brothers!

Interesting, isn’t it, that the Lord uses the terms “brother,” “Jacob,” and “Edom”?

- These all go back to Genesis!
- These are all terms that would have reminded them of the initial cause for hostility between the two twins

At some point, Judah was attacked

- There are a number of times in history that Judah was attacked¹¹

¹¹ Wilkinson & Boa, 251.

But the most likely time that is in view here is during the reign of Jehoram (848-841 BC)

- The Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah
- They looted the palace (2 Chr 21:16-17)
- It was during this time that Edom revolted and became a bitter antagonist against Judah (2 Kgs 8:20-22; 2 Chr 21:8-20)

Some would point to the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.¹²

- However, Obadiah doesn't refer to the entire destruction of the city and Temple
 - o With the Babylonians, there was total devastation and destruction
- Obadiah doesn't mention the Babylonians by name
 - o Every other prophet who addressed the Babylonians as agents mentioned them by name
 - o Obadiah leaves the enemy unidentified
- There is also no mention of the destruction of the Temple or the deportation of the people

When Israel was defeated due to her sins, Edom gloated (Obadiah 12, 13)

- Because of their intense hatred for Jacob/Israel, the Edomites stood back and reveled in Israel's exile
- I am sure they were thinking and saying, "Ha! You are finally getting what you deserve!"

So with this thought in mind, the LORD has Obadiah fast-forward the tape of history

- At that point, it was Israel's time for punishment
- But Edom's day in court was coming

II. God's judgment on the nations (15-16)

Verse 15 would have brought deathly silence, "For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head."

- Wow!

Edom thought that she was invincible

- But God will bring them down
- God will humble their exalted thoughts

It was not only Edom who would be judged

- This day of great judgment would fall "on all the nations"

¹² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 237.

There was a **big** difference between the LORD's judgment on Israel and His judgment on Edom

- Israel would be taken away for a short season
- But she would return to her land with His blessing

The Edomites, on the other hand, would be completely destroyed

- There was no hint of repentance offered
- There was no hope of restoration

III. God's restoration of Israel (17-21)

Obadiah, as the messenger of the LORD, speaks of Israel's restoration throughout the rest of the chapter

- The promises of God through Abraham were still in effect because of God's faithfulness
- What was taken away from other nations would be returned by the LORD Himself

In the fifth century B.C., the Edomites were forced to leave their territory

- They moved to southern Palestine and became known as the Idumaens¹³

Perhaps the most well-known Edomite/Idumean is someone that you may have heard of in the New Testament

- He was a man who was instrumental in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ

Herod the Great was an Edomite who became king of Judea under Rome in 37 B.C.¹⁴

- This Edomite continued the hostility and hatred toward the Israelites

Remember, Herod was one of the instigators to have Jesus Christ killed

- Herod was an Edomite
- Jesus was an Israelite

In A.D. 70, the Idumeans were defeated

- They haven't been heard of since

God was faithful to His Word in that total destruction would be issued

- Obadiah 10, "And you will be cut off forever"
- Obadiah 18, "there will be no survivor of the house of Esau"

The book of Isaiah speaks of the destruction of the Edomites in graphic language

- Turn with me to Isaiah 63
- "Who is this who comes from Edom, with garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, this One who is majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength? It is I who

¹³ Wilkinson & Boa, 252.

¹⁴ MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 238.

speaking in righteousness, mighty to save. ² Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? ³ I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. ⁴ For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. ⁵ And I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath upheld Me. ⁶ And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” (Isa 63:1-6)

- What a sobering view of God’s judgment on Edom and other nations who opposed Israel

God promised Abraham “I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse” (Gen 12:3)

- Edom cursed Israel, so they were cursed
- God blessed Israel and restored them after their exile

This story of Obadiah is a very clear example of what Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12)

- Edom thought that he stood
- But God would bring the nation down

God has always hated pride

- Both James and Peter tell us that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jam 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5)

“There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers” (Prov 6:16-19)

- The very first thing in that list is “haughty eyes”

Humility is God’s working in our heart to show us the dangers of pride

- No one is humble in and of themselves

John Stott has written, “pride is our greatest enemy and humility our greatest friend”¹⁵

The book of Obadiah ends on a positive note, “the kingdom will be the LORD’s”

- What a great reminder of God’s sovereignty!
- What a great reminder of God’s ultimate victory!

¹⁵ Dever, 754.