

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets

Studies in the Minor Prophets

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Jersey Shore Baptist Church

Pastor Phil Erickson

Began May 24, 2017

Message Four – Obadiah “The Pride of Edom”

Memory Verse

“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.” - (Obadiah 1:4)

Introduction

Obadiah is a prophecy pronouncing judgment on the nation of Edom, which is located just to the south and east of Judah, below the Dead Sea. (see map) This nation had lifted themselves up in pride against God, and against God’s people. Though they descended from Israel’s brother, Esau, they treated the children of Israel as their bitter enemy.

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. McGee states:

“Obadiah is a little book, but it is an example of an atomic bomb in the Bible. It is a small thing, but it has a potent message.”¹

The Prophet - Obadiah

His name means “servant of Jehovah” or “servant of the Lord”, and he is one of a dozen or so men in the Bible that share that name. It is difficult to tell which Obadiah he may be, as it is also difficult to determine the exact date of the writing. Bible experts are torn between an early date of around 840 BC, and a later date of 586 BC. This Book is either the earliest of all of the prophets, or it is among the latest (excluding the post-exilic prophets). The context of the Book describes an invasion of Jerusalem. There were four main invasions of Jerusalem in Israel’s / Judah’s history, but exactly which invasion of Judah Obadiah is speaking about is difficult to determine:

Four Invasions of Jerusalem:

- 1 Egypt (Shishak) – 926 BC during the reign of King Rehoboam (1 Kings 14:25 – 26; 2 Chronicles 12)

¹ McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 725). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- 2 Arabians and Philistines – 848 – 841 BC during the reign of Jehoram (2 Chronicles 21:8 – 20)
- 3 Israel (Jehoash - Northern Kingdom) – 790 BC during the reign of Amaziah. (2 Kings 14; 2 Chronicles 25)
- 4 Babylon – 605 – 586 BC (2 Kings 24 – 25; See Psalm 137 – The Edomites are mentioned in association with this invasion.)

Possibilities of which Obadiah was the writer:

- 1 The Obadiah that was in Ahab’s Kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 18)
- 2 The Obadiah sent by Jehoshaphat to teach the law in Judah. (2 Chronicles 17:7)
- 3 The Obadiah who was one of the overseers responsible for repairing the breaches of the temple in Josiah’s day. (2 Chronicles 34:12)

The supporters of the early date believe that invasion # 2 by the Arabians and the Philistines is the one referred to in Obadiah, which would make the writing of Obadiah somewhere around 840 BC; and Obadiah #2 (above) could be the writer. The Obadiah (#1 above) mentioned in relation to Ahab’s kingdom did prophecy around the same time, but it is not probable that he was a prophet to the southern kingdom. Obadiah # 3 above was possibly around when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem. It is also possible that the writer to this Book is not one of the other Obadiah’s mentioned in Scripture.

The People – The Edomites

The people of Edom descended from Esau, Jacob's twin brother. There was a sibling rivalry between Edom and Israel, found first in Esau and Jacob:

- 1 The twins struggled in their mother's womb. (Genesis 25:22 – 26)
- 2 Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. (Genesis 25:27 – 34)
- 3 Jacob tricked Esau out of his blessing as the firstborn. (Genesis 27)

While Jacob and Esau eventually reconciled (Genesis 32 – 33), their descendants were often at odds with one another:

- 1 In the Exodus, Edom refused Israel passage through their land. (Numbers 20:14 – 21)
- 2 The Edomites fought against King Saul. (1 Samuel 14:47)
- 3 Edom was finally subjected by David. (2 Samuel 8:13 – 14; 1 Chronicles 18:12 – 13)

- 4 They revolted against Solomon. (1 Kings 11:14 – 25)
- 5 They fought against Jehoshaphat. (2 Chronicles 20)
- 6 During the reign of Jehoram, Edom revolted. (2 Kings 8:20 – 22; 2 Chronicles 21:8)

After the prophecy of Obadiah, the Edomites were overcome by the Nabataeans, and forced to settle south of Judah. Around 100 B.C., they were conquered by John Hyrcanus of the Maccabees who forced many of them to be circumcised and accept the Law. As such, many became nominal Jewish proselytes (Herod the Great was among them). By 100 AD, Edom as a race and nation had become lost to history.

The Edomites are mentioned in Malachi 1:1 – 3, and Paul explained the meaning of this passage in Romans 9. The following comments were taken from my study on the Book of Romans:

"And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;"
(Romans 9:10)

Now God will trace the nation through Jacob the younger son of Isaac and Rebecca.

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)" (Romans 9:11)

The nation of Israel came through Jacob and not Esau. Please be careful to note that it does not say anywhere in this passage that Jacob was elected for Heaven, and Esau was elected for Hell. The "calling" here is not to salvation. Jacob was elected by God's sovereign choice to be the father of Israel, and I think that we will see that God's foreknowledge has a lot to do with that choice.

"It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." (Romans 9:12)

Esau never served Jacob while he was alive, but his descendants served the descendants of Israel. Again, we are not dealing here with individuals, but rather with the nation of Israel, and the Edomites, which were the descendants of Esau.

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Romans 9:13)

This is a quote from Malachi 1:2 – 3, the last Book of the Old Testament. God never said that he hated Esau when he was alive. He did say that Esau would serve Jacob, but as we have already determined that was a reference to his descendants. God rejected (hated – same word as was used for Saul when God rejected Saul from being king – [1 Samuel 15:23, 26; 16:1]) Esau and his descendants by His sovereign choice, but it does not mean that Esau, as an individual, was condemned to Hell before he was born. If Esau or any of his descendants went to Hell, it was because they rejected God. Had any one of them placed his faith in God, he would have been saved.

The Place

Located to the south of the Dead Sea (see map), they built their cities in the cliffs, and thought that their cities were impregnable to invading armies.

Note from Charles Ryrie:

From the thirteenth to the sixth centuries b.c. they settled in Mount Seir, a mountainous region S of the Dead Sea, of which Sela (Petra) was the capital. So rugged is the terrain that the valley in which Petra is located can be reached only through a narrow canyon guarded by towering mountain walls 200–250 ft (61–76 m) high (see Obad. 3–4). During the fifth century b.c., the Nabataeans dislodged the Edomites from their territory, causing them to withdraw to Idumea in southern Palestine.²



Petra

This city in the Desert of Edom (present day Jordan) has miles of underground chambers and passageways. It is believed by some to be the place the Israelites will escape to during the Tribulation Period when fleeing from the Antichrist.



The Prophecy

I The Description of Their Pride (vs. 1 – 9)

² Ryrie, C. C. (1994). *Ryrie study Bible: King James Version* (Expanded ed., p. 1324). Chicago: Moody Press.

The Edomites were a proud people. They especially prided themselves in the fact that their cities were so fortified that enemies could not invade them. (verse 3) According to this prophecy, Edom would be betrayed by their allies, and completely destroyed.

See Jeremiah 49:7 – 22 for a passage that is strikingly similar to Obadiah 1 – 9. (also, Ezekiel 35)

The obvious lesson that we can learn from this prophecy is that pride is something that will surely bring any nation, and any individual Christian, down:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." - (Proverbs 16:18)

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." - (Proverbs 6:16-19)

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." - (2 Chronicles 7:14)

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." - (Proverbs 8:13)

Note on v. 9 – Temon – see Job 2:11 (Eliphaz was from Temon); Jeremiah 49:7 (Temon is spoken of as once having wisdom)

II Their Defiling of God's People (vs. 10 – 14)

In this section, God describes the specific reasons for the judgment that was coming.

A For their treatment of Israel (v. 10, 13 - 14)

"Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother:" - (Deuteronomy 23:7)

See Deuteronomy 2:1 – 7; Numbers 20:14 – 21

When Jerusalem was invaded, the Edomites not only participated, but also blocked off the escape of the Israelites through their border.

B For their siding with Israel's enemies (v. 11)

It is unwise to take sides against the people of God:

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." - (Genesis 12:3)

C For their rejoicing over Israel's defeats. (v. 12)

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:" -
(Proverbs 24:17)

III The Depiction of Their Punishment (vs. 15 – 21)

"The Day of the Lord" refers to Christ's future judgment of all of the nations, and the setting up of His Earthly Kingdom. (see 2 Peter 3:7 – 13) However, Edom's demise as a nation came about before Christ's first coming, but there may be some "remaining" (v. 18) that will have to be dealt with.

- 1 Edom's destruction began with the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar (600 B.C.)
- 2 It continued into the fourth century B.C. with the invasion of the Arabs known as the Nabataeans, forcing them to a region south of Judah.
- 3 In the second century B.C., the Maccabees brought them under subjection when Judas Maccabeus slew twenty thousand of them
- 4 John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.) forced the remnant to accept circumcision and the Law.

Conclusion

There are many practical applications that can be drawn from this study of Obadiah.

- 1 Pride must be destroyed or it will destroy you.
- 2 Relationships are more important than your rights (getting your way). The Israelites and Edomites had a long-standing hatred for each other that began with Jacob and Esau.
- 3 God will hold you and I accountable for our actions. God may have waited a long time before he judged Edom, but He did not forget what they did.
- 4 Don't take sides against Israel. God will establish His Kingdom with Israel. The land belongs to them.

"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

Israel is certainly not always right, but they are God's problem. Our job is to support Israel.