

**“The Kingdom Is The Lord’s”
(Obadiah 1:1-21)
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INTRODUCTION:

Background to Obadiah

Here are some quick facts about it.

- Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Just one chapter, 21 verses.
- Obadiah is not an oracle or prophecy against Israel, but pretty much stands alone as a prophecy against Edom.
- Obadiah was most likely written during the exile, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC.
- To understand the message of Obadiah we have to go way back to Genesis and see how God related with Edom.

Edom is the nation descended from Esau. If you look at this prophecy the author uses Edom and Esau interchangeably. So where do we first encounter the Esau? Genesis 25

Genesis 25:19-26 ¹⁹ This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²² The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." ²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

This is where it all begins. Here's how the relationship between the two brothers continues.

Genesis 25:29-34 ²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." ³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" ³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

And then when you get to chapter 26, it tracks the life of Isaac and how God was blessing him, and then here's an interesting statement at the end of that chapter.

Genesis 26:34-35 ³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

Why? Most likely because of who he married. He married someone outside his tribe. And it appears he married without the counsel of his parents. And so they, both of them as husband and wife had become a source of grief.

Then when we move over to chapter 27 we have that famous story of Jacob deceiving Esau for his father's blessing. Remember that story? Their mother Rebecca schemes with Jacob the younger son and tricks both their ailing father Isaac and the older brother Esau out of his blessing as the first born son. And Isaac issues this blessing on Jacob.

Genesis 27:28-29 28 May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness-- an abundance of grain and new wine. 29 May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."

Did you catch what it said? Be lord over your brothers. And the tail end of it is a repeat of the Abrahamic promise. It's a promise to be the one through whom the promise of Abraham, the promise of salvation for all nations, will be carried out.

And then Esau returns and approaches his father to receive the blessing that he was to receive as the first-born son and both Isaac and Esau are shocked that they had been deceived by Jacob. And so Esau begs his father for a blessing and his dad basically says, sorry but what's done is done and the blessing has already been given to your brother. But Isaac does have one word for his eldest son.

Genesis 27:39-40 39 His father Isaac answered him, "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. 40 You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck."

It's basically a blessing that just reconfirms the blessing given to Jacob. In fact it's not even really a blessing. It's a curse. And Esau hated Jacob from that moment.

Genesis 27:41 41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

But the drama is not over...it had actually just begun.

So they were grown up and they had become leaders of their own clans and as they were journeying, being nomadic shepherds, they stumbled upon each other. And afraid that Esau would attack Jacob, Jacob sends ahead of him a great gift of cattle to hopefully appease his brother. And they meet each other...not really sure of what to do...they exchange courtesies, but then basically go on their own way. There was no reconciliation. You hear no mention of repentance or forgiveness from either of them.

And then we jump over a few generations. The Israelites have been in slavery under the Egyptians. They've been delivered by the hand of God through Moses and they are at the end of their 40 years of wandering through the desert to the Promised Land. And so that takes us to Numbers chapter 20 where we have our next encounter between Jacob and Esau or as they're now known, not as clans, but as the nations of Israel and Edom.

Numbers 20:17-21 17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not go through any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway and not turn to the right or to the left until we have passed through your territory." 18 But Edom

answered: "You may not pass through here; if you try, we will march out and attack you with the sword." 19 The Israelites replied: "We will go along the main road, and if we or our livestock drink any of your water, we will pay for it. We only want to pass through on foot-- nothing else." 20 Again they answered: "You may not pass through." Then Edom came out against them with a large and powerful army. 21 Since Edom refused to let them go through their territory, Israel turned away from them.

Now jump over a few more generations to the times of the kings and the conflict continues. At that time Judah had conquered much of the region and Edom was part of their rule, but Edom rebelled against Judah to regain their independence.

And then in Amos God gives a judgment against Edom when he says...

Amos 1:11 11 This is what the LORD says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not turn back my wrath. Because he pursued his brother with a sword, stifling all compassion, because his anger raged continually and his fury flamed unchecked,

And then in Psalm 137:7 we have an account of the bitterness that Israel had against Edom.

Psalm 137:7 7 Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell. "Tear it down," they cried, "tear it down to its foundations!"

So that's the background to Obadiah. It's only one chapter, but you need to know the whole bible to understand what's going on.

So let's get to this short book.

Obadiah 1:1-21 NIV 1 The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom-- We have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Rise, and let us go against her for battle"-- 2 "See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised. 3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' 4 Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. 5 "If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night-- Oh, what a disaster awaits you-- would they not steal only as much as they wanted? If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? 6 But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged! 7 All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it. 8 "In that day," declares the LORD, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau? 9 Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. 10 Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. 11 On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. 12 You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. 13 You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor look down on them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. 14 You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. 15 "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head. 16 Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been. 17 But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. 18 The house of Jacob will be a fire and the

house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of Esau." The LORD has spoken. 19 People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau, and people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead. 20 This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan will possess the land as far as Zarephath; the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negev. 21 Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's.

An explanation of the book

As God was judging Israel in allowing the unthinkable to happen, for a foreign nation to come in, in this case the Babylonians, and destroy Jerusalem, and take the people into slavery off into a foreign land, Edom should have used this tragedy as a wake up call to repent herself of all of her sins. These two countries had ties by blood. They should have consoled each other and cared for each other and stood by each other. But Edom doesn't do that. She gloats and she prides in herself. She stands off aloof. She points the finger of judgment. She says, they had what's coming to them. What comes around goes around and things like that. And more than that she revels and rejoices in the fact that Israel is getting her due. The bottom line was that Edom was prideful and didn't get the message.

And God says, for those actions, you will get yours too. Because judgment is not only reserved for God's people. Judgment also awaits all nations that disobey God.

15 "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

But we know it's not only for nations but also for individuals. Those who reject God's kingship in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, will get their due. God will judge them. And so we must repent of our rebellion and look to the cross and accept the true king Jesus Christ as savior and Lord. And for those of us who consider ourselves Christians, we should never gloat in the destruction and misery of others. It should always serve as a wake-up call for ourselves. It should always make us look inward and see if we too are not guilty of the same sins. It should cause us to be broken and amazed in the grace and favor that God has shown us.

Now let's look at the **second half** of this book. It speaks of how God will restore Zion, Israel, the people of God. That seems to be a common message for the prophets. There will be judgment, even upon God's people, for God is just and holy and he cannot be mocked, but there will always be a remnant, a select few who remained true to God and he will restore and reward them for their faithfulness.

For a Jew this message would be understood very narrowly and they would look forward to a restoration of the Jewish people in Palestine. They would look forward to the glory of Zion to be restored once again. But as Christians, we understand that the promise of restoration is much larger than what we see in the book of Obadiah.

We know that the people of God are not just Jews. The people of God goes beyond ethnicity to spirituality. Those who have God as their Father and Christ as their Savior are the true people of God.

Galatians 3 tells us that the real descendants of Abraham are not merely by bloodlines, but by Christ. And at the Day of the Lord, the judgment, only those who have trusted in Jesus will be spared. So if we have trusted in Jesus, we too can be assured that God will reign and his kingdom will come and we will be saved and vengeance will be the Lord's.

There are a few more key lessons in this short book.

- Though God deals primarily with the nation of Israel, he is still sovereign over all the nations.
- All nations must humble themselves and acknowledge the sovereignty of God. (2-9) There is no place for pride, not for Christians, not for anyone.
- Compliance with sinful nations is sin itself. (10-14)
- There will be judgment for all peoples who do not recognize the rule of God. (15-16)
- God's plans for Israel, those who believe in Christ, namely the Church, will prevail. (17-21)

Conclusion:

Friends, the message of the prophets is basically the message of the whole bible, which is the message of the gospel, the good news.

God, one God, the God of heaven and earth created everything. And the pinnacle of his creation was humankind. And he gave humans free will and choice, and they used that choice to disobey and rebel against God. And so God being God, holy and just, has to judge those wrongs. It'd be unjust of him to do nothing. And those wrongs that we've done deserve the worst type of judgment and that's the judgment of hell, which is eternal separation from God, but also eternal punishment for sin. That's the bad news.

The good news is that God in his incredible love, send his only Son Jesus Christ, who was fully God and fully human, and he died on a cross. And the death he died, he died for us, to take upon himself the punishment for sin we were supposed to receive. And he rose from the dead three days later to conquer sin and death.

And God says, take my son's sacrifice. Take it for yourself. Let me apply what he's done to your life by confessing your sins and believing in Jesus. That's the only way you can have a relationship with me. That's the only way you can enter heaven. That's the only way you can avoid hell. Just accept this gift and allow God to be the leader, the lord of your life.

That's the message of the prophets, that's the message of the bible, that's the message of Jesus. Let's pray.