

Obadiah For the Modern World

Introduction:

1. The biblical book of Obadiah is considered one of the “minor” prophets.
2. It is only one chapter and the contents of that chapter are remarkably similar to the contents of Jer. 49.
3. The historical setting of its message is not specified. Some O.T. prophets identify specifically when they received their messages. Ex. Jeremiah says the word of the Lord came to him during “the days of king Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah” and ended at the eleventh year of king Zedekiah (1:1), when they were taken captive by Babylon.
4. It is likely, that Obadiah pertains to the same time period.
5. Its message has to do with God’s judgment against Edom, one of Judah’s neighbors. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the older brother of Jacob.
6. You might remember the account in Genesis 25 about Esau selling his firstborn birthright to Jacob. You might also recall that Jacob deceived his father into blessing him with these privileges rather than his brother (Gen. 27).
7. There was constant friction between these two groups.
 - a. Sometimes Jacob’s descendants subjugated Esau’s descendants.
 - b. Sometimes Esau’s descendants would be independent.
8. What would such an ancient document have to offer a modern world? What can it offer me? Let’s investigate and see.
9. Reading 1-4.

Discussion:

- I. First, it invites us to consider what the Lord God has to say.
 - A. While we live in a modern world in which many do not accept the existence of God this text assumes His existence and calls on us to listen to what He has to say.
 1. Whether you believe in the existence of God or not the Bible claims that it is a message come from Him. Ex. Obadiah 1, 4, 8, 18.
 2. This means that He not only exists but that He communicates with men.
 - B. This communication implies that men are responsible to Him.
 1. Edom is arrogant and God will bring her down (v. 4).
 2. Moral and ethical obligation is associated with the existence and the communication of God.
- II. Second, it indicates that God is control of things in this world.
 - A. He rules in the affairs of nations (1) bringing judgment on those who are arrogant.
 - B. He is familiar with them, their dwelling place and what is in their heart (3).
 - C. He rules our allies (7) and our leaders (8).
- III. What had Edom done that had brought the judgment of God upon them? (vs. 10ff).

- A. In her arrogance she had done violence to Jacob (v. 10).
- B. Verses 11ff there is a description of what she had done.
 - 1. They had allied themselves with those who had invaded Jerusalem (v. 11). This is probably a reference to their support of the Babylonian invasion.
 - 2. "They gloated over" Jerusalem's misfortune. They rejoiced in their day of destruction. They boasted in the day of their distress (v. 12).
 - 3. They gloated over their calamity. They looted their wealth (v. 13).
 - 4. They cut down their fugitives and imprisoned their survivors (v. 14).
- C. We have seen this kind of thing happen in our modern world, have we not?
 - 1. We have seen powerful military forces invade, take control and destroy. And in a "might makes right" kind of philosophy there is nothing wrong with that. We have witnessed the barbarity of racial cleansing. We have experienced the atrocities of war.
 - 2. But in God's communication it is not only wrong it receives His condemnation. Edom has rejoiced, gloated over, taken advantage of fugitives.
- D. Surely we would not do the same? Do we take financial advantage of those fleeing war zones? Those feeling economic depression? Does God's revelation affect our immigration policy? Does God's revelation affect our care for those fleeing domestic violence? Does God's revelation affect how I treat the people I know? If someone I know has "less power" than me how do I respond?
 - 1. In 1 Cor. 6 Christians were perpetuating legal violence on their brothers.
 - 2. In 1 Cor. 5:11 the verbal violence of reviling is condemned. Cf. Matt. 5:21ff.
- E. Edom had acted as a bully, having allied herself with Babylon. God was engaged to respond.

IV. The consequence of their actions.

- A. The Lord will use nations to go against Edom in battle (1).
 - 1. This is a reflection of God's control in the affairs of nations.
 - 2. He uses nations as His agents to bring judgment.
- B. He will make Edom small (2).
 - 1. Although she see herself as great.
 - 2. The Lord judgment will reduce her.
- C. The Lord will bring her down (3).
 - 1. She will be ruined (5).
 - 2. She will be ransacked (6).
 - 3. Her allies will betray her (7).
 - 4. He will destroy her wise men (8).
 - 5. Her mighty men will be dismayed (9).
 - 6. Everyone will be cut off by slaughter (9).
 - 7. She will be covered with shame (10).
 - 8. She will be cut off forever (10).
 - 9. She will be burned as stubble (18).
 - 10. There will be no survivor of the house of Esau (18).
- D. "This is harsh judgment," you might observe. We have already observed their gloating over the destruction of Judah.

1. Amos 1:11 says, "Edom pursued his brother with the sword, while he stifled his compassion; his anger tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever."
 2. If God brought such judgment on Edom for such action will He dismiss similar hostility manifest by people today? Already noted Matt. 5:21-26.
 3. Read Rom. 1:28-32.
 4. God is in the business of judging righteously (2 Thess. 1:4-9).
 - a. Yes God's people are persecuted.
 - b. But not always.
 5. Why does God allow evil? "He is patient, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). But there is a time coming. He knows how to rescue the righteous and to condemn the unrighteous (see 2 Pet. 2:4-9).
- E. God rules in the affairs of men (Obad. 19-21).
1. I do not think this text means that Israel will control the actual physical territory of her enemies. I think this text transcends physical geography.
 2. It speaks to the ultimate victory of God and His people.
 3. Verse 21 points to the dominion of God and His people over the kingdom of the world. God's people are triumphant, whereas the people of the world will be completely defeated.

Conclusion:

1. Does the ancient Book of Obadiah have a message for today. It is most relevant.
2. It teaches us that God humbles those that are proud; that judgment will come upon those who insist on practicing evil.
3. It teaches that God vindicates those who are His and that the people of the world will be completely defeated.
4. Are you among those who will be vindicated? Or are you among those who will be defeated.