

## BIBLE SURVEY - OBADIAH

***"For the Day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head."*** Obadiah 15

Obadiah means *servant of the Lord*. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. The prophet Obadiah presented this vision from God in 845BC. This opened a period of 300 years, during which many prophets warned the people of God not to continue in ingratitude, injustice, immorality and idolatry.

### **Words of Rebuke and Reassurance**

Obadiah warned Edom of imminent judgement and reassured God's people of His sovereign justice. Ultimately, it is not the evil will of men that will determine history, but the righteous purposes of God. When the people of God suffer persecution they need to turn to the prophecy of Obadiah to renew their faith that God cares for His suffering people and He will work all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

### **Esau the Red**

Obadiah proclaims judgement upon Edom. The Edomites descended from Esau, the first born (twin) son of Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 25:24-26), who struggled with Jacob, even while in the womb (Gen. 25:22). Esau's name means hairy because *"he was like a hairy garment all over."* Esau was also called Edom, meaning *"red"*. From birth he was red-headed (Gen. 25:25).

### **Despising His Heritage**

The Bible says that God loved Jacob, but he hated Esau (Malachi 1:2-3). Esau showed contempt for the Covenant by marrying two Hittite women, who were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26:34-35). Esau later married a daughter of Ishmael (Gen. 28:9). Esau despised his heritage and sold his birthright for a mere plate of food (Gen. 25:33-34).

### **Edom**

Esau settled in the mountainous region South of the Dead Sea, stretching to the Gulf of Aqabah. This range of precipitous red sand stone heights known as the Mountains of Sier, controlled the Kings Highway caravan route, linking North Africa with Europe and Asia. The territory included fertile valleys and fruitful soil.

### **Petra**

Its ancient capital was Bozrah, just South of the Dead Sea. In Obadiah's day the capital was Petra, a unique rock city perched like an Eagles nest amid inaccessible mountain cliffs. It's only approach was through a deep rock cleft, more than a mile long, with massive cliffs, more than 700 feet high, rising on either side. Hewn out of the soft red sandstone, temples and dwellings were carved out of the rock. Towering above Petra is Mount Sier around 2,000 feet high. Petra was an impregnable fortress for the Edomites who raided their neighbours and lived off the loot of their ill-gotten gains.

### **Cruel Arrogance**

Petra, with its difficult access, rock hewn dwellings and precipitous natural defences was considered impregnable. This helped foster a spirit of fierce defiance and arrogance. The Edomite people came to be described as profane, proud, gloating, fierce, bitter, brutal, cruel, mean and treacherous.

### **The Request of Moses**

When Moses led the children out of bondage from Egypt, he appealed to the king of Edom: *"Thus says your brother Israel: you know all the hardship that has befallen us, how our fathers went down to Egypt and we dwelt in Egypt a long time and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers."*

*When we cried out to the Lord. He heard our voice and sent the Angel and bought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields, or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the Kings Highway, we will not turn aside to the right hand or the left until we have passed through your territory."* Numbers 20:14-18.

### **The Hostility of Edom**

Then Edom said to him: *"You shall not pass through my land lest I come out against you with a sword."* Edom came out against Israel with many men and with a strong hand and refused to give Israel passage through their territory. When Jerusalem was attacked the Edomites aided their enemies.

### **Shameful Treachery**

*"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you and you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side – in the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem - even you were as one of them. But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Indeed you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity, or laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress."* Obadiah 10-14.

### **Centuries of Conflict**

The Edomites opposed King Saul (1043-1011BC). They were conquered by King David (1011-971BC), and ruled by King Solomon (971-931BC). The Edomites fought against King Jehoshaphat (873-848BC) and successfully rebelled against King Jehoam (853-841BC). The Edomites were again conquered by Judah under King Amaziah (796-767BC). The Edomites regained their independence during the reign of King Ahaz (735-715BC).

### **The Fall of Jerusalem**

The Edomites gleefully joined in the destruction and looting of Jerusalem when it fell to the Babylonians in 586BC. *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion... Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem, who said 'Raze it, Raze it, to its very foundation!'"* Psalm 137:1,7.

### **The Idumeans of Judah**

After the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon, the Edomites migrated into the, now, mostly depopulated Judea. They suffered crushing defeat from Judas Maccabaeus (1 Maccabees 5:3, 65). The Edomites came to control Judea to such an extent that the Idumeans became kings of Judah. Herod the great, an Edomite (Idumean) became king of Judah in 37BC.

### **The Bitter Fruit of Hatred**

The age-old enmity between Esau and Jacob was seen in King Herod's attempt to murder Jesus at His birth in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18). The Idumeans were a major part of the rebellion against Rome and were defeated by Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD70. It is ironic that the Edomites, who gloated and applauded the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC, died trying to defend it in AD70.

### **Everything Has Consequences**

*"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."* Galatians 6:7-8.

## **Reaping What They Have Sown**

The treachery and arrogant callousness of the Edomites who could enjoy the sight of the defeat, devastation and affliction of the people of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians provoked God's judgment. ***"For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head."*** Obadiah 15.

## **The Day of Judgement**

*"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."* Matthew 25:40-46.

## **Sowing Iniquity**

*"Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same."* Job 4:8.

*"Perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord."* Proverbs 6:14.

## **Sowing Strife**

*"A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends."* Proverbs 16:28.

*"He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow..."* Proverbs 22:8.

## **Provoking the Wrath of God**

*"They have sown wheat but reaped thorns; they have put themselves to pain but do not profit. But be ashamed of your harvest because of the fierce anger of the Lord."* Jeremiah 12:13.

*"Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end."* Ezekiel 21:25.

## **Ploughed Wickedness**

*"You have ploughed wickedness; you have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, because you trusted in your own way, in the multitude of your mighty men."* Hosea 10:13.

*"And another angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe'."* Revelation 14:15.

## **Contrasting Brothers**

The Book of Genesis contains a number of contrasting brothers. Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. Abel, Isaac and Jacob are spiritual men, examples of God's children. However, Cain, Ishmael and Esau are carnal men who represent selfishness and the flesh.

### **Cain**

Cain exemplifies an antipathy to Redemption. He offered the fruit of the ground and despised the atonement of the blood of the lamb.

Ishmael, the illegitimate son of a slave girl, his hand would be against his brother and every man's hand would be against him. *"For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to*

*the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two Covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children - but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.... Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free." Galatians 4:22-31.*

## **Esau**

Esau represents the selfish, short-sighted, materialistic lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Esau despised his birthright, forsook his heritage, dishonoured his parents and married outside of his people. For a momentary gratification, Esau despised the hope of Heavenly glory and esteemed an earthly meal more important than God's promises for Eternity. The carnal lusts, short-sightedness, materialism, pride, cruelty and treachery of Esau is a picture of the natural man.

## **The War Between the Flesh and the Spirit**

*"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'." Romans 8:5-15.*

## **Your Pride Has Deceived You**

The pride of Edom is condemned by Obadiah: *"Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you... Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord." Obadiah 2-4.*

## **All Paths Lead to God**

Obadiah speaks of the Day of the Lord, when the Lord will judge all nations. Many people delude themselves that all religions are essentially the same, that all paths lead to God. Actually all paths do lead to God, in that, it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the Judgement (Hebrews 9:27). The question is, what will God's verdict be of you? **Where will you spend eternity?**

## **God Will Judge Each One of Us**

There is only one God: The Creator, the Eternal Judge, before whom each one of us must stand and give an account of our lives. We will have to give an account for every idle word ever spoken. This was the message of the Apostle Paul to the people of Athens: **"...God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."** Acts 17:30-31.

## Whatever You Do to God's People

One of the matters that God judges nations by is in accordance with how they have treated His people. Our Lord Jesus describes the Day of Judgement in Matthew 25, in terms of *"inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to Me."* Matthew 25:40.

## Persecuting Christ

To Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, the Lord declared: *"... 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'..."* Acts 9:4-6. Throughout the world you can see who are God's people, by how they respond to Christ. Those who reject Christ, reject God the Father. Those who love Christ, obey His Commandments (John 14:23).

## The Fruit of Faith

*"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* Matthew 7:21-23.

## God's People Love Christ

*"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but **you seek to kill Me, because My Word has no place in you.** I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father'. Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.' Then they said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father - God.' Jesus said to them, **'If God were your Father, you would love Me,** for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My Word. **You are of your father the devil,** and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? **He who is of God hears God's Words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.**"* John 8:37-47.

## God Judges Every Nation

Obadiah may seem to be a small and obscure Book, but it deals with the fundamental issues of judgement. There is only one God. He is the God of all the nations. The Day of the Lord shall come upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you. *"...The Kingdom shall be the Lords."* Obadiah 21.

## God Will Destroy His Enemies

Those who make themselves God's enemies, have no hope. *"The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain... for the Lord has spoken."* Obadiah 18. God will judge the unrepentant but He shall deliver His Holy people (Obadiah 17).

## The Curse of Pride

Pride is sinful rebellion against God. We have nothing to be proud of, except our Lord Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished.

## Christ in Obadiah

Obadiah concludes with a foreshadowing of Christ and His apostles. *"Then saviours shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's."* Obadiah 21. These saviours (or deliverers) are the apostles of Christ, ministers of the Word. They

are described as saviours, or deliverers, not because they obtain our Salvation, but because they proclaim the Salvation provided by the grace of God alone, on the basis of the Atonement of Christ alone, received by Faith alone. Scripture alone is our ultimate authority. Christ alone is the head of the Church. Everything must be done to the glory of God alone.

***"For the Day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you."*** Obadiah 15.

Dr. Peter Hammond  
Livingstone Fellowship  
P.O. Box 74 Newlands 7725  
Cape Town South Africa  
Tel: 021-689-4480  
Fax: 021-685-5884  
Email: [mission@frontline.org.za](mailto:mission@frontline.org.za)  
Website: [www.livingstonefellowship.co.za](http://www.livingstonefellowship.co.za)



The full message on *Obadiah*, as delivered at Livingstone Fellowship, is available on audio CD from: Christian Liberty Books, PO Box 358, Howard Place 7450, Cape Town, South Africa, tel: 021-689-7478, Email: [.admin@christianlibertybooks.co.za](mailto:admin@christianlibertybooks.co.za) and Website: [www.christianlibertybooks.co.za](http://www.christianlibertybooks.co.za)