

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets Obadiah—“You were as one of them...”

Intro: There is a lot we can learn from a study of the OT. We often ignore the twelve books of the Bible sometimes called “the minor prophets”. They got that name because their writings are briefer than those that precede them in the Biblical collection; but I can assure you that there was nothing minor about the minor prophets. Each of them were powerful men of God who brought a major message from God in their time. So I would like to explore some of their messages with you in this series I’ll call “Major Lessons from the Minor Prophets”. Tonight let’s turn to the book of Obadiah.

The book of Obadiah is one of the shortest of the books of the Bible; but it packs a powerful message about Edom and Israel. To appreciate its message we need to do a quick review of our OT history.

Edom and Israel were brothers! But we usually don’t remember either them by those names. You would easily remember them if I called them by their birth names (Jacob and Esau). Many of you have known the story of these two boys since you were a child.

You remember how they were the twin sons of Isaac by Rebekah and how they struggled together in her womb and how God declared that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob).

You remember how that Esau sold his birthright to his brother Jacob and later how that Jacob stole the family blessing by tricking his blind father into believing that he was Esau, and how that Jacob was forced to flee from his brother’s wrath.

You remember that the two were reconciled before their deaths and together buried their father; but their descendants would go their separate ways.

God would change the name of Jacob to Israel; and Esau came to be called Edom (“Red”) a color that had significance for him more than once in his life. At birth he was “red skinned” and later he would sell his birthright for some “red” stew. So the nation from him was called Edom or the Edomites. And the nation from Jacob was called “Israel” or the “Israelites”. The Edomites would conquer the land east of Israel and live in the area of Mount Seir in the lofty rock crags of that region. Israel of course would eventually occupy the land of Palestine on the western side of the Jordan.

So the relationship of these two “brother” nations was not fraternal as one might have hoped but hostile.

When Israel came out of Egypt they were treated by their “brothers” the Edomites with hostility (Num. 20:14-21) and that hostility was to continue for hundreds of years until they were subjugated by King David (2 Sam. 8:13-14).

Many years later Edom revolted against Israel during the reign of King Jehoram (2 Kg. 8:20-22; 2 Chron 21:8). This however was only the

beginning of Jehoram's troubles. This king did not respect God or lead like his ancestor David. Instead we are told he failed to provide spiritual leadership to his people, allowing them to engage in worship to pagan gods like Baal (2 Chron. 21:10ff). He used his authority as king to kill his brothers who were better than himself. Thus, God sent Elisha the prophet to him with a message that he would be punished by personal disease and by invasion. The Chronicler describes that invasion in 2 Chron. 21:16-17. But what did Edom do during this time when Israel was being punished? What attitude did they have toward Israel? The prophet Obadiah speaks about this in his book:

Edom's attitude and response toward Israel during this time is seen in Obadiah's prophecy.

Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. 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. (Obadiah 10-12)

Edom, Israel's brother nation, could have come to their aid, but instead they "stood aloof". Instead of identifying with their brothers, they identified with the heathen people who conquered their brothers. Instead of feel compassion and sorrow at the fall of this brother nation, they gloated over their misfortune and capitalized upon it.

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. 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. You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. (Obadiah 12-14)

What then is the message of Obadiah? To Israel and to Edom?

Obadiah's Message concerning Israel and Edom

Edom, along with the nations, will be judged for its arrogance.

Obadiah 1:1-9

The Edomites were proud, defiant, ambitious, opposed to the people of God, cruel. Then see the other side of self-deception, detestable to God, defeated by the faithful and destroyed by God.

It is interesting to notice that the judgments were returned upon their heads just as they had dealt with others

"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. (Obadiah 15)

And just as God promised so he did.

The Babylonians

Then the Greeks

*Then the Israelites themselves until Edom was no more, just like God said!
Edom, itself became a symbol of the anti-God mindset and the ultimate destruction of the wicked (v. 16).*

The remnant of Israel will be saved through judgment and reign over her enemies.

Over against the judgment of Edom is the salvation of Israel, which refers not so much to the physical people but rather the remnant of Israel, those faithful to the Lord. (Obadiah 1:17-18)

Mount Zion is Jerusalem, the place where God causes His name to dwell. There God's people will dwell as a "holy" people, separated to Him.

Their "possessions" will not be taken from them as before (i.e. they will be protected from their enemies).

Instead of being conquered, they will conquer their enemies (v. 18); thus Israel is said to possess the land of Edom and Phillistia and the full extent of the land as God had earlier promised it (v. 19-20).

Israel's deliverers will become the judges of its enemies like Edom (v. 21).

God's rule will overcome all worldly rule; for "the kingdom will be the Lord's".

Keep in mind that Israel's future is couched in language that suggests holiness, divine protection, victory over enemies, influence over the nations, and the rule of God over all! But how were these promises to be fulfilled?

Dispensationalists affirm that the fulfillment is still future in an earthly millennium in which Christ rules over the Jews. However, the Holy Spirit gave the NT prophets the "key" that "unlocks" His OT prophecies! The prophecy of Zachariah is an appropriate commentary on this prophecy (Lk. 1:68-79).

God would visit his people and provide redemption and salvation for them. They would be delivered from enemies and serve him in holiness and peace.

John would prepare the way by bring God's people to a state of repentance so that they could enjoy this salvation.

The Lord himself would visit his people to illuminate them and bring peace. The Lord came in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ's kingdom would fill the world with the saving knowledge of God and bring to an end all other kingdoms of this world and bring His people safely to the eternal kingdom of the Father.

What Obadiah's and Zachariah's prophecies anticipate is the kingdom of God established on the day of Pentecost with Jesus Christ as head reigning until every enemy of God and his people are destroyed. The

relationship of Jesus with the church and together their victory over the world fills out the meaning of Obadiah phrase, "the kingdom will be the Lord's".

God's message for the modern reader of Obadiah

To fail to aid and help the cause of truth and those who obey it is to become as one of those who hurt and oppose the cause of truth.

God's promises to Israel find their ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the spiritual Israel of God, the church, not the physical nation of Israel.

What men sow they will ultimately reap.

Those who oppose God and His people will ultimately be punished for their arrogance and defeated. There will be no dwelling place where they can hide.

Those who trust in God and seek His dwelling place will find deliverance and blessing.

No matter what evil men may plan, the kingdom is the Lord's. He gets the last word.

Conclusion: These principles of salvation and judgment still work in our world. Each of us can have a part in the fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy. Put your faith in God and seek His kingdom.