

# **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

## **Bible Study Notes**

### **12-13-17**

#### **Obadiah**

WRINKLED face, tiny hands with fingernail chips, folds of new skin, and miniature eyes, nose, and mouth—she's a newborn. After months of formation, she burst forth into the world and into her family. "She has her mother's eyes." "I can sure tell who her parents are." "Now that's your nose." Relatives and friends gaze into the little face and see her mom and dad. Mother and Father rejoice in their daughter, a miracle, a new member of the family. As loving parents, they will feed, protect, nurture, guide, and discipline her. This is their duty and joy.

God, too, has children—men and women whom he has chosen as his very own. There have always been individuals marked as his, but with Abraham he promised to build a nation. Israel was to be God's country, and her people, the Jews, his very own sons and daughters. Down through the centuries, God gave discipline and punishment, but always with love and mercy. God, the eternal Father, protected and cared for his children.

Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is a dramatic example of God's response to anyone who would harm his children. Edom was a mountainous nation, occupying the region southeast of the Dead Sea including Petra, the spectacular city discovered by archaeologists a few decades ago. As descendants of Esau (Genesis 25:19-27:45), the Edomites were blood relatives of Israel, and like their father, they were rugged, fierce, and proud warriors with a seemingly invincible mountain home. Of all people, they should have rushed to the aid of their northern brothers. Instead, however, they gloated over Israel's problems, captured and delivered fugitives to the enemy, and even looted Israel's countryside.

Obadiah gave God's message to the Edomites. Because of their indifference to and defiance of God, their cowardice and pride, and their treachery toward their relatives in Judah, they stood condemned and would be destroyed. The book begins with the announcement that disaster was coming to Edom (1:1-9). Despite their "impregnable" cliffs and mountains, they would not be able to escape God's judgment. Obadiah then gave the reasons for their destruction (1:10-14)—their blatant arrogance toward God and their persecution of God's children. This concise prophecy ends with a description of the "day of the LORD," when judgment will fall on all who have harmed God's people (1:15-21).

Today, God's holy nation is his church—all who have trusted Christ for their salvation and have given their lives to him. These men and women are God's born-again and adopted children. As you read Obadiah, catch a glimpse of what it means to be God's child, under his love and protection. See how the heavenly Father responds to all who would attack those whom he loves.

**PURPOSE:** To show that God judges those who have harmed his people

**AUTHOR:** Obadiah. Very little is known about this man, whose name means "servant (or worshiper) of the LORD."

**ORIGINAL AUDIENCE:** The Edomites and the Jews in Judah (the southern kingdom)

**DATE WRITTEN:** Possibly during the reign of Jehoram in Judah, 855-841 B.C., or possibly during Jeremiah's ministry, 627-586 B.C.

**SETTING:** Historically, Edom had constantly harassed the Jews. Prior to the time this book was written, they had participated in attacks against Judah. Given the dates above, this prophecy came after the division of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms and before the conquering of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

**KEY VERSE:** "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" (1:15).

**KEY PEOPLE:** The Edomites

**KEY PLACES:** Edom, Jerusalem

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** The book of Obadiah uses vigorous poetic language and is written in the form of a dirge of doom.

## THE BLUEPRINT

1. Edom's destruction (1:1-16)

2. Israel's restoration (1:17-21) The book of Obadiah shows the outcome of the ancient feud between Edom and Israel. Edom was proud of its high position, but God would bring her down. Those who are high and powerful today should not be overconfident in themselves, whether they are a nation, a corporation, a church, or a family. Just as Edom was destroyed for its pride, so will anyone be who lives in defiance of God.

## MEGATHEMES

### Justice

**EXPLANATION:** Obadiah predicted that God would destroy Edom as punishment for standing by when Babylon invaded Judah. Because of their treachery, Edom's land would be given to Judah in the day when God rights the wrongs against his people.

**IMPORTANCE:** God will judge and fiercely punish all who harm his people. We can be confident in God's final victory. He is our champion, and we can trust him to bring about true justice.

### Pride

**EXPLANATION:** Because of their seemingly invincible rock fortress, the Edomites were proud and self-confident. But God humbled them and their nation disappeared from the face of the earth.

**IMPORTANCE:** All those who defy God will meet their doom as Edom did. Any nation who trusts in its power, wealth, technology, or wisdom more than in God will be brought low. All who are proud will one day be shocked to discover that no one is exempt from God's justice.

### Obadiah's Vision - Verses 1-10

<sup>1</sup> 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, let us go against her for battle"—<sup>2</sup> "See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised. <sup>3</sup> 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?' <sup>4</sup> Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> "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? <sup>6</sup> But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged! <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> "In that day," declares the LORD, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau? <sup>9</sup> Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. <sup>10</sup> Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever.

**1:1** Obadiah was a prophet from Judah who told of God's judgment against the nation of Edom. There are two commonly accepted dates for this prophecy: (1) between 853 and 841 B.C., when King Jehoram and Jerusalem were attacked by a Philistine/Arab coalition (2 Chronicles 21:16-20); (2) 586 B.C., when Jerusalem was completely destroyed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36). Edom had rejoiced over the misfortunes of both Israel and Judah, and yet the Edomites and Jews descended from two brothers—Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:19-26). But just as these two brothers were constantly fighting, so were Israel and Edom. God pronounced judgment on the Edomites for their callous and malicious actions toward his people.

**1:3** Edom was Judah's southern neighbor, sharing a common boundary. But neighbors are not always friends, and Edom liked nothing about Judah. Edom's capital at this time was Sela (perhaps the later city of Petra), a city considered impregnable because it was cut into rock cliffs and set in a canyon that could be entered only through a narrow gap. What Edom perceived as its strengths would be its downfall: (1) safety in their city (1:3-4)—God would send them plummeting from the heights; (2) pride in their self-sufficiency (1:4)—God would humble them; (3) wealth (1:5-6)—thieves would steal all they had; (4) allies (1:7)—God would cause them to turn against Edom; (5) wisdom (1:8-9)—the wise would be destroyed.

**1:3** The Edomites felt secure, and they were proud of their self-sufficiency. But they were fooling themselves because there is no lasting security apart from God. Is your security in objects or people? Ask yourself how much lasting security they really offer. Possessions and people can disappear in a moment, but God does not change. Only he can supply true security.

**1:4** The Edomites were proud of their city carved right into the rock. Today Sela, or Petra, is considered one of the marvels of the ancient world, but only as a tourist attraction. The Bible warns that pride is the surest route to self-destruction (Proverbs 16:18). Just as Petra and Edom fell, so will proud people fall. A humble person is more secure than a proud person because humility gives a more accurate perspective of oneself and the world.

**1:4-9** God did not pronounce these harsh judgments against Edom out of vengeance but in order to bring about justice. God is morally perfect and demands complete justice and fairness. The Edomites were simply getting what they deserved. Because they murdered, they would be murdered. Because they robbed, they would be robbed. Because they took advantage of others, they would be used. Don't talk yourself into sin, thinking that "nobody will know" or "I won't get caught." God knows all our sins, and he will be just.

**1:8** Edom was noted for its wise people. There is a difference, however, between human wisdom and God's wisdom. The Edomites may have been wise in the ways of the world, but they were foolish because they ignored and even mocked God.

**1:9** Eliphaz, one of Job's three friends (Job 2:11), was from Teman, about five miles east of Petra. Teman was named after Esau's grandson (Genesis 36:11).

**1:10-11** The Israelites had descended from Jacob, and the Edomites came from his brother, Esau (Genesis 25:19-26). Instead of helping Israel and Judah when they were in need, Edom had allowed them to be destroyed and even had plundered what was left behind. Edom, therefore, acted like an enemy and would be punished. Anyone who does not help God's people is God's enemy. If you have withheld your help from someone in a time of need, this is sin (James 4:17). Sin includes not only what we do, but also what we refuse to do. Don't ignore or refuse to help those in need.

### **Obadiah's Vision - Verses 11-21**

**<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> You should not gloat over 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. <sup>13</sup> You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. <sup>14</sup> You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. <sup>15</sup> "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. <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance. <sup>18</sup> Jacob will be a fire and Joseph a flame; Esau will be stubble, and they will set him on fire and destroy him. There will be no survivors from Esau." The LORD has spoken. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's.**

**1:12** The Edomites were glad to see Judah in trouble. Their hatred made them want the nation destroyed. For their wrong attitudes and actions, God wiped out Edom. How often do you find yourself rejoicing at the misfortunes of others? Because God alone is the judge, we must never be happy about others' misfortunes, even if we think they deserve them (see Proverbs 24:17).

**1:12-14** Of all Israel and Judah's neighbors, the Edomites were the only ones not promised any mercy from God. This was because they looted Jerusalem and rejoiced at the misfortunes of Israel and Judah. They betrayed their blood brothers in times of crisis and aided their brothers' enemies. (See also Psalm 137:7; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Ezekiel 25:12-14; Amos 1:11-12.)

**1:15** Why will God's judgment fall on all nations? Edom was not the only nation to rejoice at Judah's fall. All nations and individuals will be judged for the way they have treated God's people. Some nations today treat God's people favorably, while others are hostile toward them. God will judge all people according to the way they treat others, especially believers (Revelation 20:12-13). Jesus talked about this in Matthew 25:31-46.

**1:17-21** The Edomites were routed by Judas Maccabeus in 164 B.C. The nation no longer existed by the first century A.D. At the time of Obadiah's prophecy, Edom may have seemed more likely to survive than Judah. Yet Edom has vanished, and Judah still exists. This demonstrates the absolute certainty of God's word and of the punishment awaiting all who have mistreated God's people.

**1:21** Obadiah brought God's message of judgment on Edom. God was displeased with both their inward and their outward rebellion. People today are much the same as people in Obadiah's time, filled with arrogance, envy, and dishonesty. We may wonder where it will all end. Regardless of sin's effects, however, God is in control. Don't despair or give up hope. Know that when all is said and done, the Lord will still be King, and the confidence you place in him will not be in vain.

**1:21** Edom is an example to all the nations that are hostile to God. Nothing can break God's promise to protect his people from complete destruction. In the book of Obadiah we see four aspects of God's message of judgment: (1) Evil will certainly be punished; (2) those faithful to God have hope for a new future; (3) God is sovereign in human history; (4) God's ultimate purpose is to establish his eternal kingdom. The Edomites had been cruel to God's people. They were arrogant and proud, and they took advantage of others' misfortunes. Any nation that mistreats people who obey God will be punished, regardless of how invincible they appear. Similarly we, as individuals, cannot allow ourselves to feel so comfortable with our wealth or security that we fail to help God's people. This is sin. And because God is just, sin punished.