

OBADIAH

MINOR PROPHETS SERIES

Thus far in our study of Obadiah, we have seen the pride of the Edomites as they relied upon their location, wealth, friends and allies, wisdom and knowledge, and their military power. This pride led to their eventual downfall. Verse 3 tells us, “The pride of your heart has deceived you...”

The Edomites and Israelites were brothers since they descended from Isaac’s twin sons Jacob and Esau. There was conflict between these brothers from the time of their birth and the nation of Edom was hostile towards Israel throughout Old Testament times.



The word “day” is used in Obadiah to highlight particular times of action by Edom against Israel. In verses 11-14 the word day is used ten times in reference to specific instances when Edom was either aloof or deliberately aggressive. These serve as testimony against Edom.

Now in verses 15 and following Obadiah writes about another “day” and this time it is the “day of the Lord.” The “day of the Lord” is a time of judgment. As early as verse 8, God declares that there will be a judgment day for Edom. On this particular day God will destroy the wise men of Edom and their understanding. Edom was noted for their wise men, but these wise men and all their wisdom will not be able to save or protect the Edomites from the coming destruction.

A person or a nation may rebel against God on a certain day or days, but a day is coming when God will bring judgment and justice.

The Day of the Lord

The term the “day of the Lord” is used in both the Old and New Testaments. It can be used for judgments of God in this world or the final judgement. In the Old Testament, the day of the Lord pointed to any great manifestation of God’s power either in judgment or redemption. These could be days of doom or days of deliverance.¹²

Each “day of the Lord” where God acted in Old Testament history points to the great “day of the Lord” when God will send Christ back to earth and the final consummation of all things will take place. (See the following references which use the term “day of the Lord” or speak about the day of the Lord: Joel 1:15, Malachi 3:1-6; Isaiah 2:2-5; Amos 9:11 ff.)

¹ Butler, Paul T. *The Minor Prophets*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1968, p. 84.

² See Paul T. Butler’s book on the Minor Prophets for a full list of Old Testament references to the “day of the Lord” p. 88-90.

In the New Testament the phrase “day of the Lord” or “Day” refers to the Second Coming of Christ. No matter in what age a person lives, God will bring every action into judgment and will act with swift and decisive justice on the day he appoints.

- 1. Why is the “day of the Lord” an appropriate phrase to describe God’s acts of judgement or redemption?**
- 2. What “day” does Peter describe in 2 Peter 3:7, 12?**
- 3. What day is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:2?**

The Day of the Lord is Near

In verse 15, we read that the “day of the Lord is near upon all the nations.” The day is always near. For nations like Edom judgment comes through their defeat and destruction, but each of these earthly judgments simply point to the Final judgment that is coming upon all people and all nations. No one can escape God’s justice.

The great Biblical teaching of verse 15 is that nations as well as individuals reap what they sow. “Your deeds shall return on your own head” is used thirteen times in the Old Testament and refers to a “punishment justly deserved, punishment which one experiences because of his own decisions.”³

The Edomites were judged according to their actions. In verse 16 they are said to have “drunk on my holy mountain.” In verse 13, we read how Edom entered Jerusalem along with the invading forces to take advantage of Jerusalem’s calamity. Now the charge is the drinking of alcohol on the temple mount. This is a profane act if committed in this holy place.

The Edomites have drunk on God’s holy mountain and now they will drink of the wrath of God. The wrath of God described as a drink to be consumed is used a number of times in the Scripture (see Isaiah 51:17, 22, 23; Jeremiah 25:15; Revelation 14:10). They will drink and swallow because of their violence against Israel and they will receive God’s wrath and be utterly destroyed as a nation.



- 4. How soon is “near” as used in verse 15?**
- 5. Is it always true that a man or nation reaps what they sow?**
- 6. How were the Edomites judged?**

³ Smith, James E. *Obadiah, Joel, Jonah, Micah: A Christian Interpretation*. (James E. Smith, 2011), 37.

7. Describe the full measure of the wrath of God.**8. What is the cup spoken of in Psalm 75:8?****9. Of what cup does Jesus speak in Matthew 26:39?**

Victory in Mt. Zion

In verse 14, the Edomites stood at the crossroads to cut off the fugitives from Israel. Now in verse 17, God says those in Mt. Zion will escape. (Mt. Zion is a spiritual name for the southeastern hill of Jerusalem and a symbolic reference to the church). Edom will be destroyed in the “day of the Lord,” but God’s people will find protection and victory. This prophecy had an Old Testament fulfilment, but will find its final fulfilment at the final judgment. (See Galatians 4:25,26; Hebrews 12:22, 24).

God cares for his covenant people. God spoke first of his plan for the redemption of man in Genesis 3:15 and all God’s people find their deliverance in Mt. Zion. “All who remained true to God in Old Testament times--ever looking forward in faith to what God was going to do on Mt. Zion--had deliverance, for Christ died for the transgressions done aforetime.”⁴ Old Testament as well as New Testament saints are justified through Christ. (See Romans 3:25; Hebrews 9:15-17).

The last part of verse 17 should also be understood in the context of a Messianic prophecy. While Israel regained some of its land after their captivity in Babylon, they did not possess all the land to their former borders. This prophesy has its final fulfilment in the spiritual house of Jacob (the church; Galatians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9-10). In Christ all God’s people in both the Old and New Testament times will possess his blessings, his favour and heaven itself.

Again in verse 18 we find partial fulfilment of this prophecy in Old Testament history, but its final fulfilment comes in the church. The house of Jacob represents the southern kingdom (Judah) while Joseph represents the northern kingdom (Israel.) These two kingdoms were divided from 931 BC onward, but Obadiah points to a time of unity in the future.

The defeat of Esau was both a historical event and a prophecy of what happens to all the enemies of God. The Edomites were driven from their land sometime between 500 and 400 BC by the Nabateans.⁵ The Edomites fled to the desert Negeb where they became the Idumeans. In the intertestamental period the Jews defeated the Idumeans and Edom as a people disappeared from the face of the earth.⁶

The prophecy in verse 18 points to much more than a physical battle. It looks forward to the time when all God’s people both Jews and Gentiles are united. This did not happen physically between the northern and southern kingdoms, but does spiritually for all who come to the spiritual Mt. Zion where all barriers are removed.

⁴ Butler. *ibid.* p. 134.

⁵ *ibid.* 135.

⁶ Smith, *ibid.* p. 43.



The fire and flame in verse 18 show the zeal of God's people and their victory over their adversaries. God will use his people as his instrument to execute judgment upon the Edomites.

The theme of fire and stubble is not a new one. Exodus 15:7 says: "In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble."⁷

10. How is the description of fire used in Matthew 3:12?

The phrase "God has spoken" shows that the prophecy is as good as a completed action. God had made his decision and what is prophesied will (and did) take place.

Let us take these main lessons from the passage today.

1. The day of the Lord is near.
2. Wickedness will be punished.
3. Mt. Zion is a holy place.
4. God's people will escape punishment. (Spiritual Mt. Zion is a place of salvation)
5. God's pronouncements are sure.

⁷ All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.