Overview for Obadiah

Purpose: The purpose of Obadiah's prophecy was to pronounce God's judgment upon Edom because of that nation's actions toward His chosen people, the Jews.

Author: The author of the book was the prophet Obadiah, whose name means "servant of the Lord" or "worshipper of Jehovah." At least twelve men named Obadiah appear in Scripture; however, Old Testament scholars cannot point with certainty to any of them as the author of this book. Whatever his identity, the author Obadiah was faithful to the true God, carefully delivered God's message regarding the ungodly nation of Edom, and was fully convinced that God's justice would ultimately triumph.

To Whom Written: The Edomites and the Jews living in Judah

Date Written: It is nearly impossible to date the prophecy of Obadiah precisely, due to the scant historical information contained in the book. Scholars have proposed a number of options spanning several centuries. Some place Obadiah's prophecy around 853-840 B.C., during the reign of Jehoram in Judah. This dating is based upon Obadiah 1:10-14, which indicates that a major calamity had occurred in Judah and the Edomites had used that circumstance to their own advantage. Other scholars suggest a date of 586-553 B.C., in which case the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar may have been the background for the prophecy.

Setting: Edom was a mountainous area located south of the Dead Sea and north of the Gulf of Aqaba, a region that is now part of Israel and Jordan. During the days of Israel's monarchies, Edom's capital was Sela, the secluded valley and natural rocky fortress now known as Petra.

Edom prospered through its control of a major trade route connecting Africa with Mesopotamia, and its mining of iron and copper. Obadiah 1:6 indicates the Edomites safeguarded the wealth, which had been accumulated through trade, in the clefts of the rocks.

History: The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac who sold his birthright to his twin brother Jacob, and later was defrauded by Jacob of his father's blessing. The Edomites were hereditary foes of Israel. During the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land, Moses wanted to lead the people across Edom into Moab, but the king of Edom refused to allow passage. Later in the people's journey northward, Balaam prophesied that Israel one day would possess Edom (see Numbers 24:18). In following years, a number of hostile encounters took place between the nations of Israel and Edom.

References to the Edomites occur throughout the Old Testament. They are first mentioned in Genesis 25:30, and their final mention occurs in Malachi 1:2-5. Other prophets who spoke of Edom include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos. The Herods of New Testament times were of Edomite lineage.

While it is uncertain exactly when Edom ceased to exist as a nation, several fulfillments of the destruction pronounced upon this enemy of Israel occurred throughout Edom's history. The last clear reference to Edom in archaeological findings is an Assyrian inscription of 667 B.C.

Unique Features: Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of just one chapter with twenty-one verses. Acceptance of the 853-840 B.C. date of authorship would make Obadiah the earliest writing prophet, placing him a few years prior to the prophet Joel, and a contemporary of the prophet Elisha. Obadiah is one of only three prophets who pronounced judgment primarily on other nations (Nahum and Habakkuk are the others).

Summary: Obadiah's brief prophecy divides naturally into two sections: Edom's destruction (verses 1-18), and Israel's restoration (verses 19-21).

The nation of Edom, which eventually disappeared from history, remains one of the prime examples of the truth found in Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Outline

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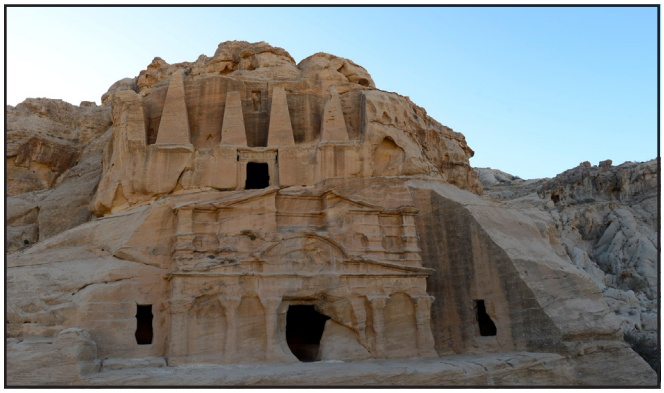
A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at www.apostolicfaith.org.

I. Introduction: The vision and theme (1:1)
II. The fact of Edom's judgment (1:2-9)
   A. The deception of Edom (1:2-4)
   B. The destruction of Edom (1:5-9)
III. The cause of Edom's judgment (1:10-14)
   A. Violence to Judah (1:10-11)
   B. Boasting over Judah (1:12-13)
   C. Enslavement of Judah (1:14)
IV. The character of Edom's judgment (1:15-18)
   A. The imminence of judgment (1:15-16)
   B. The completeness of judgment: time and extent (1:17-18)
V. The restoration of Israel (1:19-21)
   A. The remnant's return (1:19-20)
   B. The kingdom's advent (1:21)

Petra: A City in the Rocks

The ancient city of Petra was inhabited—and perhaps even built—by the Edomites. This archeological wonder located in the south of modern-day Jordan was named one of the "new" *Seven Wonders of the World* in 2007 and is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists each year. The remains of this city built in the sides of towering rocks (notice the size of the people near the structures) gives context to the warning Obadiah delivered to the Edomites, **"Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." (Obadiah 1:4)**