

OBADIAH  
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Text:

INTRODUCTION: We come now to the fourth book of the minor prophets, Obadiah. The name, Obadiah, means servant of the Lord, but we know nothing more of this man than that. There are about a dozen men called Obadiah in the OT. So look at verse 1 (read). We find in this verse that Obadiah had a vision. We find as well that this vision is with regard to a nation called Edom (read).

And our question, as usual is, when was this book written? Knowing when a book is written is very helpful in interpreting the book. When we study verses 11-14, we can narrow the dates down to two. The book is written in either 840 BC or 586 BC. And how could we get two dates so far apart? Well, verses 10-14 tell us. Let us just read verses 10-11 (read). So the question of date centers around the question of which invasion of Jerusalem verses 11-14 speak of. Ryrie gives four invasions, and says it is either invasion #2, the invasion by the Philistines and Arabians in 848-841 BC, or the invasion by Babylon, in 605-586 BC.

Now Obadiah's vision is with regard to Edom, and the Edomites were descendents of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. So verse 10 calls Jacob, their brother. It was literally so. And the two nations represented by these twins were often in conflict with each other. In Numbers 20, when Moses wanted to pass through the land of Edom on the way to Canaan, during the wilderness wanderings, Edom would not allow them passage (Numbers 20:14-21).

Now, Feinberg says, "If Hosea treats of the love of God for Israel, Amos of the righteousness of the Lord, Joel of the Day of Jehovah, Obadiah prophecies of the doom of Edom. And I would add with regard to Obadiah, that all enemies of Israel need to mark this carefully, as we have seen in the first part of the book of Amos: God is watching their every deed towards Israel, and for every evil deed done to Israel, payday is coming.

So, with regard to an outline of this little book, I have outlined it as the blight of Edom, 1-16, and the blessing of Jacob 17-21.

I. THE BLIGHT OF EDOM (1b-16)

## A. The reasons for judgment (1b-9)

So, we begin with the first section which I have titled 'the blight of Edom'. And I have divided this section into two points. First we are given the reasons why God will judge Edom, and second we are given the nature of that judgment. And the reasons are twofold. There is the internal reason for the blight of Edom, and the external reason. We find the internal reason in verses 1-9, and the external in 10-14.

So, let us consider the content of the internal reason for Edom's blight. In verse 1, we begin like this, "Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom..." Then, as I see it, Obadiah slips in a parenthetical section, and then he continues from where he left off. So, we could read, "Thus says the Lord..." then go to verse 2 to continue, "Behold, I will make you small among the nations..."

So we ask, what is this parenthetical section about? Well, Obadiah says, "We...", that is Israel, "...have heard a report from the Lord, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying, 'Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle'." Obadiah is saying, "Edom, even as I begin to write to you, the Lord's plans of your destruction are already underway." Now Obadiah will continue to give the internal reason for Edom's doom (read 2-4).

(Give pictures of Petra here. Can you watch and listen?)

Now in verse 5, Obadiah will give the extent of the judgment that is to befall them (read). What Obadiah is saying is, "If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night, they would have stolen until they had enough and then left. If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left some gleanings?"

And in the midst Obadiah inserts this, "Oh, how you will be cut off!" In other words, what is coming to you is worse than thieves or grape gatherers. Nothing will be left of you.

Then in verses 6-9, we have the manner of the judgment that is to befall them (read). Teman was the highest mountain in the region. It is recognized here as a region known for its wise men. Teman was the region that one of Job's miserable comforters came from, speaking of the wisdom that had been present in this area. And even this highest of places would be cut off by slaughter.

So, the internal reason that would lead to the downfall of Edom was nothing but pride of heart. They thought they were impregnable. No one could possibly conquer them. This leads us to the external reason for their doom. It given to us in verses 10-14 (read). Now from these verses you can tell that at some time Jerusalem was taken and the people went into captivity. Here is what makes the date of this book uncertain. Was this the invasion by the Philistines and Arabians in 848-841 BC, or the invasion by Babylon, in 605-586 BC?

But whichever invasion it was, we see in the following verses how Edom, the brother of Israel responded. Feinberg says Edom feasted on his brother's disaster. First, in verse 11 Edom stood by while Jerusalem was being sacked (read). Second, in verse 12 Edom rejoiced at Judah's destruction (read). Third, Edom helped Jerusalem's captors to plunder the city. And fourth, and last in verse 14, Edom cut off those who escaped out of Jerusalem and did not let them escape (read).

#### B. The Judgment (15-16)

Now, with regard to the judgment that is to befall Edom, we go to verses 15-16 (read). The prophet says that the day of the Lord is near. So, I think that this picture of God's judgment on Edom has a far and near fulfillment. The nearer judgment would take place through the Assyrians. The far judgment will take place during the day of the Lord. Isaiah mentions Bozrah, which is in Edom, when the Lord returns to earth and in Bozrah, the garments of Jesus Christ are splattered in blood. Psalm 83 mentions Edom along with a number of other nations, in a time that I think is yet future. And so I think the mention of the day of the Lord is significant here, as it is yet future.

So the Lord says in verse 15 that He will do to Edom in that day, what Edom had done to Israel. Oh that president Obama would do what the Canadian Prime Minister encouraged him to do and that is read the Bible. Here he would learn the consequences of mistreating Israel.

Now look at verse 16 (read). John Trapp comments on this verse like this: "As you, O Edomites, have rejoiced and revelled in the ruins of Zion, carousing and carolling in her calamity, so shall many nations, and you among, yea, above the rest (for your excessive perfidy and cruelty), drink deeply of the cup of God's fury, which hath eternity to the bottom." And here is the message, "Edom, your day is coming."

But, when we come to verse 17, we come to a major shift in the book. And so we want to look at point II, the blessing of Jacob, or Israel.

## II. THE BLESSING OF JACOB (17-21)

So, we begin by looking at verse 17, and the place of blessing (read). On Mount Zion there will be blessing, and there will be holiness. When will that be? In the millennium, which follows immediately after the tribulation, and is the light time of the day of the Lord!

But there is a very interesting statement given to us here. It says, "The house of Israel shall possess their possessions." I want to tell you that even now, that which had to come to pass in order for this prophecy to take place is fully in progress!

And since we are in a short book, and I do not know if I will get another opportunity to deal with a very important matter, I want to do it here. In order for this prophecy in Obadiah concerning Jacob to be fulfilled, a number of other important prophecies would need to be fulfilled first. So let us go way back to Deuteronomy 28, and in many other passages God prophesied to Israel that if they disobeyed Him, they would be dispersed among the nations. Turn to Deuteronomy 28 (read 58-64). There we have this prophecy. That is what happened. The northern kingdom

was more sinful earlier than the southern kingdom and in 722 BC they went into captivity. The horrors they experienced are many. Then in 586, the southern kingdom had sinned away its day of grace and it went into the 70 year Babylonian captivity. Many later returned to Israel and rebuilt the temple, and that wicked Herod of Christ's day, to win the favor of the Jews beautified and remodeled the temple so that it exceeded all buildings for glory. But never again did the glory of God dwell there.

Then in 70 AD, that temple too was destroyed. But just before that temple was destroyed, a new movement was begun by one Jesus Christ. They were called Christians. But not long after the time of Christ, these Christians apostatized and became what would become the Roman Catholic Church, and they persecuted and hounded and killed Jews. The Jews experienced horrific persecution under these so called Christians, so horrific as to almost defy description. That distorted view of the so called church helped create men like Adolf Hitler. And so God's prophecy went into fulfillment. Israel was driven into every part of the world, hounded and hunted like animals.

There is the fulfillment of the first part of God's prophecy. Second, God said they would be persecuted. Look at verses 65-68 (read). Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre have written one of the finest and most comprehensive accounts of Israel's rebirth as a nation and the ensuing battles. And they give a brief history of Israel's sufferings. They say that after the time of Christ, a new menace grew out of that supposed faith Jesus Christ had begun. The so called Church. This so called Church, which really was not the church at all, with ardent zeal for the Lord, began to brand and pursue and persecute the Jew. Christ killers they called them. Let me read a condensed account of Israel's persecutions from the early church until today, and I quote, "Theodosius II branded them for the first time as a nation apart. Dagobert, King of the Franks, drove them from Gaul; Spain's Visigoths seized their children as converts; the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius forbade Jewish worship. With the Crusades, spiritual apartheid became systematic slaughter. Shrieking their cry 'Deus vult! God wills it!' the Crusaders fell on every

hapless Jewish community on their route to Jerusalem. Most countries barred Jews from owning land. The religiosity organized mediaeval craft and commerce guilds were closed to them. The Church forbade Jews to employ Christians and Christians to live among Jews. Most loathsome of all was the decision of the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to stamp Jews as a race apart by forcing them to wear a distinguishing badge. In England it was a replica of the tablets on which Moses received the Ten Commandments. In France and Germany it was a yellow O, forerunner of the yellow stars with which the third Reich would one day mark the victims of its gas chambers.

Edward I of England and later Philip the Fair of France expelled the Jews from their nations, seizing their property before evicting them. Even the Black Death was blamed on the Jews, accused of poisoning Christian wells with a powder made of spiders, frogs' legs, Christian entrails and consecrated hosts. Over two hundred Jewish communities were exterminated in the slaughters stirred by that wild fancy.. In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews from Spain.

In Germany, Jews were forbidden to ride in carriages and were made to pay a special toll as they entered a city. The republic of Venice enriched the vocabulary of the world with the word ghetto from the quarter, Ghetto Nuovo - New foundry - to which the republic restricted its Jews. In Poland, the Cossack Revolt, with the ferocity and devotion to torture unparalleled in Jewish experience, wiped out over 100,000 Jews in less than a decade. When the czars pushed their frontier westward across Poland, an era of darkness set in for almost half the world's Jewish population. Fenced into history's greatest ghetto, the Pale of Settlement, Jews were conscripted at the age of twelve for twenty-five years of military service and forced to pay special taxes on kosher meat and Sabbath candles. Jewish women were not allowed to live in the big city university centers without the yellow ticket of a prostitute. In 1880, after the assassination of Alexander II, the mobs, aided by the Czars soldiers, burned and butchered their way through one Jewish community after another, leaving a new word in their wake: pogrom.

Bloody milestones on the road to Hitler's gas chambers, those slaughtered succeeding one another through the centuries were the constant of Jewish history, the ghastly heritage of an oppressed race to whom the crematoriums of the Third Reich might seem only the final, most appalling manifestation of their destiny" end quote. And that is a very brief overview of 3000 years of persecution.

The third major prophecy that would need to be fulfilled before Obadiah 17 and on could be fulfilled is that God said the land of Israel would lie desolate. Look at Deuteronomy 29:21-28 (read). When Israel inherited the land from God, it was described over and over again as a land flowing with milk and honey. When the spies returned from checking out the land in Moses day, they brought back one bunch of grapes that it took two men to carry. Turn to Ezekiel 20 (read 6, 15). It is called, 'the glory of all lands.'

But God said this glory of all lands would become desolate if Israel disobeyed Him. In 1867, Mark Twain, the writer of books like Tom Sawyer wrote a book called 'Innocents Abroad'. The book is about a trip Mark Twain made to many countries in the world. Recently I was able to get an e-copy of this book and just his visit to Israel filled 300 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages. When you get done reading his descriptions of the land, it wants to make you nauseous. He describes a naked, barren, blistering land where goats eat rocks. He says that a lot of Christians have written great glowing reports of this land, but it is not an honest report.

As he closes his section on his trip to 'Palestine' as it was then called, he writes, "Of all the lands there are for dismal scenery, I think Palestine must be the prince. The hills are barren, they are dull of color, they are un-picturesque in shape. The valleys are unsightly deserts fringed with a feeble vegetation that has an expression about it of being sorrowful and despondent." And again, "Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes. Over it broods the spell of a curse that has withered its fields and fettered its energies." And again, "Renowned Jerusalem itself, the stateliest name in history, has lost all its ancient

grandeur, and is become a pauper village..." And yet once more, "Palestine is desolate and unlovely. And why should it be otherwise? Can the curse of the Deity beautify a land?"

Well, God had said that if Israel disobeyed, they would be dispersed among the nations, they would be persecuted wherever they went and the land would become desolate. All of this has happened. It is history for us.

BUT!! Go back to Deuteronomy 30 (read 1-5). Now this re-gathering begins even before Israel turns to God. That is clear from other Scriptures. But this re-gathering ends in Israel turning to God for salvation and that will usher in the millennium. It is then that Israel will possess their possessions. When the millennium begins, Obadiah 17-21 will be fulfilled.

And, what Mark Twain did not realize was that something great was about to happen! A turning point was coming for Israel. He wrote his book in 1869. That is about the time our people left Russia for Canada. In Paris, France, in January 1895, Captain Alfred Dreyfus died. It was not that he had done something wrong. The cause of his death? He was born a Jew. And among the spectators that day that Captain Alfred Dreyfus died, there was present a man by name of Theodore Herzl. And what Theodore Hertzl heard all around him that fateful day was, "Kill the traitor. Kill the Jew." And all of a sudden he realized this man was going to die simply because he was a Jew, and Herzl realized he too was simply a Jew, something he could do nothing about. And there, on that day, in the heart of Theodore Herzle, Zionism was born. Life in the land of Israel was born in the heart of one Jew while another died simply because he was a Jew. Something was born that day that is unexplainable, and it kept going and growing in a way that is also unexplainable. And it still lives today, and that too is unexplainable. That is, of course, if you don't have God in the picture.

And so, about the time our Mennonites came to Canada from Russia, Herzl began to seek to bring into existence a Jewish state. After miracle upon miracle, in May of 1948, David Green, who changed his name to



David Ben Gurion, David, the Son of a Lion, declared Israel a nation. I think the United States was the first give recognition to this new state, but miracle upon miracle, Russia was among the first nations to who recognized Israel as a nation. Miracle upon miracle, five mighty Arab nations could not drive this tiny new nation, who had almost no guns and very few shells and no established army, into the sea as they had planned to do.

And until the early 1900's, the one part of God's prophetic plan that had not yet begun to be fulfilled before the early 1900's began its fulfillment. It was the long promised re-gathering of the Jews to Israel. That re-gathering has gone on for at least 100 years and is still happening. Let me give you one brief example. I told you recently about the Ethiopian Jews that had been brought to Israel recently. Let me give you a little more on that.

In 1961-1964 in Operation Yakhin 80,000 Moroccan Jews went home to Israel. In 1984, Operation Moses some 8,000 black Jews from Ethiopia made aliya to Israel, with Israel's help of course. In 1985, Operation Joshua also called Operation Sheba 494 more Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel. In 1991, through operation Solomon, 14,325 black Jews were flown to Israel. After Operation Solomon there were about 8000 black Jews left in Ethiopia. Then two years ago Israel made agreement to bring to Israel these remaining Jews. Wikipedia says, "The Jewish Agency was tasked with carrying out the government's decree and senior Jewish Agency official Asher Fentahun Seyum was sent in to do the job. Seyum went to work with energy and skill and in less than two years set up an operation that brought 6,000 Gondar Jews to Israel. Seyum pledges to "close shop" when the remaining 1,800 left in Gondar are settled in Israel - within a year. And here is a picture in a newspaper article titled 'On Wings Of A Dove' that came just a few weeks ago. It is titled, "On Wings Of A Dove". And so, in November of this year 237 black Ethiopian Jews arrived in Israel.

(Show picture & News article here).

Now all of what I have just told you, had to happen before Obadiah 17-21 could be fulfilled.

CONCL: And so, let us conclude. Just shortly before us now, lies the day of Jacob's trouble, the tribulation time period. And just seven years later, Israel will turn to God. The Bible tells us so. And for time, let me show you what will then happen by simply reading Obadiah 17-21 (read).

And Israel and God lived happily ever after!