

Edom's Sinful Treatment of Israel, and Israel's Ultimate Triumph

Obadiah 1:10-21

Obadiah verses 10-21 - *"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. ¹¹ In the day that you stood on the other side - In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem - even you were as one of them.*

¹² *"But you should not have gloated over your brother in the day of his misfortune; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.*

¹³ *You should not have marched into the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gloated over their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity.*

¹⁴ *You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped, nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress."*

Background Notes

When was the prophecy of Obadiah written? We don't know for sure. When studying prophecies, many times the name of a king is given somewhere in the text, but no king is mentioned in Obadiah. However, an invasion of Israel is mentioned in verses 10-14, and that helps in dating Obadiah.

It seems that Edom was allied with Israel's enemy in this invasion. Instead of helping their brother nation, Judah, the Edomites helped the enemy. *"In the day that you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem - you were like one of them"* (v11). The Edomites participated in looting the city of Jerusalem, and they actually cut down the Jews who were trying to escape the invading forces, or handed them over to the enemy as captives (v13-14).

When would the Edomites have participated in an invasion of Jerusalem? There are a couple of possibilities. Perhaps it was when the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem in 586BC. Another possibility (which is more likely, in view of the details presented here) was when the Philistines invaded Jerusalem during the days of King Jehoram of Judah. This would have been circa 845BC. The account of this invasion is in 2 Chronicles 21.

So if Obadiah wrote his prophecy soon after the Philistine invasion of Jerusalem, the date of Obadiah would be about 840BC. If that is the case, Obadiah would be the earliest writing prophet, and he would have been a contemporary of Elisha.

Because of Edom's harsh and wrong treatment of Judah, the nation was denounced in Obadiah's prophecy. Thus the theme of Obadiah is "The Doom of Edom" - and, by contrast, "The Future Blessing of Israel." Most likely Obadiah's prophecy was written to Israel as a comfort and encouragement. God was assuring His people that they did not need to take their own revenge. God would repay the Edomites for their wrongdoing - in His own time, and in His own way. This is a biblical principle. *"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord,"* Romans 12:19.

Doctrinal Points

1. In a day of distress, God holds people accountable.

Notice how "day of distress," or "day of calamity," or "day of trouble" is mentioned three times - at the end of verse 12, end of verse 13 and end of verse 14. It was Judah's day of distress, and God held Edom accountable because they had participated in Israel's defeat. *"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever" (v10).*

"As you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head (v15). We reap what we sow - and Edom would reap the devastation that she had sown. Verse 15 sounds a lot like Galatians 6:7 - *"Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap."*

In fact, Edom's harsh treatment of Israel went all the way back to the days when the Israelites were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. Israel asked permission to shorten their journey by passing through the outskirts of the land of Edom, but Edom said "No!" That was a day of distress for Israel, and Edom did not help. Down through the years Edom continued to contribute to Israel's distress, and God held them accountable. God holds people accountable for how they behave in a day of distress.

What was true of Edom in Obadiah's day is still true today – God still holds people accountable for their actions. This principle holds for individuals as well as for nations. Are you taking advantage of someone's weakness right now, as Edom did? God will hold you accountable.

Do you know anyone who is in a distressing situation, and you could do something to help - but you're not doing it? What about that brother or sister in Christ who is in sudden financial difficulty, and you could help them out - but you're ignoring the situation? I'm not talking about helping people who are always looking for a handout - no! I'm talking about helping someone in a day of distress.

What about a ministry that needs your time or your talent? Maybe right in your local church - like Sunday School, or VBS, or youth group, a small start-up ministry to people in need - ministries that could use your help. Are you going to help out in their "day of need"? Or are you turning away and doing your own thing? God holds us accountable when we see others who are experiencing a time of need.

What about persecuted believers in other countries? They are our brothers and sisters, and they are certainly in distress. What can we do? At the very least, we can find a way to provide financial assistance through ministries that are able to help them. We can strongly request our government to bring pressure to bear on repressive foreign governments. And of course we can support them in prayer. We are responsible to do what we can. In the day of distress, God holds people accountable.

2. On the day of the Lord, God will settle all accounts.

Obadiah verses 15-21 - *“For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near. As you have done, it shall be done to you. Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.*

¹⁶ For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been.

¹⁷ “But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness. The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

¹⁸ The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau shall be stubble. They shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau,” for the Lord has spoken.

¹⁹ The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia.

They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead. ²⁰ And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.

²¹ Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau.

And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Verse 15 mentions “the day of the Lord” - a time when there will be judgment on all nations, and verse 17 indicates great blessing on Israel. When is this “day of the Lord”?

By definition, **the “day of the Lord” is any time period when the Lord intervenes in the affairs of nations, either in judgment or in blessing.**

There is an aspect to the day of the Lord that is historical. The doom of Edom, that has already taken place in history, is part of the day of the Lord. But there is also an aspect of the day of the Lord that is eschatological. The demise of Edom foreshadowed the judgments that will take place in the end times, in the eschatological day of the Lord, or the ultimate day of the Lord. That “day of the Lord” is still in the future.

From verse 15 on, most of the prophecy of Obadiah refers to the eschatological day of the Lord – the aspect that is still future. It was said to be “near” because it was imminent – meaning it **could** come to pass in the near future. In fact, the historical aspect of the day of the Lord did indeed come to pass in the near future for Obadiah. However, the eschatological aspect to the day of the Lord still remains for the future.

Notice that the day of the Lord is a day when all nations will be judged (v15). Notice also that it is a day when Israel will be blessed (v17). And notice that it is a day when the kingdom of our Lord will be set up on this earth (v21). When we put those verses together with the rest of prophetic Scriptures that deal with the future (including the book of Revelation), the future day of the Lord includes the future Tribulation period and millennial kingdom of Christ – the kingdom that will last for 1000 years here on earth. During the Tribulation period, all the nations of the earth will be judged, including the Edom of the last days (end of v18). It appears that there will be a revival of Edom in the end times, along with a revival of other ancient nations that are mentioned here and in other prophetic Scriptures.

After the Tribulation period, the Lord will set up His thousand-year kingdom, and great blessing will come upon Israel. All the land that God originally gave Israel will finally be fully occupied by the Jewish people (v19-20).

Verse 21 mentions “deliverers” who will come to Jerusalem, to Mount Zion, to be “judges” in the kingdom. Who are these “deliverers,” or “judges”? **It may be that we will be the judges!** After all, we know that we, as Christians, will be part of Christ’s kingdom here on earth, and 1 Corinthians 6:2 says that we will judge the world. We look forward to **a great future!** On the day of the Lord, God will settle all accounts.

Practical Application

Don’t gloat over your brother’s day of misfortune!

That’s exactly how the New American Standard Version translates verse 12: *“Do not gloat over your brother’s day, the day of his misfortune.”*

This application is very practical, because we all have a tendency to gloat – maybe just a little, now and then? Maybe you’re secretly a just little pleased if someone who has been much more successful than you suffers a financial reverse? How about a family in your church that seems to have done a better job of raising their kids than you have - are you not as sad as you should be if you hear that one of their kids has messed up? If you’re a student, do you secretly gloat when you finally get a better test score than that student who always scores higher than you? On and on we could go...

Do you gloat? Gloating is a sin! We don’t usually consider it a sin. We tend to justify it as being “just human nature” or “not very bad”- but here in Obadiah **God** says that gloating is wrong. In fact, it’s **really** wrong if, as Edom did, we gloat over the misfortune of a brother or sister!

This verse has an important extended application: don’t gloat over your brother’s day of misfortune!