

INTRODUCTION TO 31ST BIBLEBOOK

OBADIAH (just after 586 B.C.)(14th)

A. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

Obadiah is the fourth of the twelve Minor Prophets. ‘Obadiah’ means ‘*servant of the Lord*’. We know nothing more about this prophet. Obadiah belongs to the prophets who *prophesied in Judah*.

He directs his prophecy against Edom, that is, the nation that descended from Esau, who was the brother of Jacob. Some people believe that he prophesied long before the exile during the time of Jehoshaphat or Jehoram. However, Obadiah verse 10-14 describes how the Edomites first stood aloof when Judah was plundered by foreigners and afterwards went into Judah to plunder it themselves. They even helped the enemy to capture the fugitives of Judah. Before the exile, there is no evidence that the Edomites did these things nor rejoiced at the calamity of Jerusalem and Judah. But after the exile of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., several passages in the Bible give vivid accounts of the rejoicing by the Edomites, for example Ezekiel 35¹. The Edomites took revenge on Judah, delivered them over to the sword, rejoiced with glee and malice in their calamity and plundered Judah.

Therefore, Obadiah most likely prophesied just **after the events of 586 B.C.**, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and Judah and took the rest of the people of Judah in exile to Babylon.

B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

The book of Obadiah may be given the title, “*God will humble the pride of Edom.*”

It has two parts:

- Obadiah 1-14. God’s judgement of Edom.
- Obadiah 15-21. God’s deliverance of Judah.

Note again the contents of the Bible is *the salvation or the judgement* of the LORD. *There is no neutral zone. The world is not really ‘secular’, as if God does not exist or as if God does not act.* Whoever believes, will be saved and whoever remains an unbeliever will be lost².

C. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

1. God will humble the pride and arrogance of people.

The main message of Obadiah is that people should *not look down on other people in the day of their misfortune*, nor rejoice over their calamity in the day of their disaster. People should never plunder the possessions of others especially not in times of disasters and never hand over fugitives into the hands of their oppressors.

“Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, ... you will be destroyed forever (vs 10).”

“You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune... nor rejoice in the day of their destruction (vs. 12).”

“You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble (vs. 14).”

“As you have done, it will be done to you, your deeds will return upon your own head (vs 15).”

2. God will judge the proud nation of Edom, but save his own people Israel.

On the future Mount Zion there will be deliverance. This is a reference to the end-time revelation (apocalyptic).

“The house of Jacob (the believers in the southern kingdom of Judah) will be a fire and the house of Joseph (the believers in the northern kingdom of Israel) a flame; the house of Esau (the unbelievers, symbolised by Edom) will be stubble (vs 18).”

¹ Lamentation 4:21; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 36:5; Psalm 137:7

² John 3:16