

Obadiah

A sign on the back of a florists van says "Drive carefully or the next load of flowers may be for you." Those who did not want to attend their own funerals may have heeded the warning, but most smile at the clever advertising and continue to drive disregarding the warning.

The message of Obadiah is similar "Live carefully, obey God's word, or the doom of Edom will be your fate too."

Introduction

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. Obadiah's name means a slave or bondservant of Jah, a short form of Jehovah. Paul called himself a bondservant and we are to be the same. In that, we have a kinship to this writer.

We don't know anything about the author's background. There are eleven other people with this name in the Old Testament but there is no evidence for connecting this prophet with any of them. The prophecy has two main parts. Verses 1-16 are directed against Edom, and verses 17-21 focus on the vindication of Israel and the final establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

In the beginning

Esau and Jacob were twin brothers who had been competitors from before birth (Gen. 25:19-26).

When Esau learned that his brother had stolen the blessing, he resolved to kill him after their father was dead, and this led to Jacob leaving home. Years later, the two brothers experienced a brief time of reconciliation (Gen. 32), and they both faithfully attended to the burial of Isaac (35:27-29), but the animosity was never removed.

Esau established the nation of Edom (25:30; 35:1, 8; 36:1ff), and his descendants carried on the family feud that Esau had begun years before.

The Law of Moses commanded the Jews to treat the Edomites like brothers: "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother" (Deut. 23:7, nkjv). In spite of this, the Edomites "harboured an ancient hostility" against Israel (Ezek. 35:5, niv) and used every opportunity to display it.

Like Isaiah (1:1), Micah (1:1), Nahum (1:1), and Habakkuk (1:1), the Prophet Obadiah received his message from the Lord by means of a vision

This is what the Sovereign LORD says

Not, I believe, I think, I suppose, or it's my opinion, but truth and certainty. Thus says the Lord, or the Bible says.....

The Lord enabled Obadiah to know what was going on among the nations Edom and Judah.

God told Obadiah that an ambassador from a nation allied with Edom was visiting the other nations to convince their leaders to join forces and attack Edom. Actually, it was the Lord who had ordained this change in policy, and what appeared to be just another diplomatic visit was actually the working out of the Lord's judgments against Edom.

God's message to Edom (Obad. 2-16)

There are two parts to this message. Today we look at the first part, where the prophet declared that God would judge Edom and take away everything the nation boasted about and depended on for security (w. 2-9).

PRIDE

To begin with, God said He would bring down their pride (vv. 2-4). The Edomites were feeling secure in their mountain fortress called Sela' or modern day Petra on Mt. Seir. (v.3). This is where some folk think the remnant of Jews will flee to during the Tribulation. Dr Ronald Shultz says there is, one group that has placed sealed New Testaments in the caves of that city so that when they get there they can read them and be saved. Now that is practicing what you believe.

This city could only be approached through passes so narrow that two horsemen could not ride abreast. In the days before gunpowder they felt secure.

Edom was a proud nation that considered itself impregnable and invulnerable because it was situated "in the clefts of the rock" (v. 3), a region of rugged mountains with high cliffs and narrow valleys that would dissuade any invader from attacking. Like the eagles, the Edomites lived on the rocks and looked down from the heights with disdain upon the nations around them.

The nation of the eagle, America thought they were invincible because of geography until technology brought war to their shores in 1941. Now death and destruction can come from anywhere by many more means than ever imaginable in the history of mankind. We still trust in our military might but even our best technologies have failures in a battle. The Edomites thought they were a great people, but God said He would bring them down "**Pride goes before destruction.**" (Prov. 16:18).

You who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' verse 3

Edom the descendents of Esau should have been Israel's servants (**Gen 25:23**) **Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.**

Unacceptable, so they exalted themselves and felt secure in doing so. But not so secure that God could not humble them. Physical strength, wealth, social position, good education and political power tend to deceive the hearts of those who possess them and make it hard for them to depend upon God. Religion is not a crutch for the weak, the ignorant or the poor.

Verse 3: "The pride of your heart has deceived you." Pride makes one think one is independent, self-sufficient, and invulnerable. Pride is based on a lie.

God hates pride and will bring it down. Verse 4

Wealth

The prophet also said that their wealth would be plundered (Obad. 5-6). Located on several major trade routes, Edom could amass riches; and out of their mountains, they could dig copper and other minerals. Because of their isolation, they didn't have to worry about making treaties with the larger nations or finance expensive wars.

Thieves who come at night work in a hurry and only steal until they have enough. They rarely strip a property clean.

But unlike ordinary thieves, their plunderers would take everything they could find; and unlike grape harvesters, they would leave nothing behind for others to glean. This would be the end of the Edom that boasted of its wealth.

To be robbed or have your vineyard raided would be bad enough but it was nothing compared to the devastation Edom was to experience.

In other words, the financial ruin that God will bring upon Edom will be total.

As a nation we need to learn from the errors of the Edomites. We are a greedy people. We have so much more than almost anyone else does and yet we demand more and more. Sadly, Christians are not immune from this sickness. We need to reassess and determine to make our needs equal to Scriptural principles and our priorities those that affect eternity.

If you can't have what you want, learn to want what you have.

As a nation, we have had treacherous politicians and business magnates that have shown no mercy. They have lived for their own profit and programs and woe be it unto any that stood in their way. We may never know the truth about many things that have happened even in our lifetime and we know history has often been revised to protect the guilty. Many loyal workers have been disposed of like leftovers when it suited their company. Politicians have casually broken many promises. We live in an age where none of them are trusted.

The world recession and collapse of the economy can be firmly placed as a result of greed;- individual, corporate and national greed. During the good times many people got wealthy quickly and consistently overspent on the basis of their supposed wealth and income. This was especially true in the housing market, where property became more and more expensive. This led to a building boom in an attempt to meet the demand. But then suddenly there was an oversupply and property prices fell.

This led to a collapse in the stock market and the banking sector and this in turn has led to a massive loss of jobs.

But God in his mercy has certainly not taken us to the same place as Edom - yet!

Broken alliances

Third, the Lord would work so that Edom's alliances would be broken (v.7). Though protected by their lofty heights, the Edomites were smart enough to know that they needed friends to help them stand against the great empires that frequently threatened the smaller eastern nations. Edom would also want allies to assist them in their constant feud with Israel. But God would turn these friends into enemies, and those who had eaten bread with them and made covenants of peace would break those covenants. While pretending to be friends, their allies would turn into traitors, set a trap, and catch Edom by surprise.

To be destroyed by one's enemies is tragic enough, but to be destroyed by one's friends and allies while one is completely without suspicion is a tragedy.

Nations today that boast of their political alliances and their formidable military establishments should take heed to what happened to Edom long ago, for that proud nation is no more. About 300 B.C, the Nabataean Arabs drove out the Edomites and occupied their key city Petra, the "rose red city" carved out of solid rock. The Romans took Petra in a.d. 105. All that remains of Petra today is a lonely and desolate ruin with no future.

As a nation, we have a history of disloyalty. We have made many treaties and broken many promises to our own people as well as our allies.

Karen in Burma, Israel etc.

And we have been the victims when as a nation we have put confidence in signed treaties that are broken the minute they don't serve the purposes of the other party. "Peace in our time" spoken on 30 September 1938 by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in his speech concerning the Munich Agreement.

Wisdom

God also warned that Edom's wisdom would be destroyed (Obad. 8). The people of the east were known for their wisdom (1 Kings 4:30), and this included the Edomites. Located as they were on the great trade routes, the leaders of Edom could get news and views from many nations.

Education, education, education may make for political headlines but no matter how much we would trust in our intellect, our education system struggles to give even a basic education to many.

Defeat

Verses 8 and 9: John Piper writes [Teman was a grandson of Esau and a chief city in Edom -- evidently a cultural and military centre where the intellectual and military elite gathered. But God is not impressed or threatened: he will cut them off in their pride, wise and powerful together.](#)

Obadiah announced that Edom's army would be defeated (Obad. 9). Without wisdom, the military leaders wouldn't know how to command their troops, and their mighty men would be defeated. This may have happened when the Babylonians took Jerusalem, or this promise may have been fulfilled when the Arabs invaded Edom and took over their cities, driving the Edomites to the west. The Greeks and Romans called these Edomites "Idumeans" (Mark 3:8). By New Testament times, Edom no longer figured in world affairs.

The Herods including Herod the Great were Edomites/Idumeans, and their characters and actions were typical of that race, but after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (A.D. 70), Edom dropped forever out of world history.

Conclusion

To those who wrongly believe the answer to our problems lies in political power, the answer is repentance of our arrogance and a need for revival. Wealth has evaporated, and international trust has gone out of the window. There seems to be no wisdom in high places. The cause is our loss of focus as a nation and our dependence and trust in things other than God. Until those things change our nation (and the churches) will not be healed or delivered.

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chron 7:14)

May we not have to learn the same lesson or suffer the same fate as the Edomites.

Knowing that the Lord reigns over all things ought to encourage us as we watch world events and grieve over the decay of people and nations. The sovereignty of God isn't an excuse for believers to be indifferent to evil in the world, nor is it an encouragement to slumber carelessly and do nothing. God's ways are hidden and mysterious, and we sometimes wonder why He permits certain things to happen, but we must still pray "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10) and then be available to obey whatever He tells us to do.

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