

## **The Church of the Servant King**

### **Prophecy Series**

(Proph14C\_Prophecy in the Prophets\_Obadiah\_Part 2 of 2)

#### **Introduction**

Since the purpose of the current series is a study of messianic and eschatological prophecies in the Bible, we will focus the majority of our attention on the last section of the book of Obadiah. It is this section that is still prophetic from our standpoint in human history since Judah has yet to be restored to a position of prominence among the nations. The pronouncements of judgment upon Edom are followed by two salvation oracles or prophecies in verses 17-21. It is these salvation oracles with which we are most concerned in this study. Nevertheless, we will deal briefly with the other verses of this short prophetic book.

#### **Notes (Continued)**

*Judgment oracle #1 – Edom’s pride and the completeness of the disaster (vv. 2-9) –* These verses in Obadiah have great similarity with Jeremiah 49:7-22 as we noted in the last lesson. This similarity is one argument in favor of a latter dating of Obadiah’s ministry to correspond to the ministry of Jeremiah and the events surrounding the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. Some of the similarities are noted in the following table:

<b>Jeremiah 49</b>	<b>Phrase/Description</b>	<b>Obadiah</b>
Verse 7	Wisdom has departed Edom	Verse 8
Verse 9	Grape gatherers and thieves strip Edom bare and leave nothing; Edom would be better off to have had a band of robbers invade their land – at least something would be left	Verse 5
Verse 14	An envoy is sent among the nations urging them to rise up against Edom	Verse 1
Verse 15	You are small among the nations and despised	Verse 2
Verse 16	You are arrogant and falsely secure in your high dwelling among the clefts of the rock	Verse 3-4
Verse 22	Mighty men will fall in terror	Verse 9

Some of the mountain peaks in Edom reach an altitude of over 6000 feet. Jerusalem is about 2300 feet above sea level. The cliffs around Petra, a prominent city in Edom, were about 2000 feet high.<sup>1</sup> This terrain provided Edom a false sense of security. Teman (v. 9) is also thought to be one of Edom’s principle cities. The name comes from a son of Eliaphaz, who was the firstborn son of Esau (Ge 36:9-11). It is interesting to note that Eliaphaz is also the name of one of Job’s friends and he also came from Teman. This could be an indication that Job was a contemporary with Jacob as we have noted.

*Judgment Oracle #2 – The Basis for Judgment – Unbrotherliness and Aloofness (vv. 10-11) –* As we have noted previously, Esau and Jacob were brothers, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah (see Ge 25:24-26). The inhabitants of Edom descended from Esau. The people of Edom were not the provocateurs and they were not intended to be God’s instrument in the judgment God executed against Judah. If anything, they should have joined with Judah against a

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<sup>1</sup> Compare footnotes in Earl D. Radmacher, editor, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 1491 and Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, 1978), 1373.

common foe. Instead, Edom stood aloof in indifference and eventually they participated in the cowardly work of hindering the escapees from their escape and of grabbing the defeated and bringing them back to their victors. At least Babylon had her own self-interest in mind as a reason for attacking and laying siege to Judah and Jerusalem. Edom had no reason to join the battle. Edom went out of her way in gazing upon the people of God in their distress, of gloating, and then of blocking the paths for the escape of some from the sword. Edom would receive the harsher punishment.<sup>2</sup>

*Judgment oracle #3 – For aggressiveness and violence against Judah (vv. 12-14)* – The Hebrew grammar of verses 12-14 would normally be translated – “Stop gazing on the day of your brother.” The implication is that the prohibition relates to a current activity. This is in contrast to many translations which imply a past tense such as “You should not have” as found in the NKJV. If in fact Obadiah wrote after the events he describes, then this translation presents a bit of a difficulty. One probable scenario is that when Obadiah wrote these words he was “transported by prophetic vision back in time to the period of the onset of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. In this manner he then spoke in a prophetic vision to the people of Edom telling them not to participate in the attack upon the city of Jerusalem.”<sup>3</sup> The biblical prophets are most often transported by the Holy Spirit in their prophetic visions to the future. However, Obadiah may have had the unusual experience of being transported back in time to rail against Edom for what they had done or were doing.

*Judgment oracle #4 – The timing and nature of the destruction (vv. 15-16)* – In this passage, Obadiah uses the phrase – “the day of the Lord.” “A study of numerous Old Testament references to the day of the Lord and “the day,” as it is sometimes called, should make clear to anyone who respects the details of prophecy that the designation denotes an extensive time of divine judgment on the world. Among the texts are Isaiah 2:12-21; 13:9-16; 34:1-8; Joel 1:15-2:11, 28-32; 3:9-12; Amos 5:18-20; Obadiah 15-17; Zephaniah 1:7-18.”<sup>4</sup>

The significant truth revealed here is that the day of the Lord which first inflicts terrible judgments ends with an extended period of blessing on Israel, which will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. Based on the Old Testament revelation, the day of the Lord is a time of judgment, culminating in the second coming of Christ, and followed by a time of special divine blessing to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

*Salvation oracle #1 – Judah exalted over Edom (vv. 17-18)* – Mt. Zion in verse 17 refers to Jerusalem in which city the Temple of the Lord was located and the Temple’s holy nature as the house of the Lord is attributed to the entire city. This is even more significant in Obadiah’s usage and reference here since the Temple built by Solomon was destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. The Temple was the place in Israel where God met man. The idea of the Temple being destroyed was inconceivable to a Jew prior to 586 B.C. Some refer to this as the “Temple cult heresy” in ancient Israel.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald B. Allen, “Notes on the Book of Obadiah” (Unpublished class notes for 304N, Old Testament Prophets. Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 1996), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Walvoord, “Posttribulationism Today: Part IX: The Rapture and the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 134:533 (January, 1977): 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Allen, “Notes”, 9.

Mt. Zion is many times in the Bible a symbol of the locus from which God's judgment originates against other nations and even His own people (e.g. Isa 31:9; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2-2:16 cf. Isa 10:12; Lam 2:1-8; 4:2-16; Mic 3:12; Obad 11-14, 16). God's salvation also is seen as originating from Mt. Zion in the form of His kingly rule (Psa 20:2; 53:6 cf. Obad 17) which is yet future to us as it was to the prophet Obadiah and his audience.

The term "*deliverance*" in verse 17 is a reference to the remnant of Jews that God has always preserved from Israel even to this day.<sup>7</sup> This principle is seen after the fall of Jerusalem and the tragedy of Edom is that some of the survivors of Jerusalem's fall were killed as a result of Edom's complicity (v. 14). The term "*possessions*" refers to Israel's habitation of the promised land from the time of the conquest. Israel and Judah had forfeited their right to possess the promised land through their disobedience; however, Obadiah foresaw a day when Judah would repossess the land as a holy community.

In verse 18, Obadiah envisions a unified Israel (i.e. the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph – Ezek 37:15-23 cf. Psa 77:15; 80:1-2; Jer 3:18) that have been delivered in contrast to the house of Esau (Edom).<sup>8</sup> The "stubble" of a nation – Edom – cannot withstand the "fire" and "flame" of God's judgment through His people.<sup>9</sup> Earlier in the book, Obadiah refers to God's enlistment of heathen nations – those allied or in confederacy with Edom – to execute judgment upon Edom (vv. 7-9). However, in verse 18, God's own people were to join with Him in destroying Edom.

This prophecy (v. 18) is one of the examples of a prophecy that has a dual fulfillment in history – from our vantage point, one already past and one yet future. Both were yet future to Obadiah. In the past, Edom was displaced from its country by foreign nations. Their land was

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<sup>7</sup> For passages that support the concept of the remnant in Israel's history, see Ezra 9:8-13; Isaiah 4:2; 10:20; 37:31-32; Jeremiah 50:28; 51:50; Ezekiel 6:8-9; 7:16; 14:22; 24:26-27; 33:21-22 as examples.

<sup>8</sup> The Ezekiel passage (Ezek 37:15-23) elaborates quite extensively upon the promises for Israel that will be fulfilled at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ. Prominent in this passage is the reunification of the two kingdoms. Judah is seen as the principle tribe of the Southern Kingdom which also includes Benjamin, Simeon, and Levi. Joseph is represented by the two prominent tribes in the Northern Kingdom – Ephraim and Manasseh. Ezekiel ministered to the exiles during the Babylonian captivity in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. This vision and dream of a unified Israel preceded Ezekiel and is found in the Psalmist's writings also. Psalm 77 is attributed to Asaph, a contemporary of David and one of those to whom David had entrusted worship service responsibilities. (See Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible*, 873). Psalm 80 is also attributed to Asaph and in verses 1 and 2, we see a reference to the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh in such a manner that they are seen as unified and perhaps representative of the entire nation. The prophet Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, also understood that God's messianic rule and kingdom would extend to the whole of a unified Israel and Judah. In Jeremiah 3:18, the remnant of Israel and Judah are seen as arriving in the land of promise from the north which is typically the direction from which Israel's greatest enemies attacked and which is most likely a reference to the direction from which a large part of dispersed Israel will be re-gathered. God will bring His people back to the land of their inheritance first promised to Abraham, their father.

<sup>9</sup> This theme is continued by Zechariah, a late 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. prophet associated with the time of Israel's return from exile, pictures the leaders of Judah like a firepot and a flaming torch among pieces of wood and sheaves. Judah consumes all of her surrounding enemies. See Zechariah 12:6. Malachi, a mid to late 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. prophet, also continues the theme (Mal 4:1) and associates it with the "day of the Lord," a reference to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent. In Malachi, it is the Lord that accomplishes the judgment.

then occupied by the Nabataeans in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C. The displaced Edomites settled just to the south of Judah in an area known as the Negev. These Edomites were not humbled by their experience. Rather, they became even more arrogant and opposed to God's purposes through Judah and Israel. The early 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. prophet Ezekiel described the arrogance of the Edomites in Ezekiel 35:10, 12 and 36:2, & 5.<sup>10</sup>

Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two lands will be mine, and we will possess them,' although the Lord was there. (Ezek 35:10)

Then you will know that I, the Lord, have heard all your revilings which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel saying, 'They are laid desolate; they are given to us for food.' (Ezek 35:12)

Thus says the Lord God, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, 'The everlasting heights have become our possession.'" (Ezek 36:2)

Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul to drive it out for a prey. (Ezek 36:5)

The more immediate fulfillment of this prophecy occurred during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. Under the leadership of the Maccabees, the Judeans defeated the former Edomites who had become known by the Hellenistic name of Idumeans.<sup>11</sup> They were eventually forced to submit to circumcision and the full observance of the Jewish law under John Hyrcanus. However, they continued to haunt the Jews since the family of Herod the Great was of Idumaeian descent. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, they had lost their national identity and autonomy.<sup>12</sup> The still yet future aspect of this prophecy is found in the fact that Israel has not yet been unified as a holy community to the extent envisioned by Obadiah (and other prophets).

*Salvation oracle #2 – Judah exalted over the nations (vv. 19-21)* – Most interpret the beginning phrase in this passage – "the Negev [in the territory of Judah] will possess the mountains of Esau" – to be a reference to Judah inhabiting the region of Edom. This will fulfill prophecies in Numbers 24:18; Isaiah 11:14; and Amos 9:11-12. The "lowland," or Shephelah, is the lower hills in Judah between the central hill country to the east and the coastal plain to the west. Judah and Philistia had fought fiercely over this area earlier in Judah's history. Ephraim, Samaria and Gilead were parts of Israel during the period of the Judges and were the heart of the northern kingdom of Israel during the time of the divided monarchy. At the time of Obadiah's prophecy, all three regions had passed under foreign domination at one point or another. However, in the "day of the Lord," these regions would come under their rightful owners – Judah.<sup>13</sup>

Zarephath was a Phoenician city 14 miles north of the city of Tyre (see 1 Ki 17:8-24). Sepharad was a city to which some Judeans were exiled. Judah would be restored from exile and would thereby serve as a sign that God was a sovereign God and superior to the Babylonian

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<sup>10</sup> All Scripture quotes in these notes are taken from the New American Standard Bible used in Charles Ryrie's, *The Ryrie Study Bible* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Bible Institute, 1976, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> Gabelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Earl D. Radmacher, *Nelson Study Bible*, 1492.

god Marduk. He had allowed them to be taken into captivity and was powerful enough to bring them back in blessing.

The “saviors” or “deliverers” of verse 21 can be interpreted as those believers who return with the Lord to rule and reign from Jerusalem during the Messianic kingdom. Edom will be subject to their judgment.