Obadiah

Overview and Summary

Author:

- ⇒ Obadiah is the stated author of this prophecy. His name can mean one of two things: "servant of God" or "worshipper of God."
- ⇒ With 13 other Obadiah's mentioned in the OT, there have been attempts to reconcile one of those with the author of this book. With no evidence from the book of Obadiah, and with little evidence from other OT books that would correlate well with the dating of this book, we cannot positively identify the author of this book with another individual elsewhere.

Date:

- ⇒ As with a few other minor prophets, Obadiah does not date himself by listing a family genealogy or by listing the kings associated with his ministry. This has led to many different opinions on the dating of this book, all of which try to correlate the role Edom plays in plundering Jerusalem. Of the many suggestions concerning Obadiah's dating, two are most prominent.
    - Mid to Late Ninth Century:
        - Proponents of this view suggest that Obadiah's prophecy took place during the reign of Jehoram (853-841BC) over Judah. According to 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 21:8-17, Edom, who was under the authority of Judah at the time, revolted against Judah and made for themselves a king to rule over them. Soon after the Edomites raided Jerusalem (v. 17) and took away his sons, wives, and possessions.
        - Proponents also indicate that the order of Obadiah in the Hebrew canon suggests that it is an earlier text.
        - Obadiah 3-4 also shows similarity to Jeremiah 49:16. The question then becomes who came first. Proponents of this view believe that Jeremiah generally relies upon earlier prophets for his writing, suggesting Obadiah could have come first. Grammatically the passage in Obadiah is not as refined textually as it is in Jeremiah, which suggests that Obadiah came first and Jeremiah elaborate on the scripture.
    - Mid to Late Sixth Century:
        - Proponents of this view believe that the most natural explanation of the text is to see this as a judgment upon the nation of Edom who exploited Jerusalem during the Babylonian raids.

- Because there are no kings listed in this book, some see this as a proof of Obadiah's later writing since after the exile there were no more kings in Israel.
- Proponents also suggest that during the time of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem the people of Edom participated in these raids against Judah. Examples from Scripture include: Ps 137:7; Isa 34:5-17; Ezk 25:12-14, 35:1-15.

<u>Edom:</u>

⇒ Edom's history with the Jewish people is long and has many facets to it, but it is important to note the beginnings of their relationship from scripture as well as the continued state of Israel's relationship with Edom during the days of Obadiah.

⇒ History of Edom and Israel

- Edom's beginning comes in Genesis 25:25-26, where Esau was born with his twin brother Jacob holding his heel. The Genesis narrative in 36:1 then tells us that Esau is the father of the Edomites. Therefore, the contention between Esau and Jacob will continue to develop in history into the contention between Israel and Edom.
- After Israel was freed from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and were migrating toward the Promised Land, the biblical account records that once they came to the borders of Edom, the Edomites would not let them pass through (Num 20:14-21).
- Early kings of Israel, such as Saul and David, continually fought against the Edomites, with David finally conquering the nation in 2 Samuel 8:12-15.
- Edom, after the death of David, would become a sore spot to King Solomon (1 Kings 11:25).
- During the reign of the kings of Judah after Solomon, Edom would vacillate between being an independent state and being a territory of Judah, thusly making tensions always heightened in their relationship.
- In 593BC the Edomites made way to Jerusalem to plan a coalition against the Babylonian forces, but ultimately in 586BC when the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, the Edomites turned and sided with the invaders. Richard Fuhr writes, "Edom used the Babylonian invasion as an opportunity to seize territory from Judah, and archaeological evidence, including military dispatches from Arad, in southern Judah confirms this conflict between Judah and Edom."

<u>Structure & Content:</u>

⇒ Being the shortest book of the Bible consisting of only 670 words, Obadiah has a relatively simple structure.

- 1-9 The prediction of Edom's downfall (judgment)
- 10-14 The cause of Edom's downfall (sins)
- 15-21 The coming judgment of the Day of the Lord (future judgment)

⇒ 1-9: The first half of this section details the immense pride of Edom, thinking themselves too high or too hidden to avoid the judgment of God, but as the ending of verse four says, "From there I will bring you down declares the Lord." Verse five suggests that it would be better for thieves and robbers to ransack Edom than for the judgment of the Lord to befall them, yet this judgment is inevitable. God promises to destroy the wise among them. Edom will be overpowered and slaughtered according to the word of the Lord.

⇒ 10-14: The sins of Edom as listed in this section and include violence to their "brother" Jacob, conspiracy, stealing from Jerusalem in the time of its destruction, rejoicing over Judah's demise, and betrayal.

⇒ 15-21: Verse fifteen transitions from a view of Edom's judgment to a prophecy on the day of the Lord when all the nations will be judged, "As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head." These nations will be totally wiped from the map, while Mount Zion will remain in perpetuity. No longer will nations like Edom claim territorial rights, but it will all be the Lord's.

<u>Message:</u>

⇒ God hold power over the history of the kingdoms of man and each kingdom will be judged according to what they have done or not done.

⇒ In the end, God will reclaim all the territories of man under one unified kingdom the He will lead into eternity.

⇒ There are no authorities too far or too powerful that God cannot and will not provide his righteous judgment over them.