

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Obadiah

—by Peter Hammond



“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” Obadiah 1:15.

Obadiah means servant of the Lord. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. The prophet Obadi-

ah presented this vision from God in 845BC. This opened a period of 300 years, during which many prophets warned the people of God not to continue in **ingratitude, injustice, immorality and idolatry.**

Rebuke and reassurance

Obadiah warned Edom of imminent judgement and reassured God’s people of His sovereign justice. Ultimately, it is not the

The descendants of Esau

Obadiah proclaims judgement upon Edom. The Edomites descended from Esau, the first born (twin) son of Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:24-26), who struggled with Jacob, even while in the womb (Gen 25:22). Esau’s name means hairy because “*he was like a hairy garment all over.*” Esau was also called Edom, meaning “red”. From birth he was red-haired (Gen 25:25).

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evil will of men that will determine history, but the righteous purposes of God.

The Lord cares for His suffering people and He will work all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

Despising his heritage

The Bible says that God loved Jacob, but he hated Esau (Malachi 1:2-3). Esau showed contempt for the Covenant by marrying two Hittite women, who were a burden to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 26:34-35). Esau later married a daughter of Ishmael (Gen

Centuries of conflict

The Edomites opposed King Saul. They were conquered by King David, and ruled by King Solomon. The Edomites fought against King Jehoshaphat and successfully rebelled against King Jehoam. The Edomites were again conquered by Judah under King Amaziah. The Edomites regained their independence during the reign of King Ahaz.

The fall of Jerusalem

The Edomites gleefully joined in the destruction and looting of Jerusalem when it fell to the Babylonians in 586BC. “*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion...Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom, the day of Jerusalem, who said ‘Raze it, Raze it, to its very foundation!’”* Psalm 137:1,7.



Edom and Petra

Esau settled in the mountainous region South of the Dead Sea, stretching to the Gulf of Aqabah. This range of precipitous red sand stone heights known as the Mountains of Sier, controlled the Kings Highway caravan route, linking North Africa with Europe and Asia. The territory included fertile valleys and fruitful soil.

In Obadiah's day the capital was Petra, a unique rock city perched like an Eagles nest amid inaccessible mountain cliffs. Its only approach was through a deep rock cleft, more than a mile (1.6km) long, with massive cliffs, more than 213 metres high, rising on either side. Hewn out of the soft red sandstone, temples and dwellings were carved out of the rock. Towering above Petra is Mount Sier around 610 metres high. Petra was an impregnable fortress for the Edomites who raided their neighbours and lived off the loot of their ill-gotten gains. The Edomite people came to be described as profane, proud, gloating, fierce, bitter, brutal, cruel, mean and treacherous.



28:9). Esau despised his heritage and sold his birthright for a mere plate of food (Gen 25:33-34).

The request of Moses

When Moses led the children out of bondage from Egypt, he appealed to the king of Edom: *"Thus says your brother Israel: you know all the hardship that has befallen us, how...the Egyptians afflicted us...when we cried out to the Lord. He heard our voice and sent the Angel and bought us up out of Egypt; now here we are...on the edge of your border. Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields, or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the Kings Highway, we will not turn aside to the right hand or the left until we have passed through your territory"* Num 20:14-18.

The hostility of Edom

Then Edom said to him: *"You shall not pass through my land lest I come out against you with a sword."* Edom came out against Israel with many men and with a strong hand and refused to give Israel passage through their territory. When Jerusalem was attacked the Edomites aided their enemies.

"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you and you shall be cut off forever...when foreigners entered his gates...even you were as one of them. But you...should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction...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." Obadiah 10-

14. After the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon, the Edomites migrated into the, now, mostly de-populated Judea. The Edomites came to control Judea to such an extent that the Idumeans became kings of Judah. Herod the great, an Edomite (Idumean) became king of Judah in 37BC.

Contrasting brothers

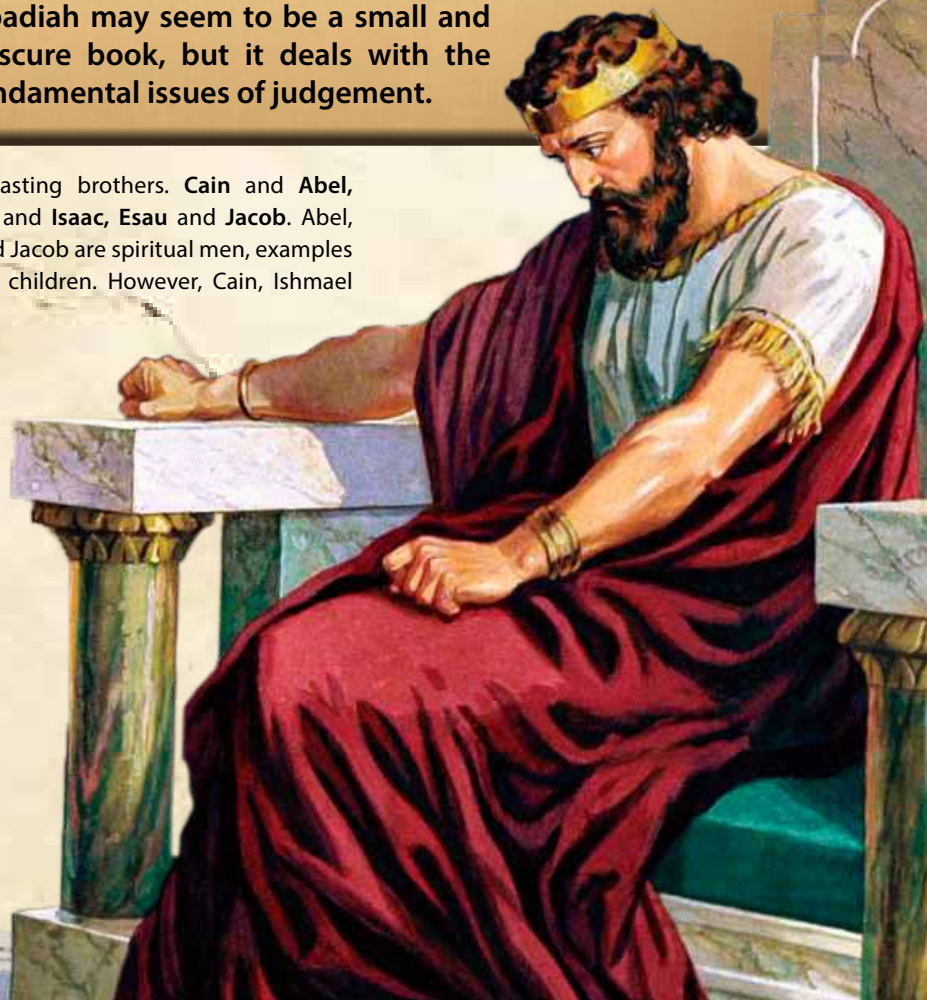
The Book of Genesis contains a number

and Esau are carnal men who represent selfishness and the flesh.

- **Cain** exemplifies an antipathy to redemption. He offered the fruit of the ground and despised the atonement of the blood of the lamb.
- **Ishmael**, the illegitimate son of a slave girl, his hand would be against his brother and every man's hand would be against him (Gen 16:12). *"For it is written »*

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of contrasting brothers. **Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob.** Abel, Isaac and Jacob are spiritual men, examples of God's children. However, Cain, Ishmael



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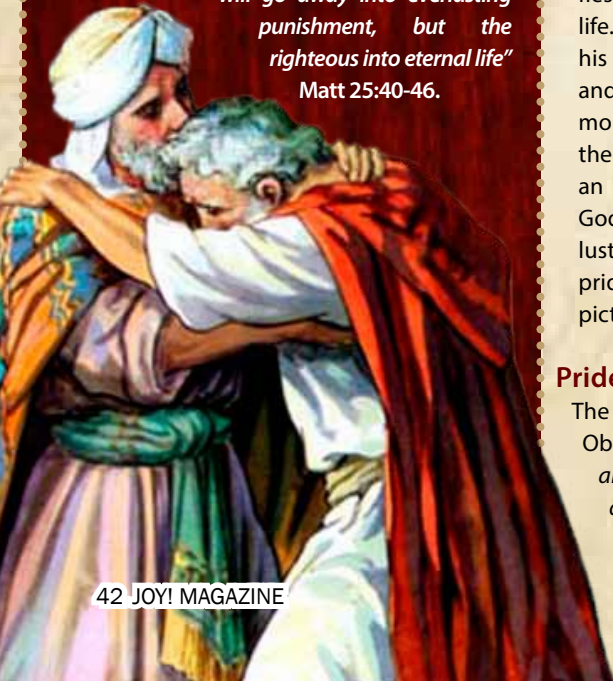
Obadiah



Bitter fruit of hatred

The age-old enmity between Esau and Jacob was seen in King Herod's attempt to murder Jesus at His birth in Bethlehem (Matt 2:16-18). The Idumeans were a major part of the rebellion against Rome and were defeated by Titus in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD70. It is ironic that the Edomites, who gloated and applauded the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC, died trying to defend it in AD70. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" Gal 6:7-8.

The treachery and arrogant callousness of the Edomites who could enjoy the sight of the defeat, devastation and affliction of the people of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians provoked God's judgement. "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." Obadiah 15. "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me!...And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life'" Matt 25:40-46.



that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two Covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children - but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother

high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord" Obadiah 2-4.

All paths lead to God

Obadiah speaks of the Day of the Lord, when the Lord will judge all nations. Many people delude themselves that all religions are essentially the same - that all paths lead to God.

Actually all paths do lead to God, in that, it is appointed unto man once to die and

Obadiah speaks of the Day of the Lord, when the Lord will judge all nations and people. The question is, what will God's verdict be of you? Where will you spend eternity?

of us all...Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now...we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free" Gal 4:22-31.

- Esau represents the selfish, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Esau despised his birthright, forsook his heritage, dishonoured his parents and married outside of his people. For a momentary gratification, Esau despised the hope of Heavenly glory and esteemed an earthly meal more important than God's promises for Eternity. The carnal lusts, short-sightedness, materialism, pride, cruelty and treachery of Esau is a picture of the natural man (Rom 8:5-15).

after that the Judgement (Heb 9:27). The question is, what will God's verdict be of you? Where will you spend eternity?

God will judge all of us

There is only one God: The Creator, the Eternal Judge, before whom each one of us must stand and give an account of our lives. We will have to give an account for every idle word ever spoken. This was the message of the Apostle Paul to the people of Athens: "...God now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" Acts 17:30-31.

One of the matters that God judges nations by is in accordance with how they have treated His people. Our Lord Jesus describes the Day of Judgement in Matthew 25, in terms of "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to Me" Matt 25:40.

Pride deceives

The pride of Edom is condemned by Obadiah: "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you...Though you ascend as

Pride is sinful rebellion against God. We have nothing to be proud of, except our Lord Jesus Christ and what He has accomplished.

Persecuting Christ

To Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, the Lord declared: *"...Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"* And he said, *'Who are You, Lord?'* Then the Lord said, *'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting!..'* Acts 9:4-6.

Throughout the world you can see who God's people are, by how they respond to Christ. Those who reject Christ, reject God the Father. Those who love Christ, obey His Commandments. *"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word..."* John 14:23.

God will destroy His enemies

Those who make themselves God's enemies, have no hope. *"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...for the Lord has spoken"* Obadiah 18. God will judge the unrepentant but He shall deliver the repentant (Obadiah 17).

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God's people love Christ

"You are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My Word has no place in you...They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father'. Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father. If God were your Father, you would love Me...You are of your father the devil...He was a murderer from the beginning...there is no truth in him...He who is of God hears God's Words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." John 8:37-47.

The Lord judges every nation

Obadiah may seem to be a small and obscure book, but it deals with the fundamental issues of judgement. There is only one God. He is the God of all the nations. The Day of the Lord shall come upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you. *"...The Kingdom shall be the Lord's"* Obadiah 21.

Christ in Obadiah

Obadiah concludes with a foreshadowing of Christ and His Apostles. *"Then saviours shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's"* Obadiah 21.

These saviours (or deliverers) are the apostles of Christ, ministers of the Word. They are described as saviours, or deliverers, not because they obtain our Salvation, but because they proclaim the Salvation provided by the grace of God alone, on the basis of the Atonement of Christ alone, received by Faith alone.

Scripture alone is our ultimate authority. Christ alone is the head of the Church. Everything must be done to the glory of God alone. *"For the Day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you."* Obadiah 15. ■

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