

## A Study of the Minor Prophets The Book of Obadiah ~ Chapter 1

- I. The book of Obadiah addresses the brotherly conflict between Israel/Judah, the descendants of Jacob, and Edom, the descendants of Jacob's twin brother Esau. The message of Obadiah is that God would completely destroy Edom for the violence she had committed against Judah and that he would ultimately restore Israel. The book of Obadiah reminds us of God's justice as he punishes Edom in accordance with its crimes as well as remembering his special love for Israel, his elect people. Edom was a small kingdom to the southeast of Judah. It lay in the rugged and mountainous terrain between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Edom is sometimes referred to as Seir (Gen 32:3; 36:20–21). Israel and Edom were bitter rivals throughout the Old Testament era. Though they were allies at times (see Deut 2:2–6; 2 Kgs 3:9), their relationship was more often characterized by hostility and conflict.
  
- II. Because the hostility was centuries long there is debate about when the book was written. Of all the conflicts between Edom and Israel, the Babylonian invasion seems to best fit the description in Obadiah 10–14, particularly the references to Edom's participation in the looting of Jerusalem. The time of Obadiah's ministry likely falls, then, between the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC and the defeat of Edom by Nabonidus and the Babylonians in 553.
  
- III. The book of Obadiah divides into two major sections—the oracle of judgment against Edom in verses 1–14 and a more general announcement of the coming Day of the Lord against all nations in verses 15–21. The oracle against Edom in verses 1–14 contains the two basic elements of a judgment speech, with the announcement of judgment coming first (vv. 1–9), followed by the accusation of the crimes that forms the basis of the judgment (vv. 10–14). The oracle concerning the “Day of the Lord” in verses 15–21 also divides into two sections. These sections contrast the judgment of the nations, particularly Edom (vv. 15–18), and the future blessing of Israel that would include its geographical expansion and subjugation of Edom (vv. 19–21).
  
- IV. The theological message of Obadiah is Yahweh is the Lord and judge of all nations, and all people must ultimately answer to him. The many “days” of judgment the Lord has executed against his enemies in the past confirm the certainty of the final Day of the Lord, in which he will judge the entire earth and all humanity (see 2 Pet 3:10–13). The fate of historical Edom is representative of the judgment that awaits all nations and peoples who oppose God. This idea is most clearly seen in prophetic texts where the judgment of Edom precedes the coming of Israel's eschatological restoration (Isaiah 34–35; Ezekiel 35–37; Isaiah 63–66).