



Obadiah



THRU the BIBLE

NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

J. Vernon McGee

MINOR PROPHETS



Obadiah

WRITER: Obadiah means *Servant of Jehovah*. He is one of four prophets about whom we know absolutely nothing, except that he wrote prophecy. The other three prophets are Habakkuk, Haggai, and Malachi. Obadiah is like a ghostwriter—he is there, but we do not know him. He lived up to his name. A servant boasts of no genealogy, neither exploits nor experiences. Dr. Edward Pusey said, “God has willed that his name alone and this brief prophecy should be known to the world.”

DATE: There is a great difference of opinion as to the date of this prophet. There are some who give the date of 887 B.C., which fixes the time during the reign of Jehoram and the bloody Athaliah (cf. 2 Kings 8:18 with 11:1-16). Dr. Pusey placed him during the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:7). If this is accurate, we have one isolated reference to Obadiah in history. Nevertheless, this name was as common in that day as the name John is today. Canon Farrar gave the date as 587 B.C. Dr. William Moorehead concurred in this, as he suggested that Obadiah was probably a contemporary of Jeremiah. The whole question seems to hinge on verse 11. Is this verse historical or prophetic? The natural interpretation is the historic one, which would give it the late date. Most likely it was written subsequent to the Babylonian captivity.

KEY: Edom

How are the things of Esau searched out! How are his hidden things sought [out]! (Obadiah 1:6)

FEATURES: Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament—only 21 verses. But the brevity of the message does not render it less important or less significant for us today. Like the other Minor Prophets, the message is primary, it is pertinent, it is practical, and it is poignant. It is a message that can be geared into this day in which we are living.

Obadiah tells us immediately, bluntly, and to the point, “Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom” It is the prophecy of judgment against Edom.

BACKGROUND: The Edomites were those who were descended from Esau, just as the Israelites are those who are descended from Jacob.

The story of Esau and Jacob is that of twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. They were not identical twins; actually they were opposites (see Genesis 25:24-34).

Esau despised his birthright. The man who had the birthright was in contact with God—he was the priest of his family, he was the man who had a covenant from God, the man who had a relationship with God. In effect Esau said, “I would rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God.”

Having seen Esau in the first book of the Old Testament, look now at the last book of the Old Testament and read this strange language:

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau (Malachi 1:2, 3)

This is a strange thing for God to say—“I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” The explanation is in the little book of Obadiah.

COMMENT: Verse 6 is translated by Ginsburg, the Hebrew scholar, thus: “How are the things of Esau stripped bare!” They are laid out in the open for us to look at for the first time. Obadiah puts the microscope down on Esau; and when we look through the eyepiece, we see Edom. As we inflate a tire tube to find a leak and cannot find that leak until it is inflated, just so Obadiah presents Esau

inflated so that we can see the flaw in his life. What was small in Esau is now magnified 100,000 times in the nation. God did not say at the beginning that He hated Esau—it was not until he became a nation and revealed the thing that caused God to hate him:

The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? (v. 3)

It was pride. “Pride hath deceived you,” God says to Edom.

Esau, like Jacob, had become a great nation. The children of Israel had come into the Promised Land; the children of Esau had gone to the south and east, in the rocky fastness, where in 1812 archaeologists discovered a city, Petra, actually hewn out of solid cliffs of rose-colored rock. It was an impregnable fortress, so safe from attack that Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria deposited money there. Just a handful of men could guard the narrow canyons which form its approaches.

They were living in a false security. In their pride they felt that they did not need God anymore, and they bowed Him out of their civilization. When a mere man, a little creature down here, gets to the place where he says, “I don’t need God,” God says, “That’s what I hate.”

OUTLINE:

I. Edom—destruction, vv. 1-16

A. Charge against Edom, vv. 1-9

B. Crime of Edom, vv. 10-14

C. Catastrophe to Edom, vv. 15, 16

(Poetic justice—*lex talionis*—law of retaliation)

II. Israel—restoration, vv. 17-21

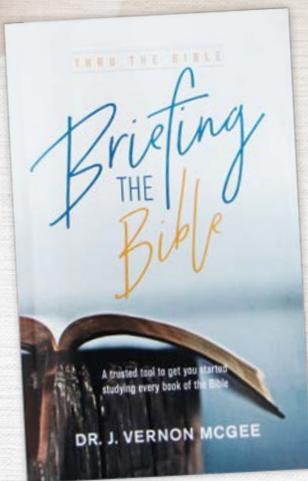
A. Condition of Israel, v. 17

B. Calling of Israel, v. 18

C. Consummation of all things, vv. 19-21

(“And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”)

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