

OBADIAH

GOD IN DEFENCE OF HIS PEOPLE (Obad. 1:1)

Part I of IV

The Book of Obadiah is one of those little gems in God's Word that is rarely studied, and yet it has a wonderful message of encouragement for God's people today.

How much do you know about Obadiah? Actually, that is a kind of a 'trick' question because the Bible scholars are not too sure about anything to do with him, - he is a real mystery!

Let's begin with what we *do* know. He has written the shortest book in the Old Testament ... with only twenty-one verses. ... His name means "one who worships God", or "servant of Jehovah" (עֲבַדְיָהּ `Obadyah; Obed's name, - the father of Jesse, - means 'serving'). ... As to his identity, here the mystery deepens. There are at least twelve, - and probably thirteen ... maybe more, - Obadiah's in Scripture, - he could be any one of them, but it is safe to assume he was most probably involved in the ministry of the temple in some way ... so that narrows our investigation down to four possibilities,

1. I Chron. 9:16, Obadiah the son of Shemaiah
2. II Chron. 34:12, And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari
3. Neh. 10:5 ... (9:36 Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: ... 38 And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.)
4. Neh. 12:25, Obadiah ... porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates.

When did he live? Once again, we're not sure but traditionally, the majority of reputable Bible scholars believe he was writing about the Babylonian invasion by Nebuchadnezzar prior to the total destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. There are one or two other possibilities, but the traditional view seems to have more evidence in support of it.

There is also a similarity between Obadiah's first nine verses and Jer. 49 ...

Obadiah, **1** The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. **2** Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. **3** 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? **4** Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. ... **8** Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? **9** And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Jeremiah, **Jer. 49:15** I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. **15** For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. **16** Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. **17** Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. ... **20** Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. ... Most probably, Jeremiah borrowed from Obadiah.

What is the story behind the book? Starting at the beginning, the prophet refers to a longstanding family feud between two brothers many

centuries previously, and the impact it has had throughout the years on their succeeding generations. The book concludes with God's assurance the enemy of His people will be defeated and His Kingdom established in the land.

So, to summarise so far ... This is the shortest book in the Old Testament, written by a man called Obadiah, during a period when the people of God, - the Israelites, - were being seriously threatened by their neighbours.

If we are not sure about too much of the background of this book, why bother trying to study it? Well, God considered worthy of being included in His Word, so therefore, it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It describes a very real situation where the nation of Israel was passing through a dark valley, seemingly alone and almost crushed by events around it. When you study this book you will find it has a promise first of all for the Jewish people of that day ... and then secondly, for the people of God in our day ... Therefore, the Lord has something to say to you and me through this prophecy of Obadiah.

But we must look into the background a little deeper. To the fore in Obadiah's vision was the ...

FAMILY STRIFE The two main nations mentioned in the book are Edom (vv.1,8,) and Judah (v.12). They are also referred to under the titles of their founding fathers, Esau (vv.6,8,9,18,19,21) and Jacob (vv.10,17,18). ... These two men were brothers, ... both sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau was the elder brother, very 'manly' ... and into all the outdoor activities, - a cunning hunter and a man of the field (Gen. 25:27). He was his father's favourite (v.28). Jacob, on the other hand, was closer to his mother (v.28), and was content to stay 'around the house', ... a plain man, dwelling in tents (v.27).

It does not come across as being a perfect family unit, - Isaac and Rebekah had their favourites, and the two sons were aware of this. There seemed to be a certain amount of rivalry between the two. When Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah, he was born into privilege, 'born

with a golden spoon' ... and even though he had an older half-brother (Ishmael, the son of Hagar), he, - Isaac, - had all the comforts, whereas Ishmael and Hagar were forced out of the home into exile to the harsh wilderness. ... I wonder then, if Isaac had a certain 'soft spot' for Esau because as he looked back to how Ishmael was treated, he wanted to make amends ... and he saw Ishmael and Esau as being very similar kind of 'underdogs'.

Anyhow, after coming home from hunting, the young Esau 'did a deal' with the young Jacob over a pot of soup. It was a high degree of scheming from Jacob ... when Jacob bartered with his absolutely starving brother, - "I'll give you the best, most delicious, most tasty, 'beautifullest' soup made with the freshest vegetables picked today". The smell, and Jacob's description made Esau absolutely ravenous! ... And as scheming as Jacob was ... equally as naive was Esau, because he sold his birthright/heritage over a pot of soup!!

I don't suppose the two boys were ever all that close ... but when Esau's hunger was satisfied, any modicum of fraternal love in that home would have evaporated very quickly! Consequently, Esau turned bitter and he went and married two Hittite wives, [which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah \(Gen. 26:35\)](#).

Now, where did the Hittites come from? ... [Gen. 10:15 And Canaan begat Sidon his firstborn, and Heth](#). ... Where did he come from? What kind of man was he? Canaan was the son of Ham who was the son of Noah who went in and 'gawked' at his father as Noah lay drunk in his tent! (Gen. 9:21,22). When Noah heard about it, he declared, [Gen. 9:25 Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren](#). ... So, Esau married two Hittite women whose ancestry came from the family of the accursed Canaan (Gen. 26:34).

No wonder Isaac and Rebekkah were grieved when Esau married the Hittites ... Their eldest son had married women who was not only foreigners, but also, they came from a people who were cursed, and that curse would continue through Esau's generations! Nevertheless, when Isaac was very old and almost blind he still favoured Esau and he called

him in and asked him to go out and kill a deer, 27:4 make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

However, Rebekah heard the conversation and she hatched a plot. She told Jacob to go and kill two young goats of the flock (... surely there is a difference in taste between a goat and a deer! ... but maybe the old man's sense of taste was on the wane). She prepared the meal (v.9), but Jacob had another problem, - v.11 Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. When my father touches me, he will know right away I'm not Esau! No problem, said Rebekah (she's probably the one Jacob learned the scheming from), here are the skins of these goats ... put them on and he will not know to the difference! And of course, - we know the story, - their deception deceived the old man.

When Esau came in from his hunting and discovered what had happened he was distraught ... but nothing could be done, - Jacob had gained 'one over on him' ... v.41 And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. Consequently, Esau's hatred of Jacob spilled over into their families, and the generations to come ... and even though Esau and Jacob eventually resolved their differences and were reconciled, the hostility continued in their descendants ... This was despite the Jews being specifically instructed in the Law of Moses, Dt. 23:7, Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother. ... And on the Edomite side, God noticed they had a perpetual hatred for His people (Ezek. 35:5).

This was the background of the ongoing hostility and aggression Obadiah was bringing to the fore in his prophecy. **Family strife** is an awful thing. Most families experience it sometime or another ... and more often than not ... the original cause of the strife has been away in the past ... as it was here!

FAITHFULLY SECURE The people of Judah never grew into being a large nation. In the same way He preferred to work with Gideon's 300, rather than with the potential army of 32,000 at the beginning, the Lord

often seems to favour smaller numbers ... [Zech. 4:10](#) who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice. ... And this was the background to Obadiah's prophecy, - Israel was small and greatly despised ... Why were they greatly despised? ... They were greatly despised because they were a separated people, different from all the other nations, and recognised as the people of Jehovah. They were not 'part of the club', belonging to the outside nations! They had a different legacy, - they spoke a different language, they worshipped a different God, they had a different upbringing ... none of the other nations could understand them ... and that was because the nation of Israel was set apart for God.

And within this setting, Obadiah introduced his prophecy, and told the people they were entering times of great warfare. As such, the Lord has given them a command to *not* be at peace with the enemy, and *not* to be like them for, - to use James' characterisation, - [the friendship of the world is enmity with God \(James 4:4\)](#). Or, to use Paul's instruction to the Corinthians, [II Cor. 6:18](#) be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. Or, to quote Peter, [I Peter 2:9](#) ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people

You see, these were God's people in danger. As Obadiah described, they were aware of the conglomeration of outside nations ... and none of them sympathetic to Israel. They resented Israel's presence in the land and in the region ... in much the same way the same nations do today.

Obadiah was speaking to a people who were under these great threats ... whether they realised it or not ... and they had to be warned. So, what do you do? Do you snuggle up and pretend it's not happening? Do you join yourself to your opponents into some kind of a religious pretence? ... This was a problem common throughout the years, for example, Isaiah spoke about some of his people in a similar situation who were prepared to look in the wrong directions to keep going, [Is. 31:1](#) Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

... We shall seek *their* help, - the very people who are out to destroy us! ... But the moment God's people began to seek the help of the enemy was the moment God's people stopped trusting in the Lord ... That is what ultimately led to their rejection of Him.

They were looking in the wrong place for protection ... while all the time God was appealing, [Is. 44:22](#) return unto me; for I have redeemed thee ... [55:7](#) Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. In Amos' day there was the same problem to address, [6:1](#) Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria. Surely, a sleeping church is the devil's playground. It is while God's people are asleep, Jesus said ([Mt. 13:24ff.](#)), the enemy comes in and sows his tares.

Those were dark days when the clouds were gathering over the Israelites. ... Where was their hope? ... Their hope is where it always was! He was there for them all to see in the opening words of the prophecy, [v.1](#) Thus saith the Lord God. Obadiah was not bringing the people to a new form of the religion, and neither was he bringing them to the religious or political leaders in Jerusalem. Nor was he leading them to forge alliances with the ungodly from the surrounding nations ... Obadiah began by directing them to the Word of God, [Thus saith the Lord GOD.](#) ... He brought them to Adonai Jehovah, the Sovereign Lord ... the God of Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, Moses, Samuel, and David ... the God Who had proved Himself throughout their history.

There is nothing wrong with going back. When you have a problem with, for example, your computer, you go back to the settings where it last worked the best. There is nothing wrong in going back, it's a wise move ... That was how Jeremiah directed his people, [Jer. 6:16](#) Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. ... When you look down through history, the Church of the Jesus Christ has often looked as if it 'was on its last legs' ... and still we are here, ... How are we still here? We are still here because, even when it has seemed the Church was 'on its last legs', God has brought it to its knees

... and the Church on its knees is the most powerful position God's people can adopt!!

CONCLUSION

What is Obadiah saying to us? I believe it is simply this ... and yes, I believe such a small book as this has great lessons for us ... Obadiah is telling us to keep moving on with God. ... He has not passed the reins to another. He has not been defeated. He is still in charge!

It doesn't matter what the enemy says, or how he tries to draw us away ... We are a people separated unto God. ... The old peculiarities of the people of God, and the Word of God is an anachronism to the enemy ... and that is why we must stand with Obadiah when he declared, **Thus saith the Lord GOD.**

The enemy comes to you and tries to gently sneak in under your defences, and then he creeps in and leaves his little dregs of contamination ... and when those little dregs of contamination are left to putrefy, they begin to corrupt and corrode and stink. ... And it becomes, - because you have left them, - their horrible smell becomes 'normalised', and you do not notice the harm their defilement is doing. ... That is how Satan works ... He will tell you there's no harm, even if the Bible tells you it's wrong. He will tell you there is no need to take spiritual issues so seriously ... and the preacher standing up at the front is exaggerating the issues. ... I can tell you the preacher is not trying to impress anyone ... he is just trying to preach what the Lord has laid upon his heart. ... And that is what Obadiah, - whoever he was, - was doing.

And, as we progress further into this Book of Obadiah, we shall see how he tells the people the Lord is at work to the glory of His Name and He is protecting His beloved and chosen Israel.

Part II of IV

GOD'S JUDGEMENT UPON EDOM (Obad. 2-9)

Judgement is a word that often seems to present a wrathful God Who is angrily awaiting the opportunity to rain His terror upon an unsuspecting world. Therefore, it has never been a popular subject. From the pronouncement meted out to Adam and Eve when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden, to the decision upon Cain for killing his brother, through the *many* times when God judged His people Israel ... *judgment* has always been the reality for those who have shown defiance and contempt towards God. And that is how it will continue until the end of time. ... While men's values have changed, God's standards have remained the same, and His judgment is inevitable.

However, it is shameful when the attitudes of the world enter the realm of God's people and dilute their witness and message. It obscures the true identity of the Church, and it brings us to where we don't want to make much of the important issues ... and one of the most important of those subjects is the judgment of God, including the 'wrath to come', and Hell ... The truth is though, we do favours to no-one if we, - as it were, - 'hide these issues in a box', lest we cause offence.

We may choose not to speak of God's wrath ... but it does not make it go away ... It does not change the fact of God's anger towards sinners who reject Him. God has never 'toned down' His attitude to sin, and therefore, it is dangerous and uncaring to push it to the one side and ignore how people need to be warned. ... That is what many of the priests and the false prophets in the Old Testament did as they ignored God's law ... and Jeremiah did not 'mince' his words when he proclaimed against them, **Jer. 5:30** *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; ³¹ The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*

Failure to address the subject of God's judgement is unforgiveable because God *will* judge the ungodly, ... and if unsuspecting sinners do not hear of God's judgement we are doing them a great disservice *because they need to know* ... *how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?* (Rom. 10:14).

You might say to me, David, there are other ways you can tell them, without being so ‘contentious’ ... Well ... but when it comes to the crux of the matter, God’s Word emphasises how the message must be stated clearly, and the message will never become popular. It is not entertainment to tell someone they need to be saved. It is our sober and sombre responsibility .

Here, Obadiah has a message of God’s judgement to proclaim. I do not see him laughing his way through what he preached. I don’t see him trying to slip something in to lessen the impact or make it easier for the people to accept. ... In fact, I don’t see him using any of the antics used in some places today!

Obadiah had a hard message to tell the people, and he had to tell them knowing God was listening.

GOD’S EXAMINATION

It is an awesome task declaring to others what the Lord lays on your heart. Sometimes what He says is easy to receive, and sometimes it is not. Nevertheless, the purpose of the servant is to serve the Master the way the Master requires. Therefore, the message does not originate with the servant, but with the Master ... and it is the servant’s task to relate, - word-for-word, - what he has been taught by the Master. That is the concept behind Paul’s words to the Ephesians, **Eph. 6:19** [*18 praying always*] for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. ... That is our only remit.

It is an awesome task, but it is one that is set out for every believer to faithfully fulfil. It is not fiddling about with a few thoughts, or telling people what we think they might want to hear. It is not about using religion to further secular goals, but our task is to make God known through the means He shows us in His Word so that we have His support and leading in His work.

Of course, the devil has always been busy among God's people, and that is why many pulpits and even some evangelistic campaigns (so-called) have played host to preachers and teachers of all kinds of 'gospels', for example, **II Peter 2:1** But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable [*ἀπώλεια, destructive*] heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their pernicious ways [*ταῖς ἀπωλείαις, destruction*]; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [*βλασφημέω, blasphemed, reviled*]. ³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation [*ἀπώλεια, destruction*] slumbereth not. ... They sneak/creep in unawares (cf. Jude v.4), and with feigned words make merchandise of you ... *feigned* words, the Greek word is πλαστοῖς λόγοις, - 'plastic' words! Words that can be twisted and stretched to mean anything you want them to mean ... as Jude explains, **Jude 4** ... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into [*perversion and shameless error*], and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ ... and they were leading the unsuspecting to Hell!

These were the type of people Obadiah had to contend with also ... and he had to ensure he spoke to the people exactly what God set before him to speak. We do not know who Obadiah was, but we *do* know he had a message from God for the people of Edom ... and he was responsible before God for faithfully proclaiming exactly what God had for him to say. ... **God's examination** ...

GOD'S CONDEMNATION

These people to whom Obadiah was prophesying were the Edomites, - the descendants of Esau. Throughout the Old Testament, there are many examples of how they had deserted God, **Is. 56:11** Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. ¹² Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. ... They considered themselves to be in absolute control, and untouchable, ... and they boasted, **Obad. 3** 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?

Edom was *so* proud, and they thought themselves unconquerable because their land was bordered on each side by two mountain ranges, v.3 thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock. They considered themselves great, but God said they were small (v.2) ... ² Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. The actual word (קָטָן qatan {kaw-tawn}) means ‘insignificant’ and ‘unimportant’ ... in God’s great scheme of things, these people were as a tiny speck! ... And these people were about to discover the truth of those words for God judged them, v.3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee ... ⁴ Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

By turning against God’s people, they were setting out to rob God of His glory, Is. 44:23 ... for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel ... 55:5 Behold, ... for he hath glorified thee ... and God said, No! You won’t rob Me of My glory for *I will not allow it!* ... God is jealous of His glory towards and among His ancient people, to whom He said, Is. 43:1 O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine ... ⁷ Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

These Edomites were the enemies of God’s people, and they were located on several of the major trade routes, - they were a wealthy people! They were a real business community, and of course the mountains were rich in copper and other minerals. They were not answerable the larger nations for they were a successful entity on their own, - they didn’t have to make treaties and give money elsewhere, which meant they could keep all their wealth for themselves. They were happily self-contained, and responsible to no-one else. ... But they were forgetting God. Their success was only ‘loaned’ to them. They had their ‘friends’ ... when they needed them ... and there were times when Edom found it necessary to forge local alliances with these smaller countries, for example, Ps. 83:2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and

they that hate thee have lifted up the head. 3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. 4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. 5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee: 6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them ... Indeed, they had formed an alliance against Israel!

But God said, Watch your 'friends'! Edom, your friends are going to betray you! God would turn Edom's friends into their enemies, and those who had fraternised with them and made alliances with them would break those covenants. Their friends would turn into setting up traps, into which the unsuspecting Edom would fall.

But for the sake of the ancient relationship of the brethren, - Esau and Jacob, the two sons of Isaac and Rebekkah - God continued to have a place in His heart for Esau/Edom. That is why He had written into the Law of Moses, Dt. 23:7 Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother ...

And just as the Israelites had responsibilities to the Edomites, the Edomites had responsibilities to the Israelites, - brotherhood works both ways! Brothers have a bond because of birth, and they should get along, - or, at least try. They should be looking out for one other, not fraternizing with the enemy as the Edomites were doing ... plotting against their brethren, the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites.

And don't you sense a sadness in the pen of Obadiah for the Edomites. They had no such compassion for Obadiah and his people because they were intending to side with the enemy for the overthrow of Israel ... but you can feel Obadiah's sorrow for Edom, 5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6 How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!

Look what God is saying. Normally if a thief enters your home he only takes those things of value ... but God will so severely punish Edom they are going to lose everything. The enemy is going to creep into the Edomite vineyards and not just take a few basketloads ... *but the whole crop of grapes!* ... v.6 *How are the things of Esau searched out!* ... There will be nothing left! ... What the Hebrew word really means is, they will be ransacked completely! ... *Decimated!* ... But the Edomites could not see the predicament they were in for they failed to understand their so-called 'friends', - among the nations, - would turn against them. ... They would not listen to the prophets for v.3 *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee,* ... and the state of their hearts affected the workings of their minds, v.7 *the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee.* ... They went from being **deceived** to being **dismayed** (v.9 *thy mighty men, O Teman [an Edomite clan], shall be dismayed*), and then to being **destroyed**, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. ... **God's Examination, God's Condemnation**
...

GOD'S EXPLANATION

This was a truly hard message Obadiah was instructed by God to bring. ... Why was God dealing so harshly with the sons of Edom? Why could He not have left them alone and ignored them? Very simply, God was not prepared to stand by and condone evil. Neither is He prepared to stand by and watch His beloved people of Israel suffer.

God's people are precious to Him. He brought Abraham from a land far away, through all the obstacles and He led him into Canaan. He looked down upon the Hebrews in captivity in Egypt, Ex. 3:7 *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; 8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.* ... God does not ignore the distress of His people. He takes account of those who set themselves in opposition against them ... and Edom was falling at a very fundamental hurdle, Lev. 19:17 *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart.*

Edom hated Israel, and his hatred emanated from his pride (v.3ff.). And because of his feelings against Israel, He was in opposition to Israel's God ... and this went as far back as the time of his rebelliousness when **Gen. 26:34** Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: ³⁵ Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah. ... He didn't only turn against his parents and his brother Jacob, He also turned against his God ... and his hatred festered through the years of his descendants until God decided to deal drastically with it here in the prophecy of Obadiah.

Hatred and ill-feelings towards a brother or a sister in Christ is often one of the devil's most effective weapons in his armoury. The Edomites gloated over the sufferings of Israel, ... they basked in their misery.

The message of Obadiah here is the challenge to the believer as to their relationship with a fellow-believer. The Israelites and the Edomites had a common heritage, - they both were born out of Isaac and Abraham ... *that* was the lineage and privilege. They should have been on the same side, looking out for each other ... but instead, the Edomites were on the side of the enemy, looking for every opportunity to cause mischief against Israel. ... And that was **God's explanation** for the misery He was about to send upon the children of Edom in this prophecy of Obadiah.

CONCLUSION God's Examination, ... Condemnation, ... Explanation
More harm has been done in the fellowship of God's people *by* God's people than the enemy outside can manage to do! Whereas persecution and oppression has made the church strong, the Church has weakened itself from the inside.

In just about each of the churches in the New Testament Paul had to deal with conflicts between believers, - they were arguing among themselves, and hindering the blessing and the progress of the Gospel. ... Euodias and Syntyche couldn't look at each other ... The Corinthian believers had broken up into factions! ... Obadiah's message has always been relevant!

The people of Edom abused their familial inheritance with the people of Israel ... and God was about to deal with them. ... If you have a grievance against a brother or a sister, it is an obstacle in the work of the Lord ... and for His sake, it should be sorted out. To be holding a grudge is to fall foul of the spirit of Edom ... *and you will ultimately suffer!* ... Paul was often offended, but he told the Corinthians to give **II Cor. 6:3** no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed: **4** But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, ... **6** By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned [*ἀνυπόκριτος, undisguised, sincere*]. In the Garden of Gethsemane, *that* was the prayer of the Lord Jesus too, Jn. 17:21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.

That is the message of Obadiah in these verses ... to guard our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, for His work, and to His glory. Amen.

Part III of IV

THE GUILT OF EDOM (Obad. 10-16)

Since the beginning of time, we find people's number one interest is themselves, - that is what lay at the heart of Adam and Eve's aspirations. Their ambitions came to be centred round 'self', - self-will, self-gratification, self-glorification. ... And as King Solomon wrote, **Eccles. 1:9** there is no new thing under the sun. From the beginning, therefore, human beings have been adamant their place is in total control of all they survey, and they are answerable to none.

These were the type of people Obadiah was dealing with. As far as God was concerned, He was a 'convenience', - a commodity, - who would quite happily accommodate their moods, aspirations, ... and any other needs they required ... *Sound familiar?!*

In the previous verses, Obadiah had announced God's judgment was to come upon the Edomite army (9 And thy mighty men, O Teman [*the name of an Edomite clan; Gen. 36:15, a grandson of Esau*], shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter). They were using violence against their brethren, the Jews, Esau/Edom's brother, the sons of Jacob, (10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them). When Esau discovered he had been deprived of his father's blessing, he determined to kill his brother Jacob (Gen. 27:41), and this malicious hatred was passed on through the generations.

Instead of helping the Jews, the Edomites sided with the enemy, and were complicit with those who ransacked Jerusalem. Amos also wrote about them, **Amos 1:11** Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: 12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah [*the capital city of the Edomites; in the southern area of modern Jordan, along the King's Highway, protected on all sides by a steep cliff; Herod was an Idumean/Edomite*]. They stood back and enjoyed seeing Jerusalem suffer (**Obadiah 12** But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.).

In fact, they even sided with the enemy (**Obadiah 13** Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their *calamity*; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their *calamity*, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their *calamity*; 14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress). They took of the spoil, and impeded the escape of the Jews ... handing them over to the enemy. Consequently, God had had enough for He announced "the day of the Lord" was approaching (15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen [*goyim*]). However, the Edomites were a proud people, and didn't care too much for Obadiah's warnings.

But God had made His mind up, v.15 as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy

mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been ... words reminiscent of Gal. 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. So, what does God teach us from these verses in Obadiah vv.10-16?

GOD'S AUTHORITY OVER THE ENEMY

In this month's *Spectator* magazine (April 2017), there is an article concerning the decline of Christianity in the United Kingdom. Apparently "church pews are emptying at the rate of 10,000 people per week. In 1983, some 40 per cent of the population declared itself Anglican. Now, it's 17 per cent. To be a practising Christian in the West now is to belong to a minority". Earlier in the article, the writer commented, "The collapse of religion in Britain has been perhaps the most striking feature of the last generation". ... While the author is writing in a manner sympathetic to Christianity, I am not certain the situation is as dire as he documents, but it is nevertheless *concerning*. ... And this is only one of many articles we could refer to, which portray a similar synopsis.

If Obadiah was here today, he would perfectly understand our situation, for he knew what it was like to belong to a faith that was declining, - in fact, it was on its way out! In the period in which he lived, he knew all about the dangers from the surrounding religions, and how the Name of Jehovah was being swamped by a whole range of deities being advocated by a 'progressive' society. Every day, the Name of God was being *stamped* further into the ground by ungodly men and fearless governments.

But Obadiah was assured of something we must never lose sight of, - *God is in control!* He was shown God's authority has not been weakened. The enemy considered Jerusalem to be religiously impressionable and open to all kinds of new ideas ... and yes, on the face of it, Jerusalem *was* ... And for that reason, it was going to be destroyed ... but the enemy had not calculated upon God's promises to the remnant of His faithful people.

The sovereignty of God has never diminished, it has never faded away, - not even in the slightest! Obadiah means "Jehovah's servant" ... and he was God's man where God had placed him, speaking God's message ... reminding a hard and unresponsive people they ultimately had to deal with God! ... And even though there is no mention of anyone accompanying him, it is very unlikely He was on his own for God always keeps a remnant ... At the same time, it does not matter whether there was one, one hundred, or one thousand

... Obadiah was illustrating in his prophecy that it is *God* and not man who is the Saviour of His people, and Who always has the last say! ... It is *God* Who keeps His plan of history moving forward because 'history', - in the final analysis, - is '*His Story*'. It is all about Him, and ultimately, it is all to His glory ... To explore this, trace your way through Scripture and I don't think you will find at any time the followers of God were in the majority ... but, where is the power of Egypt today? Where is the power of Babylon too? Where is the power of ancient Greece and Sparta? Where is the ancient power of Rome? ... They are all gone ...

Travel through these countries and you will find their ancient civilizations represented by ruins. Yet, the little country of Israel, - the descendants of the ancient people of God, to whom He made the covenants - He has kept His Word to them by bringing them back into their land, settling them there, and despite the turbulent and belligerent nations surrounding them ... He is keeping them there! He is able to do all this for He is the sovereign and all-powerful God. ... Israel is one of the greatest evidences of God and His power being witnessed in these modern times!

... And another great witness to the power of God today is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ ... It remains despite all the forecasts about its inevitable demise. If all their calculations had been correct over these last two thousand years, Christianity would have been long gone! It would have been consigned to history for it would not have lasted. The Name of Jesus would have been consigned to the category of the idols of Greece and Rome that very few people know any more. Instead, Christianity, - even in all its permutations, - is the world's leading religion ... and *true Biblical* Christianity will never be defeated for Jesus said, Mt. 16:18 *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

It doesn't matter what the magazine articles say, - the enemy can concoct all kinds of bleak forecasts for Christianity, and it can say whatever it wants, and it can believe whatever it decides ...but the Church of Christ is for staying *forever!* ... The Church *cannot* be defeated, - it is impossible, for that is what God indefatigably teaches in His Word! ... **God's authority over the enemy** ... *That* is what Obadiah saw ... and he also saw ...

GOD'S DEFENCE OF HIS PEOPLE

Jerusalem should have been able to have trusted Edom ... but no, for Edom was 'two-faced'. They were 'putting on an act' ... and what was happening was this ... those who should have been on the side of God and His people, -

the Edomites, - were complying with the enemy, and this was what made the whole situation worse. The Edomites, - the people who were descended from the brother of Esau ... *cousins* to the Jews, - ... were supporting the armies who were treating the people of Jerusalem so despicably. ... And that is the reason God particularly set apart Edom for judgment, v.10 *For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.* ... They were not the only nation against Israel, but they were brothers to the Jews, and yet they formed an evil alliance with the enemies of Israel. ... Where the Lord particularly blesses, He expects a better response ... and if that response is not forthcoming, He deals all the more directly.

It is a personal opinion, but why do you think the United Kingdom has been so blessed of God in their history? I'll tell you what I believe ... God said to Abram, Gen. 12:3 *I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* Throughout the centuries our country has, - in the majority, - stood by the Jewish people ... and God's promise has been enjoyed. ... One hundred years ago (1917), the Balfour Declaration endorsed the establishment of a Jewish homeland, and part of that Declaration written by Lord Balfour stated, "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object". ... God says, *I will bless them that bless thee.*

In many aspects of our society, - in politics, in business, in science, - Jews have been given by God to be a blessing to our nation. ... I believe God's promise still stands, - He will continue to bless those who bless the national people descended from Abraham through Isaac, but He will also curse those who are opposed to them ... I believe you only to have open your eyes and look around you to see the modern-day evidence of that statement.

God's ancient people have never ceased being precious to Him ... and He promises that one day they will realise Christ as the Messiah ... And also, - from out of the Gentile world, God has included us in His redeemed people ... Therefore, **God's defence of His people** is at work today, - He continues to defend His own! ... The devil can do nothing to us outside of God's will and plan. ... Rom. 8:35 *shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

Perhaps though you are finding it hard to be optimistic about the future of the church ... Maybe you can relate to how the people of Jerusalem were feeling, Obad. 12 in the day that he became a *stranger* ... in the day of their *destruction* ... in the day of *distress* ... v.13 the day of their *calamity* ... v.14 the day of *distress*. Indeed, it can be perfectly understandable when we look around and see aging congregations, and churches closing, and false gospels being preached and propagated from once-faithful pulpits. ... That is not the end of the story though! ... And, Obadiah could see further-on than the destruction of Jerusalem, the distress of the people, and their calamity. He could see, - over and above it all the glory of God for he commented, - v.15 the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen ... 16 *they shall be as though they had not been.*

You see, **God defends His people** ... Far from being defeated, His Church is winning more victories today than ever before, - multitudes of people in many parts of this world are finding Christ and being saved today ... And despite all the conglomeration of spurious pronouncements flooding out of the arrogant and pretentious secularists, with their warped analyses, we can hear Obadiah saying to us through the centuries, “Don’t listen to them for our God is in control!” It is also like how the Psalmist’s declared it in his day, **Ps. 85:8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. 9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.**

Edom was to discover there was no comfort siding with the enemy for **God defends His people** until He brings them home to Glory. ... That means God’s people is not only the *best* company to keep, but it is also the *safest*!

CONCLUSION

Moses called out to the people of Israel, **Ex. 32:26 Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me.** ... Here, in the prophecy of Obadiah, the Edomites were standing with the wrong people for they had turned away from and abandoned the faith of their fathers. ...

In our next study, we are coming to the ‘good’ part, v.17 upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ... Obadiah’s vision did not remain focussed on the duplicity of the Edomites or the seemingly unstoppable godlessness of the surrounding idolatrous nations. Instead, he fixed his gaze firmly upon His God, the God of the covenants, the God of His people ... and I trust that is where we shall continue to maintain our focus also! Amen.

Part IV of IV

THE FINAL PROCLAMATION (Obad. 17-21)

¹⁷ But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ¹⁸ And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. ¹⁹ And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. ²⁰ And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. ²¹ And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

Previously, Obadiah had brought a scathing word from God regarding the wickedness of the Edomites, who had chosen to be on the side of the nations against the tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

Now, at the conclusion of his prophecy, Obadiah turns his attention completely to the Jewish people and assures them God is on their side. ... This prophetic passage, - as the repetition of the future tense demonstrates, - has its primary application to the nation of Israel. However, passages such as this also relate to God's inclusion, - 'ingrafting', - of the Gentiles in His plan of salvation, as explained in Rom. 11.

THE PLACE OF GOD'S PROMISE ¹⁷ But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

No other city in the world has a legacy like Jerusalem's. Its history is unique, and the position it holds on the world's stage has no equal. It is only a small country, with a small population, surrounded by other countries who wish it harm and destruction ... It has very rarely enjoyed times when it has not been at conflict. And yet, this country has outlasted other ancient civilisations and has always been at the centre of history in a way no other nation can claim.

Why has Israel been so much to the fore? Very simply, the nation is *heavy* upon the heart of God, **Is. 43:3** For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. ⁴ Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. ⁵ Fear not: for I am with thee: I will

bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; ⁶ I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; ⁷ Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. ... In His plan of the ages, out of all the nations He established, God chose Israel for He said to Moses, Rom. 9:15 I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (from Ex. 33:19).

The Lord uniquely selected Israel, Dt. 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: ⁸ But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers ... and His purpose for them was to be His set-apart people, ¹¹ Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. ¹² Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers: ¹³ And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. ¹⁴ Thou shalt be blessed above all people:

But we must qualify all this. Yes, the nation of Israel was uniquely claimed by God ... and we cannot take that privilege away from them ... but with the privilege came responsibilities to God. Sadly, they mistreated their privilege and God had to judge and chastise them on a number of occasions. This involved ‘slimming down’ the nation to a faithful remnant. ... The Israelite people were required to be obedient to God and His laws in order to receive His promises! Ultimately, their relationship with Him was tested when Jesus was sent to live among them.

From the outset, though, He faced opposition from King Herod who wanted to kill him, and from the Jewish authorities when He began to preach and teach. Indeed, it quickly developed into a case of ... Jn. 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹ He came unto his own, and his own received him not. They accepted Him when they sought healing, or miracles to be performed ... but when ‘the tide began to turn’ against Jesus, He was abandoned to the malice and barbarism of evil men.

And yet, for the sake of the covenants made to the fathers, God promised salvation for the Jews ... and He continues to work to that agenda, - He will complete what He has commenced! ... And that is the plain and simple reason

they continue to this day. It is all wholly and completely down to God! ... And when Jesus returns, salvation will upon Israel, for **Rom. 11:26** And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: **27** For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. ... All Israel? Yes, His promise is to all Israel. ... In Romans chapter eleven, Paul explained how he related the term “all Israel” to the term ‘remnant’, **Rom. 9:27** Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved ... **11:5** Even so then at this present time also there is a *remnant* according to the election of grace. ... **25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

... And that is what the prophets are ‘queuing up’ to prophesy! ... For example, when Christ returns, here is how Zechariah explains the remnant (notice the particular emphasis on Jerusalem), **Zech. 12:10** And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. **11** In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon [*a place in the valley of Megiddo where a national lamentation was held for the death of King Josiah*] in the valley of Megiddon [*‘place of crowds’*]. **12** And the land shall mourn, every family apart ...

Notice how specific the prophecy is. It highlights the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the house of David. In chapter thirteen it emphasises how the remnant will be proved and tested during the time Jeremiah refers to as “the time of Jacob’s trouble”, **Jer. 30:7** Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. ... Zechariah also wrote about it, **Zech. 13:8** And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. **9** And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. ... Isaiah also prophesied concerning the remnant of all Israel, **Is. 10:20** And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. **21** The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. **22** For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. ... **65:8** Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them

all. ⁹ And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

... And that agrees with what Obadiah is also prophesying because they are all speaking the words of the same Sovereign God, **Obadiah 17** but upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ... Their deliverance was purchased at Calvary, - **Mt. 1:21** he shall save *his people* from their sins ... He was sent in disgrace outside the city walls to die, and there is no reference of Him entering Jerusalem again after His resurrection ... and that is because He will not be back until He comes again as the Great King-Messiah, the Deliverer of His people. ... That is why God is keeping, protecting and preserving Israel. ... That is why it is so important to keep looking at what God is doing in that part of the world. And that is why all the plans to destroy the nation fail, and will continue to fail! ... the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ... **The Place of God's Promise**

THE PROTECTION IN GOD'S PROMISE & THE POSSESSIONS FROM GOD'S PROMISE

¹⁸ And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. ¹⁹ And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. ²⁰ And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

To understand, we need to know the background to this prophecy. The 'house of Jacob' (v.18) refers to Judah and Benjamin, - the southern kingdom, - and the house of Joseph (the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh), , - refers to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. This division took place during King Rehoboam's reign (I Kings 12). ... Both these 'houses' were divided, and we saw how Hosea used the title "Ephraim" to describe the northern kingdom's antipathy towards the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin (Hosea 4:17; 5:3,5,9,11,12,13,14 etc ... **Hosea 5:3** I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled ... **6:10** I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.) ... They had committed 'whoredom' by siding with the enemies of Judah, as Obadiah explains, **Obad. 11** In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. ¹² But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a

stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

However, Obadiah prophesies they would eventually be reunited into one nation in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom, - the rule of the Messiah, - when Christ will come to reign. ... How shall the house of Jacob become 'a fire' (Obad. 18)? What does the prophet mean when he says the house of Joseph will be 'a flame'? What does he mean by his description of the people of Edom?

Of course, fire in the Old Testament often refers to judgement and punishment ... as in the 'fire and brimstone' that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. However, that is not what is meant here. ... When Noah built the ark, before he entered it, he offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8:20). ... Similarly, Abraham also offered up a burnt offering in the place of his son on Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:13). ... In Lev. 6:8-13 God set out how the burnt offering was to be presented ... One of the most spectacular of all the fires in Scripture is in I Kings 18 where Elijah, - on Mount Carmel, - made all the preparations for the fire as he contended with the prophets of Baal, and Ahab and Jezebel. When the preparation was complete, - as the evening was drawing in, - He prayed, I Kings 18:36 LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38 *Then the fire of the LORD fell.*

When the fire fell ... that was when God came amongst His people ... v.39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. ... Paul sheds further light on this as he described the despondent Elijah saying to the Lord, Rom. 11:3 Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. 4 But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. 5 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

In other words, a remnant will be *saved out of the fire* ... and the fire is purifying (e.g. **Job 23:10** *when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold*). Fire burns away the dross. The house of Jacob will be a fire, - it will be purified until a remnant according to the election of grace will be preserved by God.

The house of Jacob, on the other hand, will be a flame (להבֹּהַבְּ lehabah {leh-aw-baw'} or להֶבֶת lahebeth {lah-eh'-beth}), and the particular word that is used is also translated as 'tip of a weapon', the 'point/head of the spear'. It is the word used to translate the spear that belonged to Goliath (I Sam. 17:7). ... Therefore, it is a word often associated with battle and warfare which means for the goal to be achieved, great conflicts must be fought and won. ... Both the houses of Jacob and Joseph will face times of frightening opposition, but it will serve, - in God's purpose, - to bring them together and to purify them. ... The house of Jacob and the house of Joseph will be reunited, and the promise of God's Word is that they will, - together, - be victorious over the house of Esau who, - it prophesied, - will be as stubble, and they [*the houses of Jacob and Joseph*] shall kindle in them [*the house of Esau*], and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau.

Who was the house of Esau? They came from the man who was the brother of Jacob, the father of the Israelite nation, - Esau was the man who gave up his birthright. The house of Esau came down through the generations as the sons of Ishmael, the son of Esau. Ishmael was the son of Hagar, and the grandson of Isaac, and the father of the Arab nations. From the commencement, they despised the children of Israel, and here Obadiah prophesied *there shall not be any remaining of them on that Day of the Lord, - the day which precedes the Messiah coming to reign ... the Millennial Kingdom.*

Today, the great majority of the descendants of Edom worship the religion of Islam ... and God's Word says, *the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. ... Islam will fall! It will be defeated! It will become as stubble! ...*

The mountains of Edom will be possessed by Jacob and Joseph (i.e. the reunited twelve tribes of Israel). The plains formerly possessed by the Philistines will return to Israelite authority. The regions of Ephraim, Samaria and Gilead will all belong to the Lord's people. *All the land in that whole area will be returned to its rightful owners, under God! ... Obadiah 19 And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau [as contrasted with mount Zion, v.17 ... the old enmity settled; Edom stretching from the eastern side of the Dead Sea (Jordan) down to the Gulf of Aqaba]; and they of the plain the Philistines [Zeph. 2:7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity]: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria [in the so-called "West Bank"]]: and Benjamin shall possess*

Gilead [*modern country of Jordan*]. ²⁰ And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath [*in modern Lebanon*]; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. ... In fact, this is a restating of the promise God made to Abraham (**Gen. 15:18** In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: ¹⁹ The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, ²⁰ And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, ²¹ And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites), to Moses (**Ex. 23:31** And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee ... **Dt. 11:23** Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. ²⁴ Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. ²⁵ There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you).

God is at work! The enemy does not want Israel to own *any* of the land, - they would deny them of it all ... calling them ‘occupiers’. That’s not how God sees it though, and He created the heavens and the earth so He can give it to whoever He chooses ... and He has chosen to give it to the children of Abraham which means the children of Abraham will possess every inch of land God has promised them. ... God will keep His word! ... **The protection in God’s promise, and the possessions from God’s promise ...**

THE PINNACLE OF GOD’S PROMISE ²¹ And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.

Notice the ‘and’, - this is a continuation of what has been developing over centuries ... but now the prophecy is approaching its conclusion. The final chapter has been written, and at this point there are only two sets of people, - the ‘saviours’ on mount Zion, and those being judged on mount Esau, - ... the inhabitants inside Zion, and those outside Zion ... the citizens of Zion, and the strangers to Zion. The consequence of the whole scene is that the kingdom shall be the LORD’S ... **Is. 4:3** And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.

Who are the ‘saviours’ in v.21? The word Obadiah uses is the Hebrew word יָשָׁא, *yasha`* {yaw-shah’}, - from which the name Jesus/Yeshua comes, and in the

Old Testament it is translated by ‘deliverer’, for example, the judges in the Book of Judges were ‘deliverers/liberators/saviours’ (e.g. Judges 3:9,15). Also, as Stephen preached, **Acts 7:35** This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer [*λυτρωτής*]. ... God-appointed ‘saviours/deliverers’ whose allegiance and power comes from the Saviour Who told His disciples, **Mt. 19:28** Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [*παλιγγενεσία*, when the Lord makes everything new] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, *judging* the twelve tribes of Israel.

What great days Obadiah was pointing his people forwards to ... **Obad. 21** ... and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S. ... He is coming back to reign. He will stand on the Mount of Olives, and He will cross over to Mount Zion where He will take up His residence ... Ezekiel describes it, **Ezek. 43:2** And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory ... ⁴ And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. ⁵ So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house ... **Zech. 14:3** Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. ⁴ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof ... ⁸ And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. ⁹ And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

The Scriptures agree ... God’s ancient people have consistently borne the burden of the enemy’s hatred, but the Lord has always kept a remnant ... as we have seen here in this prophecy of Obadiah, but the last words of the prophet points us towards our Saviour’s victorious return and gives us the unshakeable assurance that He is coming back for us too, and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S. Amen.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

I. God's Reproach towards Edom (v. 1–14)

- A. Divine judgment declared Edom's Chastening (v. 2-9)
 - i. Edom's pride brought down (v. 2-4)
 - ii. Edom's wealth plundered (v. 5-6)
 - iii. Edom's alliances broken (v.7)
 - iv. Edom's wisdom destroyed (v.8)
 - v. Edom's army defeated (v.9)
- B. Divine judgment defended – Edom's Crimes (v. 10-14)
 - i. Violence against the Jews (v. 10-11)
 - ii. Glorifying in the Jews' plight (v. 12)
 - iii. Assisting the Jews' enemy (v. 13-14)
- C. Divine judgment discharged – Edom's Condemnation (v. 15-16)
 - iv. Ignoring God's wrath (v. 15-16)

II. God's Restoration of Jacob (v. 17-21)

- A. God will deliver them (v. 17-18)
- B. God will defend them and defeat their enemies (v. 19-20)
- C. God will establish their kingdom (v.21)