

2019 Through the Bible Reading: Bible Study Support

The Book of Obadiah	
<p>Background of Obadiah (Who, what, why)</p>	<p>The main theme for Obadiah is God’s judgment on Edom. The prophet and author through whom the denunciation comes is known only as Obadiah, “Servant/Worshiper of Yahweh.” No additional information is available about him as an individual. More than ten men bear the name Obadiah in the Old Testament. However, there is no known connection between any of these men and this book’s author.</p> <p>The Background of Jerusalem’s destruction places the date of Obadiah’s prophecy shortly after 586 B.C., the year in which the sacred city (Jerusalem) fell to the Babylonians. The message likely was given during the period of Judah’s exile, as Obadiah warns Edom of God’s impending vengeance and assures Judah of the Lord’s continued concern.</p> <p>Relations between Israel and Edom were marked by animosity throughout the Old Testament period. The bitterness began when the twin brothers Esau and Jacob parted company in dispute (see Gen 27; 32; 33). Esau’s descendants eventually settled in the area called Edom, south of the Dead Sea, while Jacob’s descendants continued the promised line, inhabited Canaan, and grew into the people of Israel. Over the years, numerous conflicts between the Edomites and Israelites developed. The events recorded in Numbers 20:14-21 are an example of this hostility. This bitter rivalry forms the background to Obadiah’s prophecy. Over a period of some twenty years (605-586B.C.), the Babylonians invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and of Israel and made repeated attacks on the sacred city of Jerusalem, which was finally devastated in 586 B.C. The Edomites saw these incursions as an opportunity to quench their bitter thirst against God’s people. As such, the Edomites joined with the Babylonians against their close relatives and helped to desecrate the land of Judah. Psalm 137:7, Lamentations 4:21, 22, and Ezekiel 25:12-14 decry the participation of the Edomites in the destruction of Jerusalem.</p>
<p>Interesting Facts in Obadiah</p>	<p>Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament. It begins with a heading identifying the prophecy as, “The vision that the Sovereign Lord revealed to Obadiah” (verse 1).</p> <p>The book of Obadiah is also the only Old Testament book to have a single chapter.</p> <p>Obadiah Means “Worshipper of Yahweh”</p> <p>The body of the book divides into two major sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first (verses 1-14) is addressed to Edom and announces her inevitable fall. For her position of pride and false security. God will bring her down (verses 2-4). The Land and the people will be pillaged and plundered, the destruction complete and final (verses 5-9). Why? Because of the violence Edom undertook against his close relatives, Israel (verse 10), because Edom rejoiced over the suffering of Judah and joined with her attackers to rob and rape Jerusalem in the day of her calamity (verses 11-13), and because the Edomites prevented the escape of the people of Judah and handed them over to the invaders (verse 14). 2. The second major section of the prophecy contemplates the day of the Lord (verses 15-21). This day will be a time of retribution, of reaping what has been sown. For Edom, this is a pronouncement of doom (verses 15-16), but for Judah, a proclamation of deliverance (vv.17-20). Edom will be

	<p>judged severely, but the people of God will experience blessings and glorious restoration to their land. Mount Zion will rule the mountain of Esau, and the Kingdom will belong to the Lord (verse 21).</p>
Reasonable Defense for the faith in Obadiah	<p>Why should we read the book of today? Obadiah forcefully addresses the matter of relationships. How easy it is for those we know best to become the objects of our most bitter resentment. Logically, Edom should have sided with Judah against Babylonia, but years of hatred caused emotions to override good sense. Such fractured relationships almost inevitably result from personal pride, pride that prevents our seeing the errors of our own ways, pride that builds barriers to block the way to reconciliation. The book of Obadiah calls us to confront the incredible cost of pride, and to realize that the importance of preserving our pride fades into oblivion when we must stand face-to-face with an angry God and try to justify our arrogance. The book calls us to repent of our pride, reconciliation in broken relationships, and to model a life-style of forgiveness and acceptance. (See Matthew 5:21-26.) The prevailing theme of Obadiah is well stated by Paul in Galatians 6:7: “Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.” Or, in the words of Obadiah himself “All your evil deeds will fall back on your own heads” (verse 15). Retribution is a reality. God is just, and He will punish injustices perpetrated against other people, both individuals and nations. The Lord takes very seriously the covenant promises He makes. In Genesis 12:1-3 He had promised to bless those who bless His people and to curse those who curse them. The Lord so closely identifies Himself with His people, that to curse His people is to curse Him, to reject them is to reject Him. Edom’s end then foreshadows the fate of all who abuse the people of God. The Lord is determined to keep faith with his people, even when His people are faithless and disobedient. The desecration of Jerusalem and the people of Judah sent a message to the world of Obadiah’s day: The God of Israel had been defeated by the gods of Babylon, Edom, and the other oppressing nations. But that was a false message, because appearances can be deceiving. In His Sovereignty God uses circumstances to accomplish His People. As Lord of all the earth He was already masterminding Edom’s doom, announcing victory in the face of smoldering defeat, and controlling the course of the future in order to accomplish his plan. The Lord who did all that for Israel is that the Lord who still works for his people today. Be sure to read <i>The Third Option: Hope for a Radically Divided Nation</i> by Miles McPherson as a contemporary solution to the division that happens between people.</p>
Memory Verse	<p><i>“He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love ^umercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”</i> (Micah 6:8 NKJV).</p>
Practical Application to memory verse	<p>Grow in your dependency on the power of prayer as you develop the Kingdom mindset. As you serve the Lord, serve with humility in your example of Jesus Christ.</p>
Life Application from Biblical Themes in Obadiah.	<p>DO NOT allow pride to deceive you, as it did the people of Edom. They falsely believed that their superior position and fortifications made them invincible. Learn from their fatal errors. Humble yourself before the Lord, and make Him your refuge and your fortress.</p>