

November 14

Scriptures: Read Obadiah

Key Verse: “For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you... “ (Obadiah 15)

Overview

Edom was overly proud of themselves because of their stronghold in the rocky range of Mount Seir. But they were self-deceived to think that they were so important and safe from all enemies. Already the Lord was stirring up the other Gentile nations to despise them and plan their destruction (v. 1). Obadiah foretold that even their naturally fortified stronghold high in the cliffs, known today as Petra, could not save them from the Lord’s judgment. In their earthly wisdom they built their homes high in the rocks. They thought they could not be conquered, and indeed it was impossible without the Lord’s help. As a result, they had become overly confident, thinking that even the God of their father Isaac could not reach them. How wrong they would be proven! They had fallen far from the faith of their fathers Abraham and Isaac, for they had rebelled against God and had become complete pagans.

Unlike a thief who leaves some things behind or a harvester who leaves the gleanings, the plunder and destruction upon the Edomites would be complete and all the hidden riches in their many caves would all be found (vv. 5-6). Their safe places in the rocks became their graves, and their stronghold of Petra stands today as an historical site which testifies to the sovereignty of God in history. God would use those who were once in league with Edom to accomplish His purposes against them (v. 7). Soon after the Babylonians defeated Jerusalem, they also plundered Edom, making it desolate. Then the Nabateans pushed them out of their homeland, and they moved to the west of the Dead Sea in southern Judah. They continued to persecute the Jews until they were subdued and Judaized by the Maccabees. They were known as Idumeans (Herod was one of them), but in 70 A.D., when the Roman General Titus invaded, they were killed (ironically) while defending Jerusalem. Thereafter, they disappeared as a distinct people.

The specific reason that Obadiah gives for Edom’s downfall is because of their violence toward their brother Jacob. The Edomites, being descendants of Esau (the elder twin of Jacob — sons of Isaac and Rebekah) were always considered by Israel as their brother. For this reason Moses had told them not to abhor (hate) an Edomite (Deut. 23:7), but the Edomites did not afford the Israelites this same respect. They hated the Israelites with a passion (cf. Ps. 137:7). It is most likely that after Jacob returned from Padan Aram, he and his brother Esau made a treaty together. Esau had forgiven Jacob of the wrong he did to him in taking his birthright and blessing (Gen. 25:29-34; 27:30-36, 41; 33:4), and Esau willingly accepted the plan of God for Jacob to possess the land of their father, Isaac — the land promised to Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 13:14-17; 28:13-14). Esau moved eastward, leaving Jacob in Canaan (Gen. 36:6-8), but Esau’s descendants were jealous of their brother’s possession which they felt should have belonged to them, since Esau was the elder of the twins.

The Edomites’ hatred, envy, and bitterness against Israel caused them to rejoice at Jerusalem’s destruction. But it was not enough just to look on with pleasure; they actively involved

themselves in the league that came against Judah and entered the city to take plunder. The worst crime, however, was that instead of trying to help their weary relatives in their time of desperate need, they set up ambushes along the roads to catch any Jews who tried to escape; then they mercilessly killed them or returned them to be held captive by the conquerors (v. 14). God would not allow such a crime to go unpunished (Prov. 17:5; 24:17-18). Other prophets also condemned and judged Edom for these same sins (cf. Ezek. 35:1-15; Jer. 49:7-22; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12).

Like other prophets, Obadiah seems to prophesy against Edom as a representative of all those nations that oppose the plan of God and are enemies against Him and His people (vv. 15-16; cf. Isa. 63:1-6; 34:5-8; Mal.1:4). Obadiah's prophecy looks to the future Messianic deliverance of the people of God (the spiritual house of Jacob) from the wicked nations. It will only be at the time of Jesus' Kingdom in the New Jerusalem, when He reigns from Mount Zion upon His throne, that there will be holiness there (v. 17). The Lord's people will be victorious over "the house of Esau", the wicked, rebellious people of the world, from whom there will be no survivors; they will all die the second death in the lake of fire. The Kingdom of the Lord in the Millennium will expand to encompass the territories surrounding Israel which were once in the hands of the wicked heathens. Then the Lord's mighty witnesses and conquerors ("saviors") will come to Zion to rule and reign with Him (v. 21).

Prayer

Dear Father, we recognize that You are a keeper of covenants. Thank You that You have provided the New Covenant in the cross of Jesus. On the basis of Your grace and our obedience to Your covenant, grant us the answer to our prayers.