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MINISTRIES

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Minor Prophets, Major Messages: Obadiah - The Kingdom Shall Be YHWH's

The so-called “Minor Prophets” are a collection of twelve prophetic books in the Tanakh—that is, the Old Testament. Even though they are called the “Minor Prophets,” these books contain “major messages” that remain relevant to believers today. In this series, we will unpack the major messages of each Minor Prophet. We will discuss their practical applications for believers today and how they connect to the Messiah’s work and teachings in the New Testament.

Today, we are looking at the Book of Obadiah. Let’s dive in.

Obadiah: An Overview

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the *Tanakh*. In this book, the prophet Obadiah receives a vision concerning God’s coming judgment against the nation of Edom (Obadiah 1).

Who were the Edomites, and why are they singled out for judgment in this book? Well, the Edomites came from the family of Jacob’s brother, Esau (Genesis 25:25-26, 30; 36:8). Jacob and Esau were rivals, and this rivalry seems to have persisted in their descendants. The Israelites and Edomites often experienced significant conflict (Numbers 20:14-21; 2 Kings 8:20-22; 14:7). So, it is perhaps unsurprising that when Babylon invaded Israel, Edom exploited the situation by joining in the attack:

Obadiah 10-11

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

The prophet Ezekiel also highlights this great act of treachery on the part of the Edomites:

Ezekiel 25:12-14

Thus says the Lord GOD [YHWH]: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them, therefore thus says the Lord

GOD [YHWH], I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord GOD [YHWH].

So, Obadiah singles out the people of Edom because they participated in Babylon's attack on Jerusalem. The apocryphal book of 1 Esdras claims that the Edomites were the ones who actually burned down the temple in this attack (1 Esdras 4:45). Obadiah characterizes Edom as prideful and uses poetic imagery of Edom's towering mountains to portray their arrogance. Prideful Edom thinks no one can touch him, but God announces that he will bring them down:

Obadiah 3-4

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD [YHWH].

The Book of Obadiah ends with a promise that the land will be restored to Israel and that the "kingdom shall be YHWH's" (Obadiah 19-21).

Obadiah's Major Message

Obadiah's major message is that God will not tolerate pride, betrayal, and violence. Edom will get his just deserts, and Israel will be restored and compensated for the harm done to him. And it is not just Edom who will reap what he has sown. At verse 15 of the book, Obadiah shifts his focus from condemning only Edom to now condemning *all* nations who sin in the same ways as Edom. Obadiah declares that the day of YHWH will come upon "all the nations," of which Edom stands as a representative. "Edom" is spelled the same way as "Adam," which means mankind. So, "Edom" could be seen as a representative of mankind, "Adam" (אָדָם). (See David W. Baker, *The NIV Application Commentary: Joel, Obadiah, Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 183).

At the day of YHWH, Edom and the rest of the nations that have come against YHWH's people will get what they gave—they will be treated the same way they treated Israel:

Obadiah 15

For the day of the LORD [YHWH] is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your deeds shall return on your own head.

However, even though judgment is coming for the wicked, there is hope for those who repent and seek YHWH. As we mentioned earlier, Obadiah ends his book by declaring that the kingdom will be YHWH's. Although it isn't as explicit in Obadiah, we know from other prophetic books that YHWH's kingdom includes those from other nations who seek him.

In fact, it is possible that Obadiah may have been placed after Amos in the canon for the purpose of elaborating upon the prophecies in Amos concerning God's kingdom and Israel's restoration (Amos 9:11-15). Like Amos, Obadiah pronounces judgment upon the nations and concludes with a prophecy regarding the restoration of the kingdom. It is worth noting that Amos's promise of future salvation explicitly mentions a remnant of Edom among other nations that will be saved and included in this

kingdom (Amos 9:12). So, within the broader biblical narrative, the fact that Obadiah speaks of the kingdom's restoration implies the message of hope for those who repent. Even those who have oppressed others and have lived lives of sin can find hope and healing, and they can be transformed by God's grace:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] and by the Spirit of our God.**

Interesting Connections

The Book of Obadiah ends with the promised hope that “the kingdom shall be YHWH’s” (Obadiah 21). While Obadiah lamented the destruction of Jerusalem and Edom’s betrayal, he recognized that evil would not win despite how things appeared at that moment. Ultimately, the wicked who refuse to repent will be destroyed, the righteous will be saved, and God will reign as king.

Obadiah’s hope in God’s coming kingdom is similar to what we find in the Book of Revelation. John wrote Revelation to early Christians who were suffering immense persecution at the hands of Rome. Like Obadiah, John declared the hope of God’s kingdom to come:

Revelation 11:15-18

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

Again, like we see in Obadiah, John writes that evil will not win. The wicked who refuse to repent will be destroyed, the righteous will be saved, and God will reign as king.

How Obadiah Points to the Messiah

The Book of Obadiah points to the Messiah in a couple of ways.

For instance, it is important to note that the Edomites came from the family of Esau, Jacob’s brother. In this way, Obadiah hearkens back to the struggle between these brothers. However, according to Genesis 33:1-4, these brothers eventually made peace with each other, despite their painful past. Similarly, Yeshua calls us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) and to be willing to forgive those who have hurt us deeply (Matthew 18:21-35). He commands us to reconcile with our brother before even offering a gift at the altar (Matthew 5:23-24). The relationship between Jacob and Esau, which is alluded to in Obadiah, is a reminder of Yeshua’s teachings. It is certainly difficult to admit when you are at fault for some things that went wrong in a relationship. It is also difficult to forgive those who may have caused

you harm. But Yeshua calls us to put down our pride and do what we can to reconcile.

Another way that Obadiah points to the Messiah is in regard to God's coming kingdom. According to Yeshua in Matthew 25:31-46, when the Son of Man comes in glory, he will sit on his throne to judge. The righteous "sheep" will inherit the kingdom, and the wicked "goats" will be punished:

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?" Then he will answer them, saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

The Messiah's teaching about the final judgment at the end of the age echoes Obadiah's prophecy that the wicked will get what's coming to them. Obadiah and Yeshua remind us that the choices we make in this life matter. Do we neglect those who need our help—or worse, take advantage of them in their time of need, pouring salt in their wounds? God will not overlook such wicked behavior. Yeshua takes *personal offense* when we neglect or harm his people. As he said, "[Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.](#)"

And that is Obadiah's major message. God will not overlook how the wicked have betrayed and hurt his people. Evil will not prevail. But amidst this message of judgment, there is hope for those who repent and seek God. There is hope for reconciliation between enemies. "The kingdom shall be YHWH's." That is a promise. The question is, will you be among the righteous sheep who inherit this kingdom, or among the wicked goats who are thrown into the fire of punishment?

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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