

I WANT TO KNOW MY BIBLE

A Lesson In Justice

TEXT: Obadiah

INTRODUCTION: In the red dust of a mountainous desert in the mideast lies the ruins of a once powerful city. It was the capital of a nation that occupied a land area a little smaller than the state of New Jersey. But tourists visit this ancient site in order to gaze in amazement at the stunning architecture that remains in this isolated place although it has been uninhabited now for nearly twenty centuries. Although this nation had dealings with Egypt, Israel, Judah, Moab, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome, after the population was extinguished near the end of the first century, it was forgotten by historians. In fact, for many years, historians argued that the stories of this nation and city were mere myths and legends. But in the 1800's the ancient city of Petra was rediscovered. Petra was the capital city of Edom, and did you know that one entire book of the Bible is devoted to a message to and about this once lost kingdom?

That prophetic word comes from the smallest book of the O.T. called Obadiah. It contains only 21 verses and therefore is not divided into chapters. Thirteen Obadiah's are mentioned in Scripture, but we cannot tell with certainty if any of them is the one who wrote the prophecy of this book.

Why would God send and preserve a book of Scripture to and about a nation that does not even exist today? Because in its prophetic words there is an important message to us. There is a lesson in justice.

I. THE INTERNATIONAL LESSON

Obadiah 1-2, 4, 9 ¹ The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the LORD, And a messenger has been sent among the nations, *saying*, "Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle"): ² "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; You shall be greatly despised. ⁴ Though you ascend as high as the eagle, And though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," says the LORD. ⁹ Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau May be cut off by slaughter.

And why was God sending such a strong word of judgment upon this nation and her people?

A. The reason for God's judgment is because of the sin of Edom.

1. Her pride

Obadiah 3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, *You* who dwell in the clefts of the rock, Whose habitation is high; *You* who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'

2. Her confederacy with God's enemies (Obadiah 7)

3. Her violence against God's people

Obadiah 10 "For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever.

4. Her rejoicing over evil and especially over the destruction of Jerusalem

5. Her stealing

Obadiah 13 You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction In the day of their calamity, Nor laid *hands* on their substance In the day of their calamity.

6. Her murder of the innocent as they tried to escape

Obadiah 14 You should not have stood at the crossroads To cut off those among them who escaped; Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained In the day of distress.

7. **All of this occurred when Nebuchadnezzar made his fatal assault on Jerusalem in 587 B.C.** The Edomites rejoiced at the destruction of Judah. When some of the Hebrews tried to escape, they aided the Babylonians in rounding them up and turning them over for captivity or death. When the Babylonian army went back home, the Edomites further plundered the land.

B. The judgment on Edom

1. Not only did God pronounce judgment on Edom through Obadiah but also through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, and Ezekiel.
2. **The record of God's judgment is written in the rocks of Petra and in the landscape of the desert that once was Edom.**
3. **After Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the inhabitants of Edom were also destroyed, never to be heard of again as an independent nation or people.**

The final verses of Obadiah contrasts God's judgment on Edom with

C. God's grace for Israel

Obadiah 17, 21 ¹⁷ "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ²¹ Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

And of what importance is this message today?

1. **God will execute His justice upon the nations as He has declared.**
2. **The way to escape the wrath of God's justice is to be a recipient of God's grace.**
3. **That truth is the essence of the Gospel.**