



Obadiah

Transcript

Introduction

00:00-01:27

The book of the prophet Obadiah. This is the shortest book in the whole Old Testament; it's a mere 21 verses. And at first glance, it does not look very promising. It's a series of divine judgment poems against the ancient people of Edom, which was a nation that neighbored Israel on the other side of the Dead Sea. However, there is way, way more going on here.

So first, here's the back story. The people of Edom were unique because they had a shared ancestry with the Israelites. They both belonged to the family of Abraham, who, with Sarah, had their son Isaac, who, with his wife Rebekah, had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Now, the book of Genesis told us the story of these two brothers, and to say the very least, they had a tense relationship. They each later received the names Israel and Edom, which eventually became the name of the families that descended from them. And these families replayed the same difficult relationship of their ancestors.

Israel and Edom had enormous tensions throughout the centuries, but they still shared that family bond. And it's that bond that was betrayed and shattered in the tragic events of Jerusalem's fall to Babylon. So when Israel was invaded and conquered by Babylon, the people of Edom took advantage by plundering other Israelite cities and then capturing, and even killing, Israelite refugees. Now, in other prophetic books, God held Israel's neighbors accountable for this kind of violence, and so here Obadiah does the same for Edom.

Verses 1-14

01:28-02:04

This short book has two halves. The first part is a series of accusations against the leaders of Edom, specifically for their pride and self-exaltation. Literally, as they

lived up high in the desert rocks, but also metaphorically. They truly believed they were superior to the Israelites, and it's that pride that led the Edomites to not just stand idly by when Babylon came to destroy Jerusalem, but actually to participate in the destruction. And so God says, through Obadiah, that Edom will be brought down from their height and destroyed. As they have done to Israel, so it will be done to them.

Verse 15

02:05-02:42

Now, right when you think you're going to hear more about how Edom will meet its doom, the topic suddenly shifts in verse 15. We hear this, "The Day of the Lord is near against all nations." Now, why do we all of a sudden shift from Edom now to all nations? This verse is a hinge piece, and it links the first half of the book to the second half, where Obadiah announces the Day of the Lord—but not only for Edom. He widens his focus to include all nations. And Obadiah says that all prideful nations that act like Edom will face God's justice in the same way. They'll fall from their prideful heights and come to ruin.

Verses 16-21

02:43-03:58

Now, the combination of these two sections, one about Edom, the other about all nations, shows us why Obadiah was so interested in this tiny southern neighbor of Israel. Obadiah sees Edom's pride and fall as an example, an image, of how God will one day confront the pride of all nations and bring about their fall too. It's hardly coincidental that in Hebrew, the word "edom," or *edom*, is spelled with the exact same letters as the word "humanity," or in Hebrew, *adam*. In Obadiah, Edom's rise and fall is a parable of how God's justice will one day oppose pride and violence among all nations in the Day of the Lord.

But as in all the prophets, God's judgment is never his final word. Specifically, remember the conclusion of the two books that came right before Obadiah, Joel and Amos. Joel had painted a picture of what will happen after the Day of the Lord against all nations. He said that God would perform a new act of salvation in Jerusalem and that all who humbled themselves and called upon him would be delivered. And in the conclusion of Amos, he said that after the Day of the Lord has judged Israel's evil, God would raise up the house of David and build a new kingdom for Israel that would include Edom and all the nations called by my name.

Conclusion

03:59-04:58

And so the book of Obadiah has been placed right after Joel and then Amos to expand on these very promises about the hope of God's Kingdom over all of the nations. And so the book concludes with a very hopeful future. God says he's going to restore his Kingdom over the new Jerusalem, that he'll repopulate it with a faithful remnant. And then from there, God's Kingdom will expand to include all the territories and nations around Israel.

And so this little book contributes to the larger portrait of God's justice and faithfulness that we're seeing in the prophets. The ancient pride and betrayal of the people of Edom becomes an example of the greater human condition, all of the ways that we betray and hurt each other and God's good world. But there's hope, Obadiah says. Edom's downfall points to the day when God will deal with evil in our world but also bring his healing Kingdom of peace over all the nations. And that's what the book of Obadiah is all about.