

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

God is here represented as summoning the nations against Edom, and declaring that his strongholds should not save him, Obadiah 1:14; that not a remnant, not a gleaning, should be left of him, Obadiah 1:5; that the enemy would search out his people, and totally subdue them; and that none of their allies should stand by them, Obadiah 1:6-9. He then enlarges on their particular offense, and threatens them with a speedy recompense, Obadiah 1:10-16. The Babylonians accordingly subdued the Edomites, and expelled them from Arabia Petraea, of which they never afterwards recovered possession. The remaining verses contain a prophecy of the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and of their victory over all their enemies, Obadiah 1:17-21. Some commentators think that these last verses were fulfilled by the conquests of the Maccabees over the Edomites. See 1 Maccabees 5:3-5, 65, etc.

Who was this prophet? where born? of what country? at what time did he prophesy? who were his parents? when and where did he die? are questions which have been asked from the remotest antiquity; and which, to this day, have received no answer worthy of recording. There is a multitude of opinions concerning these points; and their multitude and discrepancy are the strongest proofs of their uncertainty. All that seems probable is, that, as he prophesied concerning the destruction of Edom, he flourished a little before, or a little after, the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, which happened about five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ; and the destruction of Idumea by the same monarch, which took place a short time after; probably between 588 b.c. and 575 b.c., in the interval of the thirteen years which Nebuchadnezzar employed in the siege of Tyre, which he undertook immediately after the capture of Jerusalem.

Obadiah foretells the subduction of the Idumeans by the Chaldeans, and finally by the Jews, whom they had used most cruelly when brought low by other enemies. These prophecies have been literally fulfilled for the Idumeans, as a nation, are totally extinct.

Whoever will be at the trouble to collate this short prophecy with the forty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah, will find a remarkable similarity, not only in the sentiments and words, but also in whole verses. In the above chapter Jeremiah predicts the destruction of the Idumeans. Whether he copied Obadiah, or Obadiah copied him, cannot be determined; but it would be very strange if two prophets, unacquainted with each other, should speak of the same event precisely in the same terms. See the parallel texts, and the notes on Jeremiah 49:1 (note), etc.

Verse 1

We have heard a rumor - See Jeremiah 49:14, where the same expressions are found. The prophet shows that the enemies of Idumea had confederated against it, and that Jehovah is now summoning them to march directly against it.

Verse 2

I have made thee small among the heathen - God ever attributes to himself the rise and fall of nations. If they be great and prosperous, it is by God's providence; if they be low and depressed, it is by his justice. Compared with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Syrians, Arabs, and other neighboring nations, the Idumeans were a small people.

Verse 3

The pride of thine heart - St. Jerome observes that all the southern part of Palestine, from Eleutheropolis to Petra and Aialath, was full of caverns hewn out of the rocks, and that the people had subterranean dwellings similar to ovens. Here they are said to dwell in the clefts of the rock, in reference to the caverns above mentioned. In these they conceived themselves to be safe, and thought that no power brought against them could dislodge them from those fastnesses. Some think that by *ἡ ἰσχυρία* (sela), rock, Petra, the capital of Idumea, is intended.

Verse 4

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle - Though like this bird thou get into the highest cliff of the highest rock, it will not avail thee. To defend thee, when Jehovah has determined thy destruction, thy deepest caves and highest rocks will be equally useless. See Jeremiah 49:16.

Verse 5

If thieves came to thee - That is, if thieves entered thy dwellings, they would not have taken every thing; they would have laid hold on thy wealth; and carried off as much as they could escape with conveniently; if grape-gatherers entered thy vineyards, they would not have taken every bunch; some gleanings would have been left. But the Chaldeans have stripped thee bare; they have searched out all thy hidden things, Obadiah 1:6, they have left thee nothing. How art thou cut off! Thou art totally and irretrievably ruined! The prophet speaks

of this desolation as if it had already taken place.

Verse 7

All the men of thy confederacy - The Chaldeans are here intended, to whom the Idumeans were attached, and whose agents they became in exercising cruelties upon the Jews.

Have brought thee even to the border - Have hemmed thee in on every side, and reduced thee to distress. Or, they have driven thee to thy border; cast thee out of thy own land into the hands of thine enemies.

The men that were at peace with thee - The men of thy covenant, with whom thou hadst made a league.

That eat thy bread - That professed to be thy firmest friends, have all joined together to destroy thee.

Have laid a wound - Placed a snare or trap under thee. See Newcome.

There is none understanding in him - Private counsels and public plans are all in operation against thee; and yet thou art so foolish and infatuated as not to discern thy own danger.

Verse 8

Shall I not - destroy the wise men - It appears, from Jeremiah 49:7, that the Edomites were remarkable for wisdom, counsel, and prudence. See on the above place.

Verse 9

Thy mighty men, O Teman - This was one of the strongest places in Idumea; and is put here, as in Amos 1:2, and elsewhere, for Idumea itself.

Mount of Esau - Mount Seir.

Verse 10

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob - By this term the Israelites in general are understood; for the two brothers, - Jacob, from whom sprang the Jews, and Esau, from whom sprang the Idumeans or Edomites, - are here put for the whole people or descendants of both. We need not look for particular cases of the violence of the Edomites against the Jews. Esau, their founder, was not more inimical to his brother Jacob, who deprived him of his birthright, than the Edomites uniformly were to the Jews. See 2 Chronicles 28:17, 2 Chronicles 28:18. They had even stimulated the Chaldeans, when they took Jerusalem, to destroy the temple, and level it with the ground. See Psalm 137:7.

Verse 11

Thou stoodest on the other side - Thou not only didst not help thy brother when thou mightest, but thou didst assist his foes against him.

And cast lots - When the Chaldeans cast lots on the spoils of Jerusalem, thou didst come in for a share of the booty; and thou wast as one of them.

Verse 12

Thou shouldst not have looked - It shows a malevolent heart to rejoice in the miseries of those who have acted unkindly or wickedly towards us. The Edomites triumphed when they saw the judgments of God fall upon the Jews. This the Lord severely reprehends in Obadiah 1:12-15. If a man have acted cruelly towards us, and God punish him for this cruelty, and we rejoice in it, we make his crime our own; and then, as we have done, so shall it be done unto us; see Obadiah 1:15. All these verses point out the part the Edomites took against the Jews when the Chaldeans besieged and took Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and divided the spoils.

Verse 14

Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway - They are represented here as having stood in the passes and defiles to prevent the poor Jews from escaping from the Chaldeans. By stopping these passes, they threw the poor fugitives back into the teeth of their enemies. They had gone so far in this systematic cruelty as to deliver up the few that had taken refuge among them.

Verse 15

The day of the Lord is near - God will not associate thee with him in the judgments which he inflicts. Thou also art guilty and shalt have thy punishment in due course with the other sinful nations.

Verse 16

For as ye have drunk - This address is to the Jews. As ye have been visited and punished upon my holy mountain in Jerusalem, so shall other nations be punished in their respective countries. See Jeremiah 49:12.

Verse 17

But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance - Here is a promise of the return from the Babylonish captivity. They shall come to Zion, and there they shall find safety; and it is remarkable that after their return they were greatly befriended by the Persian kings, and by Alexander the Great and his successors; so that, whilst they ravaged the neighboring nations, the Jews were unmolested. See Calmet.

And there shall be holiness - They shall return to God, separate themselves from their idols, and become a better people than they were when God permitted them to be carried into captivity.

The house of Jacob shall possess - They were restored to their former possessions. But this may refer also to their future restoration under the Gospel, when they shall be truly converted, and become holiness to the Lord; for salvation and holiness shall be the characteristics of Zion - the Christian Church, for ever.

Verse 18

The house of Jacob shall be a fire - After their return from captivity, the Jews, called here the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph, did break out as a flame upon the Idumeans; they reduced them into slavery; and obliged them to receive circumcision, and practise the rites of the Jewish religion. See 1 Maccabees 5:3, etc.; 2 Maccabees 10:15-23; and Josephus Antiq., lib. 13 c. 17.

There shall not be any remaining - As a people and a nation they shall be totally destroyed. This is the meaning; it does not signify that every individual shall be destroyed.

Verse 19

They of the south - The Jews who possessed the southern part of Palestine, should render themselves masters of the mountains of Idumea which were contiguous to them.

They of the plain - From Eleutheropolis to the Mediterranean Sea. In this and the following verse the prophet shows the different districts which should be occupied by the Israelites after their return from Babylon.

The fields of Samaria - Alexander the Great gave Samaria to the Jews; and John Hyrcanus subdued the same country after his wars with the Syrians. See Josephus, contra. App. lib. ii., and Antiq. lib. xiii., c. 18.

Benjamin shall possess Gilead - Edom lay to the south; the Philistines to the west, Ephraim to the north; and Gilead to the east. Those who returned from Babylon were to extend themselves everywhere. See Newcome; and see, for the fulfillment, 1 Maccabees 5:9,35, 45; 9:35,36.

Verse 20

Zarephath - Sarepta, a city of the Sidonians, 1 Kings 17:9. That is, they should possess the whole city of Phoenicia, called here that of the Canaanites.

Which is in Sepharad - This is a difficult word. Some think the Bosphorus is meant; others, Spain; others, France; others, the Euphrates; others, some district in Chaldea; for there was a city called Siphora, in Mesopotamia, above the division of the Euphrates. Dr. Lightfoot says it was a part of Edom. Those who were captives among the Canaanites should possess the country of the Canaanites; and those whom the Edomites had enslaved should possess the cities of their masters. See Newcome and Lowth.

Verse 21

And saviours shall come up - Certain persons whom God may choose to be deliverers of his people; such as Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Maccabees.

Some think these saviours, מִשְׁׁמָיִם (moshiim), mean the apostles of our Lord. Several MSS. have מִשְׁׁמָיִם (mushaim), the preserved; those that are saved, i.e., they who were delivered from the captivity; and those of Mount Zion shall judge, that is, shall execute judgment on the Edomites. And as the Asmonean princes joined the priesthood to the state, it might be what the prophet means when he says, "the kingdom shall be the Lord's," the high priest having both the civil and ecclesiastical power in his own hands. And these actually were masters of Edom, and judged and governed the mountain of Esau. And thus this prophecy appears to have had a very literal fulfillment.

But if we take the whole as referring to the times of the Gospel, which I believe is not its primary sense, it may signify the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and that under Jesus Christ the original theocracy shall be restored; and thus, once more, in the promised land, it may be said: -

And the kingdom shall belong to Jehovah

And

(hammeluchah) (laihovah) (vehayethah)

And

And

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