

Obadiah – John Karmelich

1. Before I even start, I am willing to bet that if I asked most of you if there is an Old Testament book called Obadiah, most of you would shrug your shoulders and say, "How would I know"? A long time ago, I learned the way to be a bible expert was to keep a bookmark on the Table of Contents. Yes, there is a book called Obadiah, which is what we're covering. It's the smallest Old Testament book. There is only one chapter. That leads me to my favorite questions, why is it here and why should we care? Let me give a few facts about this little book that you may find interesting:
 - a) It is one of only two Old Testament books specifically addressed to non-Israelites.
 - b) We know it's written by someone named Obadiah, but we know little else about him.
 - c) The target audience was a small country southeast of Israel called Edom. This nation does not exist anymore. They were completely wiped-out by the Romans. Their territory today is part of Jordan, although the original Edomites are long gone.
 - d) So then, why have a bible book dedicated to telling the story of the demise of that nation? If God's going to pick on non-Israelites, why not discuss the Babylonians or the Egyptians who were the "big boys on the block" in the Middle East back then?
2. To answer all these questions, let me give my lesson title: "Hey God, we know we're not the type of witness You desire, but what about all those nonbelievers?" I suspect the reason Obadiah picks on this small nation, is just as Edom isn't a "major player", so all nonbelievers will be banished for all of eternity. Since I started teaching the Minor Prophets, I've been saying repeatedly that we've been called to be God's witnesses to the world around us. A natural question would arise asking, "We may be bad, but all of those people are worse, what'll happen to them?" Although this book is addressed to the nation of Edom, it's really to remind us that as the eternal fate of nonbelievers is just as certain as our own fate as believers.
 - a) The point is the eternal fate of nonbelievers is certain. In spite of that, God expects us to be a witness to nonbelievers and pray that people's heart be open to His truth. In spite of the reality of God's existence, many will spend eternity away from His presence and this little book describes the fate of a small nation as an example of the fate of anyone who refuses to trust and obey God. I hope that fact encourage you to study this little book with me.
3. At this point, I want to quickly review God's relationship with the Nation of Israel in comparison to His relationship with the Christian church. The bible teaches they each have different starting dates. Israel in effect began when God called that nation out of Egypt, and the church began with the Holy Spirit coming upon a group of Jewish Christians. The church era will end when the last of the Christians are "raptured" at Jesus return. I believe Israel's end is after the 1,000-year period of time with Jesus ruling the world from Israel. Then there are just believers for all eternity.
 - a) Yes that's oversimplifying a lot of theology and many devout Christians will argue it's not exactly like that. However it works, we have to accept the fact it ends up with "believers" being the ones who win in the end.
 - b) I state all of that here because I want us Christians to understand that God's not done with Israel as a nation. There is a verse from Genesis that many Christians could recite if we've been woken up in the middle of the night. It is, (Genesis 12:3, NIV) "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." The essential idea of that verse is that God desired to create a nation to be His witnesses to the world. That was God's essential purpose of the Israelites. That's also why God created "the church" to be His witness to the world.
 - c) Anyway, even with all that stated, a natural question arises: What is going to be the fate of all those people who don't respect God's people? The Edomites are in effect cousins of the Israelites. Despite that fact they pretty much hated the Israelites through their long history as neighbors. Therefore "Genesis 12:3" curse comes into play and Obadiah uses Edom as a prime example of how that curse works in this book.

4. All right enough theology for one introduction. Let me give a little of the "who, what, when, and why's of Obadiah. There are about a half dozen "Obadiah's" listed elsewhere in the bible. It does not appear that this "Obadiah" is any of them. Other than the fact he mentions himself in this one page book, we don't know much about him. He does mention he was alive around a time that the city of Jerusalem was attacked but not destroyed. Most likely this occasion wasn't the Babylonian invasion as they're not even mentioned in this book. Most scholars argue Obadiah lived around 850BC (more or less) when there was an invasion of Jerusalem. Could they be wrong? Of course. All we have is clues. We know he preached in the Southern Israelite Kingdom called Judah as we get the reference to Jerusalem, which was the capital of that kingdom.
- a) That leads to the important question: How do we know Obadiah was God inspired? This book is not quoted in the New Testament and I don't think he is even quoted elsewhere in the Old Testament, although there is a passage in Jeremiah also describing Edom's demise that is pretty similar. Scholars accept Obadiah as God-inspired, as he was accurate about the demise of Edom long before it happened, let alone the lessons we will learn here!
 - b) Let me explain that quickly. The Edomites were the descendant of Abraham's grandson. The Israelites were the descendants another of Abraham's grandson's named Jacob. His brother was named Esau, and that's the father of the Edomites. This small nation has had a "history" with Israel that included a lot of wars. When the Babylonians came to conquer the Israelites the Edomites essentially "cheered them on" to make it simple. By the time of the Romans, the Edomites joined the Israelites in rebelling against Rome and in the years of 66-70AD, the Romans wiped out both Israel and Edom and it was the end of both those countries as nations. The key difference of course, is that God saved a remnant of Israel as they formed a nation again almost 2,000 years later. Edom is long gone after that war.
 - c) Anyway, Obadiah correctly predicted all of this many hundreds of years earlier as we will see as we go through the chapter.
 - d) OK, we covered, the who, when, why and where. I've already beaten to death the idea of Edom being used as an example of the ultimate fate of nonbelievers. The fact they were a small nation is God's way of saying, "Hey, don't worry about the fate of "those guys", they will eventually be as insignificant on a world wide scale just as Edom was way back then. That's Obadiah's way of saying, "Focus on God and let Him deal with what we can't do!"
 - e) With that said, time for the details. Let's get rolling on the one chapter book of Obadiah:
5. Obadiah 1: The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom-- We have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Rise, and let us go against her for battle"--
- a) As I stated in the introduction, the only reason we know the book was written by Obadiah is his name is given in Verse 1. His name means worshipper of God. We don't know his story other than what is told in this book.
 - b) The next logical question is when did this short book get accepted as part of God's word? I don't know. We do know the Old Testament was translated into Greek around the year 200-300BC, and this book was part of that collection. All I'm saying is Obadiah was made part of the Jewish Scriptures for centuries prior to Jesus. If I had to suspect why this book was accepted it was because of his positive long term view of Israel and his prediction of an ultimate doom of one of Israel's long term enemies.
 - c) The next thing to explain is a little history of Edom. One of the basics one has to learn of Israel's history is that effectively God started with a man named Abraham. He produced a son in his old age named Isaac. Isaac grew up, married and had twin sons. One of the sons was Jacob, who fathered the twelve tribes of Israel. Isaac's other twin son was Esau. His nickname was Edom, which simply means "red". (He probably had red hair.) All I'm getting at is the Edomites were the descendants of this man named Esau. I am telling you all of this so that you realize that the Edomites were "cousins" of the Israelites. Anyway, it was at least half a millennium later when Obadiah was living and wrote this short book.

- d) As I stated earlier the land of Edom is southeast of Israel. If you ever get a chance to visit Israel and are by the Dead Sea, one can look east across that body of water to see the hills of the country of Jordan. What one is specifically looking at there is the land of Edom.
 - e) OK enough background, back to Verse 1. The second sentence says that "We have heard a message from God" and to paraphrase that message was to the "nations" that they're to go to war against Edom.
 - i) This leads to a bunch of questions. My first is "who is the we?" It's not referring to the Trinity. What it's essentially saying is an army that's going to attack Edom is a large group of nations will be involved in that attack. The army is the "we".
 - ii) To explain further, I need to discuss geography for a moment. The land of Edom is a hillside area (or small mountains). For many centuries, they're capital city was a place we call "Petra" (a Greek translation of the ancient name for that city.) What's interesting is since the Romans destroyed that place, historians over the last 2,000 years doubted its existence. Around the year 1850 an archeologist went so search for that city and found it. What's interesting about it is the only access to that city is by a narrow mile-long (more or less) passage that is only wide enough for say a horse and buggy. It then widens into a city that can hold thousands of people. It is estimated that the modern population is about 14,000 (according to "Wiki").
 - f) I wanted to give that background as God effectively calls nations to go to war against this place and I want you to understand how hard it'd be to conquer it. I'll explain how this is done as we go through the lesson. So far we're still on Verse 1 and it's time to move on.
6. Verse 2: "See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised.
- a) If you know anything about Middle East history, you'd realize "Edom" was never much of a nation. My point is there never was a mighty "Edom Empire". Even today, Edom is part of the nation of Jordan. That nation has never been a superpower in the region. I am just saying that this verse alone has been true over the millenniums as Edom was not then or now a great power.
 - b) Probably their most famous moment was the fact that Herod the Great was an Edomite. He was the Israel's leader at Jesus' birth. He helped Rome in some Middle East wars, and Rome let him be the governor over Israel and some surrounding areas. When he died, he had a number of sons and who ruled over that territory. That's why there are a number of Herod's in the New Testament. If you travel to Israel today, you can see remnants of great building projects that "Herod the Great" built 2,000 years ago. Anyway, that was it as far as any fame of any Edomite, so the bible is correct that God made them insignificant.
 - c) Speaking of the Romans, they are the one's that wiped Edom off the map. Rome has two big rules of governing: 1) Pay your taxes and 2) don't rebel against Rome. If a nation did that, Rome would pretty much leave them alone. If they did not, destruction came. In the years 66-70AD, Rome got tired of Israel rebelling against them, and they destroyed it as a nation. My point is Edom joined in that rebellion and the historian Josephus records how most if not all the Edomites died in that rebellion. That's why there are no Edomites alive today. I'm telling you all of this so you'll understand why no Edomites exist today.
 - d) So why does God want us to know all of this "trivia" about Edom? We're getting there.
7. Verse 3: The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, 'Who can bring me down to the ground?' ⁴ Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.
- a) One thing one gathers from studying the bible is God hates pride. Why is that? It's about the idea of elevating ourselves above God and thinking we're something special based on what we've accomplished and not realizing that God allowed us to achieve things so that He may be glorified on earth. Edom is an example of pride as they trusted in the rugged terrain of that land instead of God Himself. Let me explain that idea some more:

- b) The idea here is that the residents of Edom thought they were something special because they lived in this mountainous country. The closest comparison I can think of is a little bit like Switzerland is today. Let me explain: Switzerland is a mountainous nation known as the "banking capital" of Europe. Because Switzerland is hard to conquer since its terrain is so mountainous, that country became a "safe haven" for banking in the world. During the days of Obadiah, Edom had that reputation. It had mountains with lots of caves and yes it was a banking center of the Middle East due to its terrain. The point is Edom considered itself to be "something special" because of its mountainous terrain. They considered their land to be unconquerable and thus you get the images Obadiah uses to compare them to "eagle's nests" and "among the stars" as he does in these verses.
 - c) For example, the way Rome conquered them was simply by the fact they joined Israel in a rebellion against Rome and they sent about 25,000 troops to Jerusalem to join the Israelites rebellion. Anyway, it ended badly. How the city of Petra was wiped out is not known. It is known that for almost two millenniums it was practically empty and the Western world didn't know where it was located until an archeologist discovered it in the 1800's. What is important is that God's word came true as Edom was destroyed.
 - d) Remember in my introduction how I said the entire Old Testament was translated into the Greek language a few hundred years before Jesus came on the scene? Well that includes a prediction about Edom's destruction here in Obadiah long before Rome rose as a power!
 - e) Meanwhile, I left Obadiah describing Edom's ultimate destruction.
8. Verse 5: "If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night-- Oh, what a disaster awaits you-- would they not steal only as much as they wanted? If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? ⁶ But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged!
- a) Let me paraphrase Verse 5: If a robber broke into our homes, wouldn't they only steal the things they could carry with them? The point is most thieves usually leave something, as they can't physically take away every last thing. That's the idea behind this illustration.
 - b) Which leads to Verse 6. Obadiah is predicting that the destruction of Edom will be so bad there won't be anything left of them at all. Think about it this way, Egyptians still exist to this day. Persians (Iran) still exist to this day as do the Greeks. All I'm saying is there are no Edomites today. As Obadiah predicted, they would be completely wiped out!
 - c) OK time for the "Why should I care" lecture. First think of this from the perspective of the Israelites. They knew the Edomites were "cousins". They knew for centuries they were a rival to them and had to deal with them usually in hostile ways. Even in the early days of the Roman Empire, most Israelites resented Herod because he was not one of them. All of this history needs to be put into God's perspective. The Israelites had to deal with them as a neighbor and the relationship was mostly hostile for many centuries. God's saying He's going to wipe them out as a people forever, so the Israelites shouldn't fret over their long term fate. This is God saying the Israelites will eventually rule over the world when the Messiah comes to lead them (what we Christians call Jesus Second Coming) and Edom is going to be long gone way before that ever happens.
 - d) The point for you and me is when we see nonbelievers have success, yes of course we are called to be a witness to them. But in effect, those who refuse to turn to God and just want to enjoy this life, will be a "non-issue" for all of eternity. This book is God's way to remind us to stick to what He's called us to do, be a witness for Him as those who have too much pride to trust in the God who created all things will eventually be a non-issue for eternity.
 - e) As we finish this short book, what we have to keep in mind is not the history of a tiny and insignificant historical nation, but the fact that God's going to eternally wipe out everyone who refuses to turn to Him. Until that happens, God calls us to be His witness for Him to a lost and dying world, realizing that some will accept that message despite the fact many will reject it! God's truth is "The Truth" and we're called to spread it, until He returns!

9. Verse 7: All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it.
- a) While I was busy giving the "long term perspective" of this book, Obadiah is still telling of the specifics of how Edom will be destroyed. Consider why these specifics are here. Let's be honest, the Israelites didn't care for the Edomites and vice-versa. For most of history as neighbors, they've been at a "cold war" or fought each other. Yes, the Israelites would like a book that spoke of Edom's destruction. What makes it part of the bible is all the details it gives about how Edom will be destroyed as a simple proof that God exists outside of time as we know it and knows history before it is written.
 - i) For my newcomers, all I ask is that you consider the fact that if there's a god who created all things, including time, He must exist outside of time as we know it.
 - b) Anyway, enough of the "why" question of this verse. Let's go to specifics.
 - i) Keep in mind when the Romans destroyed Israel, the Edomites were in effect "Pro-Israel" mainly because an Edomite family (The Herod's) ruled over Israel.
 - ii) Israel's rebellion against Rome about forty years after Jesus wasn't over the growth of Christianity, but simply due to Israel's desire to be independent and not part of Rome's rule. Like I said earlier, Rome only has two key rules. To disobey them is a death sentence and that's why Rome ordered the destruction of Israel.
 - iii) I am also convinced God allowed Israel to be destroyed as a punishment for them rejecting Jesus. Jesus Himself predicted Jerusalem's destruction with lots of details of that event in three of the four gospels. An interesting bit of history is many of the Christians living in Jerusalem at that time escaped that destruction. They took His message to heart about its destruction and snuck out. The First Century historian Josephus records that fact that many Christians escaped that destruction.
 - c) Enough of all of that, back to Obadiah. Who are the "allies" who deceived and overcame this nation? A little more history might help here. About 500 years before Rome, another great destruction occurred when the Babylonians destroyed Israel. At that time Edom was encouraging the Babylonians as if to say, "Leave us alone and we'll help you wipe out our enemies, the Israelites". My point is for most of the 1,000 years before Romans, Edom did help other nations conquer Israel. They had "powerful friends" who did use Edom as its "banking center" and went around that mountainous area as opposed to trying to conquer it. That's why for centuries Edom was "full of pride" thinking their geography prevented them from being wiped out.
 - i) The geography of that land prevented anyone from destroying the people living in that area. God brought that nation to an end by literally drawing them to Israel to help the Israelites fight Rome and the Romans wiped out both nations at that time. The only reason Israel exists today is many Israelites still lived outside of that land and eventually God allowed them to return there, which is why they exist today!
 - ii) The reason we know all of this today is in large part due to Josephus. If you don't know, he was a pro-Roman Jewish historian and he wrote about the war fought in 66-70 AD to destroy Israel. He mentions how the Edomites joined in that rebellion and that's how we know the fate of that nation! (One can Google his book online!)
 - d) I mention these details as they tie well to Verse 7. It talks about how Edom's enemies (The Romans) will defeat them by drawing them out of that land. The point I'm getting at is the end of the Edomites occurred exactly as God said it would and confirmed through history that we still have records of today.
10. Verse 8: "In that day," declares the LORD, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau?"
- a) While I'm describing history as it occurred, Obadiah is still busy telling us that the "wise men" of Edom will be destroyed. The big picture is God's using the world's matter of fame and fortune to remind us about what is really important in life and what isn't.

- b) So when we think of "wise men" in the bible we think of "The Wise Men" who came from the east to bring gifts to baby-Jesus. Most likely, those wise men came from Persia (Iran). The wise men may have been a group of astronomers trained by Daniel to look for the one who is to rule the world. My only point here is that the wise men Obadiah is talking about is not "The Wise Men" that most Christians are familiar with.
 - c) What Obadiah is talking about is the "successful" Edomites who thought they'd never see a fall to their banking system or their end because they lived in a mountain area that's really hard to conquer. This is God saying, "You think you Edomites are special? I will tell you what is the ultimate fate of those who trust in their own wisdom over Me". OK we get the point, let's move on.
11. Verse 9: Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.
- a) First question here, who or what is Teman? The answer is both. He was a descendant of Esau as mentioned in Genesis 36:42. It was also a city in the land of Edom. With that fact in mind, the way I translate this verse is "Hey everyone living in the land of Edom, and if you're living in the "big city" of Teman, you're now warned that life is about to end."
 - b) Ok, let me ask the tough question: If God cares for all people and I'll assume many of the people of Edom were "innocent women and children" who don't care for the politics. Why would God want to wipe out all of them? First, I always remind myself of the fact that we live in God's world and He's free to do with it as He pleases. The next thing I realize is we will be judged individually. Group judgment is about being a witness for God or if we're treating God's people badly, He is teaching us by this judgment that "God's people are not to be messed with". The destruction of them became that witness.
 - c) One more tough question. If Obadiah wrote about 850 (best guess), why have a judgment that takes places about 900 years later? The best answer is to remember that God works in "patterns". My point is this nation suffered from the Assyrians, the Babylonians as well as the Greek conquests of that part of the world during that timeframe. The Roman conquest was the "final straw" where the Edomites were wiped out once and for all. It's as if God's saying, "I'm warning you, I'm warning you again, fine then, no more warnings, it's time to wipe out that nation once and for all for messing with God's chosen people".
 - d) Bottom line, the land of Esau's descendants (Edom) did suffer from the great invasions of those big empires and they were finally wiped out once and for all. Meanwhile, Verse 10.
12. Verse 10: Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever.
- a) In case you thought I was way out in left field of my analysis of Verse 9, Verse 10 "makes my case" that God is judging Edom as an example of what happens to groups or nations that want to take on God's chosen people.
 - b) So if all of this is true, should Israel today bother to defend themselves? Of course. None of us know how God works and through who. For all we know God uses Israel's ability to defeat its enemies as the way He is protecting them.
 - c) One more time, if all of this is true, why does God allow so many martyrs to come down the pike in the Christian church? If we too are God's chosen people why aren't we under the same protection? To answer we need to separate "group" protection from individual protection. We need to separate eternal protection from this life. My point is God allows what He allows for His glory. He also allows individual Christians to be martyred as so the church ultimately gets strengthened. All of the stories I've heard of Christians who'd suffered for the faith ultimately lead to build the faith of other believers. In other words, God allows what God allows ultimately for His glory. We must accept that.
 - d) In the meantime, the specific point here is one of Israel's traditional enemies will be wiped out completely in phases and then once and for all as to make the point that God blesses those who bless His people and vice versa. That's the point of Verse 10.

13. Verse 11: On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.
- a) Verse 11 is our clue to when this book's date. Some scholars think Obadiah is referring to the Babylonian invasion which happened around 600BC. Since there is no mention of the Babylonians in this book, I take the view of the majority of scholars who argue it refers to an invasion of Jerusalem around 850 BC. That invasion didn't end Israel as a nation, but it was an occasion where Jerusalem was successfully attacked. The point being that when all of this took place, Edom kind of stood there pointing to Jerusalem as if they're saying to a group that wants to attack somebody to take away loot, "Go get them and leave us alone". Could it refer to the Babylonian invasion? Sure. Whenever this was, the verse is telling us of a time God's people were defeated and the Edomites "cheered them on".
14. Verse 12: You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.
- a) What's fascinating is that God says to the Edomites that the Israelites are their "brothers". This is the old "family is family" and we should respect them accordingly. I recall a movie line where the villain was explaining to the hero why the villain hated him so much. The short version is the hero killed the villain's brother years earlier. The villain said in effect, "I think my brother was a jerk, but family is family and I've got to kill you for that reason".
 - b) The point here is that God's message to the Edomites is that you are the Israelites kin. So you shouldn't cheer on their enemies or wish for their destruction.
 - c) That's not a bad message for us either. We could have a family member who is not saved. We could think, "Too bad for you, I'm going to heaven and you're going to hell". That isn't the way God wants us to think of our family members. God wants us to always be a good witness to them and be a good witness for Jesus is a necessary part of living the Christian life. I'm not saying we have to be perfect. I am saying that we should be living differently enough so that even those around us can tell we are a living witness for Jesus, period.
 - d) OK enough guilt here. Time for the next verse.
15. Verse 13: You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor look down on them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. ¹⁴ You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.
- a) One has to realize that when the Edomites told conquering powers to go attack Israel, it is not a matter of saying, "They're over there, go get them". It's a case of Edom seizing some of Israel's assets during those wars, or even turning Jewish fugitives in to their authorities.
 - b) A modern equivalent might be in the territories the German's controlled in WWII. They'd put out arrest orders for all Jewish people. It would be as if the Edomites were an ally to the Germans and helped find "hidden Jewish people" by either killing them or by turning them into the authorities. The Edomites would be like a smalltime player who helped the Germans back in the 1930's and 1940's.
 - c) With that said, let us back up to realize why God's singling out the Edomites. One of the reasons is because they were "cousins", they were held to a hire standard than the empires that conquered the Middle East. So why is God "picking on the little guys" (Edom) versus say the "big bad empires" of the Middle East? The short version is the bible does say lots about the destruction of those empires, but this little book of Obadiah reminds us that not only will the "big bullies" die off for messing with God's people, but so will the little ones who helped out in that destruction. God uses "life in the Middle East" back then to teach us by example of how we're to be witnesses for Him.
 - d) Again, we're back to the fact that the Israelites (like the church) are God's chosen, so He is going to interfere in world history in order to preserve Israel as a nation. It is amazing to consider all the nations that have come and gone, while Israel lives on as an entity!

16. Verse 15: "The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.
- a) Now Obadiah is getting all "Revelation like" on them. When we think of "The day of the Lord" we think of how God's going to wrap up the world as we know it one day. What we forget is that expression refers to any and all times in world history where a big event occurs where people say "The finger of God" must be behind this as it's such a big scale!
 - b) This is Obadiah saying to the Edomites, "You have no idea who you are messing with. It may be no big deal to you to want to wipe out the Israelites, but you don't realize you are messing with God's chosen people and you will suffer for it."
 - c) Think about it this way, whatever loot the Edomites got based on the historical attacks on Israel didn't last forever. Edom ended as a nation around 70AD. That's how we know that Obadiah is correctly predicting that, what you did to the Israelites will come back on your own head in ways far worse than whatever you gained from harming the Israelites.
 - d) So are you saying I should bless Israel as a nation? The bible actually tells that we should pray for the protection of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6.) The way I view it is God expects us to be a witness for Him and live in a way to be that witness. Let me give a simple example: Yesterday in my "day job", I met a nice young Jewish man who was the property manager for a building I was "working on". I like to find ways to engage people in conversation. I told him about my trip to Israel and he told me about several trips he took there. All I am getting at is we shouldn't look down upon any nonbeliever, let alone one who is a part of God's "chosen". The point of all of this is simply that we should always be a good witness for Jesus in all aspects of our lives. We don't have to "beat people over the head with our bibles", but as much as possible stand out as a witness for Him.
 - e) That little lecture surprisingly leads back to this verse. "The "Day of the LORD (all capitals is the most holy name of God) is near for all nations". Think of it this way, no matter how long we live on earth, that time is relatively short compared to eternity. Therefore, the day of judgment is soon for all nations because once we pass from this life to the next one, we must all face God's judgment. For Christians that judgment is not for sin, as Jesus already paid the full price. That judgment is our eternal rewards based on how we used the time God gave us since we became believers. For nonbelievers, there is also a judgment based on what one did with the knowledge they had of God or could have had. All I'm saying is like the Edomites, we too will be judged based on what we know about our relationships with all of God's chosen as well as our living witness to nonbelievers. Now if that doesn't scare you into being a good witness for Jesus, I don't know what will!
17. Verse 16: Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.
- a) Keep in mind the "you" is the Edomites. The "holy hill" is specifically where God's Temple is located in Jerusalem. So when did the Edomites drink there? I suspect it refers to when Herod was the king. It may refer to another time in Middle East history when Jerusalem was conquered and the Edomites cheered them on. Whenever it was, we're reading here of a time predicted by Obadiah of the Edomites being part of "foreigners" ruling in Israel.
 - b) What this verse is essentially saying is just as you Edomites and other foreign nations had enjoyed being conquerors of Israel so you will be wiped out for messing with "My people"!
 - c) It doesn't come out as perfect in the English as it does in the original Hebrew, but the key point is that God's people are not to be messed with, simply because they are His people!
 - d) OK time for the tough question: If God loves them so much, why did He allow the great Holocaust to occur? If God loves Christians so much, why does He allow so many to die as martyrs for the faith? Essentially, I'm asking, why does God allow evil to exist? What I have come to accept is that God allows evil ultimately to glorify Him! It's by Israel still be a nation today in spite of that, a fact that He's still preserving a remnant. The fact that He allows Christians to be martyred as proof that the church still exists today despite that!

- e) As I like to state every so often, if this life was all there was, it would be a very unfair way to exist. Many people suffer horribly in this lifetime. If this is all there is, we must admit, this world is a very unfair place to live. If there is a God who judges all people both as an individual and as groups, that's the only way I could get through this life by trusting that such an entity exists. To put it this way, if we all live for eternity, then this life must be a "training ground" (for most of us) for what that eternity entails. All I'm saying is how we act now should be testing ground to what should happen to us for all eternity. If there is an eternity, then that makes this life have a real purpose, to prepare us for that eternity!
 - f) If I lost you in that last paragraph, I'm simply saying that God has a purpose for our being alive at this time. To state the obvious, we can't change our past. All we can do is learn as to make the best use of our time so we can glorify God with our lives.
 - g) The reason I'm going into all this theology, is in effect that's what Obadiah is doing in this verse. He's saying, "Mess with God's chosen people, you'll be "messed with" in ways that will hurt you far greater than whatever you gain in this lifetime by that "messing"."
 - h) Speaking of biblical theology, let's take a look at Verse 17.
18. Verse 17: But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance.
- a) First if you haven't noticed, the last handful of verses of this book shift the focus from the nation of Edom to the nation of Israel. Again, it's God's way of saying, "These guys over here (Israel) are My Chosen ones and those guys over there (Edom) are not. Deal with it". That does not mean every Israelite automatically goes to heaven and every Edomite will be in hell. It means God makes the rules, deal with it!
 - b) When we get to the last book of the Christian Old Testament, there is a verse Malachi will state where he says, "Yet Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated". Malachi 1:2b-3a NIV.
 - i) That verse simply means that God did choose the Israelites (descendants of Jacob) to be His chosen people while Jacob's brother's descendants were not.
 - ii) It relates to this verse here in Obadiah as God is saying the specific location where I will set up deliverance for the world will be in Israel. It's a way of saying that the Messiah (who we Christians argue is Jesus) will rule the world one day from that specific mountain. "Mount Zion" is a nickname for Jerusalem and specifically it is the mountain where the temple was and will be located!
 - c) OK John, Israel wins and Edom loses. This is getting repetitive and boring. By now we do get all of this. Give us a quick "why should we care" lecture. It's here to remind us that no matter what life throws at us, if we believe Jesus is God, He paid the complete price for all our sins, and He's in charge of our lives, then no matter what happens to us in this life is a "secondary issue" in comparison to all of eternity. The "Edom's" of the world who are only concerned with this life and what they can accomplish during this life will receive the fate that this nation gets. Our motivation to be a good witness for Jesus, gives us a purpose to live greater than any other purpose we can have in life, and that's what He calls us to do. I don't want to see any "Edomites" around me have that horrid eternal fate, which is why I do try to be a good witness to all around me. OK, enough of that, four verses left to go.
19. Verse 18: The house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of Esau." The LORD has spoken.
- a) Speaking of suffering during this lifetime, I present Verse 18: To paraphrase God, "Yes the Israelites are going to suffer in this world but they will always exist as a nation. Edomites will also suffer, but their suffering will be much worse, because once they're wiped out in the future, that'll be it for all time."
 - b) By the way, that's why some commentators see Obadiah preaching about the Babylonian invasion as they wiped out Israel as a nation just as Rome did centuries later. No matter when you believe Obadiah wrote this, in effect the results are the same.

- c) Pause and consider life this way: Even if your relatives went through something as bad as the Holocaust, wouldn't you still believe God's there if He promised that Israel will still be a nation again in spite of all of that? There is no excusing something as evil as that. All I'm saying is the positive lining of something that horrid is His unconditional promise to the nation of Israel that they will always exist in spite of all they've had to suffer. What all this means to the Christian is despite whatever we have to deal with in this lifetime, that's the end of our suffering. It's worth whatever we have to deal with in this lifetime since it means eternal life as a reward for it all.
- d) OK then, Verse 19.
20. Verse 19: People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau, and people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead. ²⁰ This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan will possess the land as far as Zarephath; the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negev.
- a) In the final few verses of Obadiah we get the "who gets what" after all that destruction is to take place. In case you care, the "Negev" refers to the desert area south of Israel. All it is saying is the land of Edom will not be empty forever, but after all Edom's descendants are wiped out another group of people will occupy that piece of real estate.
- b) The short version of these verses is that it is describing how the Israelites will one day be the occupants of the land of their enemies while the Edomites lose big time.
- c) Let me summarize this book in one thought: In the long run, the Israelites do win and the Edomites lose. The reason God gives us this one chapter book of Obadiah is to remind us of the ultimate fate of those who refuse to turn to God with their lives. Think of Edom as a motivational tool to stick close to God and use our lives to make a difference for Him.
- d) If you get that, you get the book. Meanwhile, one more verse to go.
21. Verse 21: Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's.
- a) Obadiah ends with a prediction that Israel will win in the end. That's sort of the key point of Verses 19-21. Let me put it this way: Through the hundreds of years that Israel existed as a kingdom (and split kingdom), a major fear was the "big boys on the block" who could wipe out Israel due to their size. The Edomites were their "nearby cousins" who were also "pains in the rear" to the Israelites to put it mildly. God is essentially saying to His people don't worry about them, they'll be wiped out in the end and Israel will be around for all of eternity. It's sort of a "Don't mess with God" message with Edom as the example.
- b) This ending for you and me is the reminder that no matter what we have to face in life, we will "win in the end" if we're trusting in God to guide us and we use our lives as a witness for Him. Whatever suffering we have in this life, will last at the most for one lifetime. It's also written as a contradiction to the fate of those who trust in themselves for their fate as if God is a non-issue. That's why this little book picks on "little old insignificant" Edom as an example of what happens to people who don't trust in God.
- c) With that said, time to wrap this up in my closing prayer.
22. Let's pray: Father, we don't know why You've chosen us to be one of Yours. We are just grateful that we are one of Your chosen. Guide us to use our lives to make a difference for You. Help us to see nonbelievers as others you care about as much as you care about us. Help us to be the type of witness You desire us to be. Help us to rely upon your power to be that witness. Finally help us and guide us as to how you want to use the time You've given us to be the type of witness You desire we be as we use our lives for Your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.