

God's Twelve Voices that Shaped His People: Obadiah

Adult Bible Class

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Introduction

What are the living messages of the OT prophets?

Background of text, social setting, and prophet provides parallels in our day.

Points of interest

He is unknown except for this book, although 13 men in the OT have this name. No reason exists for identifying this Obadiah with any of those other references.

His name means "servant of the Lord".

Historical setting

The date of the book cannot be determined with great accuracy.

Jerusalem has suffered a great calamity, giving us at least four options: Shishak's campaign (1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chr. 12:1-12), Arabians and Philistines (2 Chr. 21:16-17), defeat of Amaziah (2 Kings 14:8-14; 2 Chr. 25:17-24), and Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. with the destruction of Jerusalem. The latter date may be the most probable, despite the difficulties (cf. Obad. 20).

Structure of the Book

This book is the shortest in the Hebrew Bible.

It is called a vision (cf. v. 1 and Nahum, also Habakkuk and Isaiah where the verb "to see" occurs at the beginning of the book).

Obadiah is not quoted or echoed in the NT.

Obadiah is an oracle against a foreign nation.

Two sections:

1-14. Edom will be invaded by disloyal allies and driven out, a divine punishment for cruelties toward Israel.

15-21. Prediction of Day of the Lord with restoration and victory for Israel.

Purpose seems not so much to warn Edomites as to comfort the Israelites.

Similarities between the oracle against Edom in Jer. 49:7-16 and this book.

Key Concepts

Rebuke to those who prefer not to get involved in the problems of others.

Rebuke to those who find sadistic joy in the misfortunes of others.

Invulnerability of nations (or individuals) is a delusion.

Firm faith of prophet in the providence of God and his ability to work out his purpose in history.

Lesson that all eventually receive their due reward.

Questions

How should Christians understand the spirit of vengeance which seems to come through in the book of Obadiah?

How does Obadiah teach us that we must get involved in the lives of others? What demands does this book place upon us as Christians?

Do you find comfort in the book of Obadiah in the thought that God is working out his plan in the history of the world? Why or why not?

What does Obadiah say to a nation that seeks to become self-defending through military power?

How does the book of Obadiah correspond to “love your enemies”?

How does Obadiah speak to the problem of holding grudges?

What does Obadiah say to those who would become proud?