

Study Questions (Obadiah)

Theme: *Edom* and the nations will be judged in the day of God's wrath when, via the remnant, the kingdom will be the Lord's.

1. What is the historical background of the book of Obadiah, both in general and in particular?

In general, the background for the book of Obadiah is the relationship between Israel and Edom. This relationship began with the two sons of Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25:21-26). God gave these children to Rebecca and told her before they were born that the elder shall serve the younger.

The younger was renamed Israel (Gen. 32:28) and from his twelve sons came the nation of Israel. The elder became the father of the Edomites (Gen. 36:1, 9).

Esau's descendants settled "in the hill country of Seir" ("say-ear" Gen. 36:9). If we think of the top portions of the Red Sea as an index finger and left thumb, Seir is located between the thumb of the Red Sea and the Dead Sea. By the time of Christ, they were pushed northward and became the land of Idumea that bordered the southern end of Judea (Mk. 3:8).

During the wilderness wanderings the Edomites refused passage of Moses and the Israelites through their land (Num. 20:14-21; Judg. 11:17-18) so Israel turned away from them (Num. 20:21) and traveled "around the hill country of Seir" (Deut. 2:1).

After Israel settled the land of Canaan, Edom was a *continual military opponent*. David's victories "everywhere he went" included Edom (2 Sam. 8:14). In the divided kingdom period, Edomites often made raids against Judah (2 Chron. 20; 21:8-10) even taking away prisoners when Ahaz was looking to Assyria for aid against the northern kingdom (2 Chron. 28:16-17).

In particular historically, like the other Palestinian peoples, Edom became a vassal state to Assyria and then to Babylon. What stimulated the message of the book of Obadiah was the plundering of Judah and Jerusalem after the fall of the southern kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 by the Edomites who added *insult to injury* when they took advantage of the people of God that remained in the homeland, broken and vulnerable under the sword of God's judgment.

2. Defend the point that Obadiah 18 is not an absolute.

God will save the fallen nations of the earth. None who oppose Israel will survive (Obad. 18). But *there will be a remnant of Edom* and the nations in the restored Eden (Amos 9:12). Thus Obadiah 18 is balanced by verse 21 and Amos 9:12.

3 Explain how the phrase, "the elder shall serve the younger" shows us that Herod will fail in his fury of Matthew 2:16.

God revealed His plan for Edom before the birth of Esau. The elder will serve the younger. Seeking to throw off this yoke in opposition to the purposes of God will be frustrated. The Idumean/Edomite, Herod the Great, will fail to destroy Abraham's son through Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 2:16). In the Lord's kingdom (v. 21) Edomites and all nations will bow the knee to the younger son of Isaac (Jacob → Christ).

4. According to Paul (Rom. 9:13 in context) how is the remnant of Jacob formed in contrast to the severe judgment of Esau (Jacob will be a fire and Esau will be stubble)?

Jacob and Esau show us that it is by God's election of grace (Rom. 9:13) in which all who are saved become the new Israel.

How are we to understand the place of Mount Esau and Mount Zion when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v. 21)? [cf. all the land references in 19-20] Should we not understand this to mean that all lands of the earth will be Israel's land, owned by the kingdom that is the Lord's? If so, is this not now the case in the coming of the kingdom and Christ's enthronement? Is it now the case that Zion's king rules the earth by the gospel that is being preached throughout the cities of the land of Israel, which have become the cities of the earth, and this preaching will continue throughout these cities until Christ returns (cf. Mat 10)?