

Sunday Morning: August 23, 2009
Obadiah 1-21

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ENCOUNTER, ENCOURAGE, ENGAGE:

A Minor Prophet Deals With A Major Issue

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Obadiah: Introduction

A Minor Prophet Deals with A Major Issue

The book of Obadiah is the shortest of the 12 Minor Prophets. It consists of only 21 verses. Its major emphasis is upon the judgment of Edom, a people who lived just southeast of Judah. Yet, though the prophecy concerns Edom, there is no evidence that the prophecy was delivered to Edom. Unlike Jonah who traveled with God's message to Nineveh, Obadiah took the message about Edom to Judah as an explanation of God's judgment and a promise of God's vindication.

God brought judgment against His own people when He first allowed the Assyrians to capture Israel (the northern kingdom) and then allowed the Babylonians to overrun Judah (the southern kingdom). So why the judgment against the Edomites? Because they were proud and arrogant in their dealing with their kinsmen. When Babylon destroyed Judah in 586 B.C., Edom worked with the Babylonians to facilitate Judah's fall.

Compounding Edom's sin, he joined in the ransacking of Judah after the defeat and then began to appropriate territory from Judah during the time of Judah's exile. Instead of helping his Judean brothers, he sold them into captivity.

Edom and Judah had a long history of antagonism, for the Edomites are the descendents of Esau and Judah the descendants of Isaac. Just as these two brother's feuded, so did their descendants. Edom refused passage to Israel during the exodus from Egypt. Wars between the two erupted during the time of King Saul and David. This family history, along with the treaties that bound the countries during the 6th century, is the reason that God holds Edom responsible as a kinsman who should have offered aid to Judah but instead betrayed him.

An interesting side note for Christmas: the Jews of the first century never fully accepted Herod and his sons as kings of Israel, though in many ways Herod benefited the country, rebuilding the temple and expanding territory. Why? Because Herod was an Idumean, another word for Edomite.

Just as the prophecy was a word about Edom but delivered to the people of God – Judah. So the prophecy is included in God's word to us and therefore is more than just an interesting word of history. It is to be applied to our lives. Its central message to us lies in its revelation concerning the temptation and sin of pride. This insidious sin captures us and destroys us. It masquerades as self esteem, something positive, but deceives us and brings judgment and destruction to us and our families. Let's learn from Edom, not become him.

Next Week: Habakkuk