

## Possessing Edom

Obadiah 1:17-21

(17) But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

(18) And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it.

(19) And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

(20) And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south.

(21) And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

The prophecy of Obadiah is the smallest book of the Old Testament but its diminutive size need not imply that it has no significance any more than the diminutive size of the city of Bethlehem (MIC 5:2) would imply it has no significance. Jesus Christ was born in little Bethlehem and spoken of in little Obadiah (for all the scriptures testify of Christ, JOH 5:39). Let us not be quick to dismiss little things of God and so hear from Him the echo of the words, "For who hath despised the day of small things?..." (ZEC 4:10). Even *jots and tittles* (diminutive letters and grammatical marks) are significant to God (MAT 5:18). The kingdom of Jesus Christ was given by God to a "...little flock..." (LUK 12:32), its beginnings likened to a tiny mustard seed (MAT 13:31-32) but it would grow into a formidable tree.

This little book is a prophecy against *Edom* (OBA 1:1) and similar pronouncements against Edom are found in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos and even Psalms (note PSA 137:7). Edomites were the descendants of Jacob's twin brother, *Esau* (GEN 25:30 c/w GEN 36:9); they were a people with a long-standing grudge against the descendants of Jacob. Nonetheless, God had given them a land for their own possession and Israel was once commanded to honor that (DEU 2:4-5). When the Babylonian empire was sent by God as a judgment against the land of sinful Judah, the Edomites had actively participated in their destruction and rejoiced in it. But though God should find it necessary to chasten His church, they are nevertheless His people, His beloved, and "...all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them..." (JER 2:3). Whereas Edom had a high opinion of itself, they were deceived to think that the Babylonians and their allies shared their sentiments. As Obadiah said, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee..." (OBA 1:3). Pride is a delusional thing which summons not exaltation but rather destruction (PRO 16:18) and Edom would be soon devastated by its "friends" with an overthrow likened to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (JER 49:17-18).

There would be no deliverance for Edom, "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance..." (OBA 1:17); the *house of Jacob* would revive and thrive, per our text today. The language of our text implies that these promises to the *house of Jacob* extend beyond a mere possession of *geographical lands* like Edom. There are also varied deliverances spoken of in Scripture and the Psalmist had said, "Thou art my King, O God: command **deliverances** for Jacob" (PSA 44:4). *Deliverance* equates with *salvation*, as seen by comparing JOEL 2:32 with ROM 10:13. Deliverances may be *natural* deliverances (from enemies, tears, hunger, death, etc.). They may be *spiritual* deliverances (from the power of sin, the pollutions of sin, the penalty of sin, the presence of sin, etc.). They may be *temporal* deliverances (pertaining to time and this world) or they may be *eternal* deliverances. They may be *conditional* deliverances (based upon man's obedience) or they may be *unconditional* deliverances (based on God's faithfulness). Sometimes in the prophecies of the O.T. there is a mingling of these things and such is the case in our text.

Obadiah was one of the prophets that came after Samuel and so would have spoken of the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ (ACT 3:24), i.e., of the "...time of reformation" (HEB 9:10) which began with the preaching of John the Baptist announcing the *promised kingdom of God* (LUK 16:16). Peter's mention of Samuel (ACT 3:24) is significant inasmuch as Samuel's books first announced a coming eternal Messianic kingdom through David's line (2SAM 7:12-17). Samuel and Obadiah only saw vaguely what Christ's apostles would see in person and eventual clarity:

(MAT 13:17) For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Though many today affirm it so, the notion that the O.T. prophets did not see the apostolic era of the gospel church is a grievous error. The Apostle Paul, in preaching the *gospel of grace and the kingdom of God* (ACT 20:24-25) by which sinners were converted and built into churches, said that he spoke "...none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come" (ACT 26:22). It is not that the gospel church era was not made known to the O.T. prophets but that it was not made known unto them to the degree "...as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles..." (EPH 3:5). The O.T. prophets sometimes spoke of things to come in *the last days*, and that era is marked from the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for God "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (HEB 1:1-2).

Obadiah in our text spoke of deliverance and holiness upon mount Zion for the house of Jacob, and the house of Jacob would be a consuming *fire to* and *possessor of* Esau/Edom and others. Let it be here stated that holiness is itself a deliverance: a deliverance from the bondage of sin. One need not worry about finding a natural fulfillment to every detail of our text but it can be clearly seen to have a spiritual fulfillment in Jesus Christ, His kingdom, His apostles and the going forth of the gospel to convert sinners of the Gentiles. It will be helpful to recall that Jacob was renamed Israel (GEN 32:28), that his descendants became Israel the nation-church of the O.T., and that the Israel of God in the N.T. is the gospel church, a commonwealth of Jewish and Gentile believers (EPH 2:11-22; GAL 6:15-16). Consider:

1. In due time, the house of Jacob received its long-awaited king, Jesus, "...and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the **house of Jacob** for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (LUK 1:32-33). Jesus is the One of Whom it was said, "...There shall come out of **Sion** the **Deliverer**, and shall **turn away ungodliness from Jacob**" (ROM 11:26). In penitent submission to Him through faith, men "...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true **holiness**" (EPH 4:24). Zion/Sion, deliverance, holiness = Jesus. Check.

2. Jesus is Abraham's promised seed (GAL 3:16) who would "...**possess** the gate of his enemies" (GEN 22:17). By His obedience unto death and His resurrection, Jesus Christ was promised a reign in the heavenly **Zion** and "...the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy **possession**" (PSA 2:6-8 c/w ACT 13:32-33). He commissioned and commanded His apostles to preach repentance and baptism in His name to the *uttermost part of the earth* (ACT 1:8 c/w MAR 16:15-16). In doing this gospel work, they facilitated the prophecy, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be **delivered**: for in **mount Zion** and in Jerusalem shall be **deliverance**, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call" (JOEL 2:32 c/w ROM 10:13). God's word is as a **fire** (JER 23:29) and in the mouth of His servants is **made fire** (JER 5:14). Christ's apostles (men of the house of Jacob) bore holy fire in their mouths, fire for light and for consumption, even as John the Baptist had been a **burning and shining light** (JOH 5:35). Zion, deliverance, burning and possessing enemies = Jesus and His gospel converting sinners. Check.

3. Edom was in the crosshairs of Obadiah's prophecy. Whatever would befall Edom in a *natural* sense would be capped off by being overcome *spiritually* by the gospel. Jesus' personal ministry was itself even said to greatly affect **Idumea** (MAR 3:7-8), another name for **Edom**. His ministry had touched the house of Herod (LUK 8:3), an **Edomite**. The gathering in of the Gentiles to the church by the gospel was declared by the apostles (ACT 15:13-18) to be the fulfillment of the prophecy of AMO 9:11-12 which said, "That they may **possess** the remnant of **Edom**, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name..." Edom possessed = Jesus, Jesus' gospel. Check.

4. OBA 1:21 is the second and last place in Scripture where the word "saviours" is found. The other is in NEH 9:27 where it refers to the Judges in the time between Joshua and Samuel (ACT 13:19-20). Here again, *saviours* are *judges*. The apostles of Christ were set as **judges** (MAT 19:28; LUK 22:30). They taught men, being empowered and instructed in the doctrine of God by the Holy Spirit sent from **heavenly Zion** (JOH 14:26; 1PE 1:12), beginning from Jerusalem, the **earthly Zion** (LUK 24:47). Their word is final in matters of faith and practice (1JO 4:6). Gospel ministers in general are **saviours** when they continue in apostolic doctrine, as Paul told Timothy, "...for in doing this thou shalt both **save** thyself, and them that hear thee" (1TI 4:16). They declare both **deliverance** ("He that believeth and is baptized shall be **saved**..." [MAR 16:16]) and **judgment** ("...but he that believeth not shall be **damned**" [MAR 16:16]). Zion, saviours/deliverers, judges = Christ's apostles and ministers with His gospel. Check.

5. "...and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S" (OBA 1:21) c/w Jesus' words to the apostles:

(LUK 22:29) And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;

(LUK 22:30) That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The overthrow of Edom is also typical of the vanquishing by Jesus Christ of all His enemies. The language of God's vengeance upon Edom in ISA 63:1-6 is reflected in the description of Christ's bloody victory and judgeship:

Revelation 19:11-16

(11) And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

(12) His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

(13) And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

(14) And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

(15) And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

(16) And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Check and double-check.