

## GOD'S SOVEREIGN AND GRACIOUS REVERSALS

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### Obadiah PART 1 (Genesis 25:19-34)

Opening Prayer: *Keep us safe, O Lord our Heavenly Father; for in You we take refuge. Apart from You, we have no good thing. Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. You, O Lord, alone are our portion. You make us secure. May we praise You Who counsels by Your Word and Spirit, through Christ Jesus our King. AMEN.*

A week or so ago, I was talking to someone about visions and God's intention behind giving visions to His servants. One of those intentions is for God to graciously assure us of His sovereign goodness and power to bring about what He promises; despite our current circumstances. Additionally, God uses His servants to whom He reveals these visions to build-up and encourage His People with His future promises during times of difficulty. God knows the future; not only because He is all-knowing, but also because He is all-powerful to bring about the future as He has promised. Today, we see "The Vision of Obadiah", and it is a remarkable vision of prophetic revelation to give hope to God's People during a tragic time for a better future; despite what their present circumstances may suggest.

Obadiah is one of the twelve minor prophets who receives an 'oracle against the nations', especially Edom. Obadiah's name means "servant of Yahweh." We do not know much about this particular prophet, but we do know that he was indeed God's servant for His People, and there is much we, as God's People today, can learn from this prophetic servant. While we can't be certain, it is likely that Obadiah was a contemporary of Jeremiah, and that the events of Edom's "violence" (*verse 10*) against Judah refers to the Fall of Jerusalem around 586 BC. Jacob is the founding father and corporate head of the People of Judah – God's chosen People to be the recipients of God's

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promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Esau was Jacob's older brother who despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob as we read in Genesis 25. The historical struggle between these two brothers, Jacob and Esau, is parallel to the corporate struggle between these two nations, Judah and Edom. For example, as Esau was deceived to sell his birthright, so too is Edom deceived. As Esau experienced the role reversal of serving his younger brother, Jacob, so too will Judah rule over Edom. As Jacob was driven from the land because of Esau's desire to kill him, so too does Edom's "violence against" Judah lead to their violent expulsion from the Land at the hands of the Babylonians. And, as Jacob returned to possess his rightful land inheritance, so too will Judah.

All this is according to God's Sovereign and Gracious Reversals succinctly articulated in *Genesis 25:23*, "The older will serve the younger". God is sovereign, gracious and faithful to His promises, and this is why both Jacob and Judah repossess the land of their inheritance. It is not because of any inherent righteousness on their part. No. It is because of God's promise that the descendants of Abraham, through their obedience of faith, will rule the world. Such obedience is faith in this very promise from God despite present circumstances. Do you believe God is willing and able to bring about His promises despite our apparent circumstances? Do you trust His Word and promises, especially when looking at His past faithfulness? It is my prayer that our answer to these questions will be a resounding "yes" as we study Obadiah under four headings. Today, we will look at two, then, Lord-willing, we will conclude with the last two headings next Sunday.

1. Reversal through Deception (READ Verses 1-7)
  - a. Inner Deception
    - i. Pride of Edom's own heart (*Verses 3-4*)

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1. This deception allows one to think they are high above everyone else, even God, but God will bring them low (*Verse 2*). Pride is deceptive, and God will turn it into disgrace. Pride is the defining sin of the nations, and such pride is often displayed by trusting in their own power rather than in God.
2. **Re-Read Verses 2-4** This is, according to Mike Heiser, language of council rebellion. **READ *Isaiah 14:9-15***. This is a taunt, a mockery song, against the King of Babylon, and the language here is similar to the language of Obadiah verses 3-4. This is interesting in three ways. First, the pride and subsequent fall of the king of Babylon is described as that of a divine being who rebelled from God's heavenly council. Verse 12, "morning star" is the Hebrew word referring to the planet Venus which was an object of pagan worship. Additionally, in Latin, that word is translated as "Lucifer." The King of Babylon's pride and fall is like that of the serpent of old from the Garden; Satan, who rebelled against God. Second, Edom, in its pride, is like Babylon. In the Bible, Edom, like Babylon, is a symbolic word to describe the world in opposition against God and His People. Lastly, Edom partners with Babylon in the destruction and dispossession of God's People. Therefore, in sum, Edom acts Luciferian like the King of Babylon in Isaiah 14, and such actions are motivated by a prideful heart that deceives.

### b. Outer Deception

- i. Betrayal by allies (*Verse 7*)

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1. "Treaties turn into treacheries" (Jonathan Gibson, from whom I draw much of these insights, on page 989 of "The NIV Proclamation Bible").
2. This is also a practical warning against looking outward for security and safety in political alliances or in the idols of this world.

### **2. Reversal through Relationships (READ Verses 7-14)**

a. Edom, a neighboring nation to Judah, gladly stood by and exploited the People and the situation when the Babylonians brought Jerusalem to ruins. Edom and Judah were not ally nations, and this conflict between the two goes back to patriarchal times and the conflict between the two twin brothers who were the founding fathers of these two nations (Jacob = Judah and Esau = Edom) as we already considered.

b. What was the "violence" (*verse 10*) of Edom against Judah?

- i. "stood aloof" (*verse 11*); "gloated, rejoiced and boasted" (*verses 12, 13*); they acted "like one of them" (*verse 11*) and "marched through the gates" of God's People and "seized their wealth" (*verse 13*). They...

#### **READ Verse 14**

1. "In terms of guilt, Edom may as well have actively assisted Babylon. Their inaction and gloating over their neighbor's fall made them complicit in the greater crimes. Edom did expand into some of the former territory of southern Judah after 586 BC." (Faithlife NIV Study Bible).
- ii. The insult to this injury is that these people groups (Edom and Judah) were closely related with intimate ancestral lineage. They were family.
  1. We saw, in *verse 7*, how Edom's allies turned against them. Well, this was a national example of a people pridefully reaping what they sow, and, in 553 BC, Edom also fell to the Babylonians

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under Nabonidus. Edom's betrayal by its allies was precipitated by their hostility toward their sibling nation, Judah. Edom exchanged family relationships for foreign strength. For Edom, family turned to foe, and foreigners turned to friends. But, in the end, those foreigners proved to be the foes. Siding with the world and the Devil only leads to destruction.

- c. What can we expect in our own intimate, even familial relationships, today as God's People? How do we respond?
  - i. Jesus as THE Suffering Servant, had family that questioned His sanity, and Jesus was betrayed by Judas, called Iscariot, after Satan entered him (Luke 22:3-4). King Herod, who sought to kill Jesus after learning of His messianic birth from the Magi, was an Edomite. Should we expect any less as servants of this King?
  - ii. We can trust God and His promises. We can trust God to vindicate us and to carry out justice against those who mis-treat us. We also see His gracious mercy toward us wonderfully revealed through His Son Jesus Christ by His death on the Cross for our own betrayal. Therefore, we can love our enemies and rejoice when we are persecuted for Christ our King.

1. **READ *Romans 12:14-21***

a. AMEN

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### Obadiah PART 2 (Psalm 16)

Opening Prayer: *Keep us safe, O Lord our Heavenly Father; for in You we take refuge. Apart from You, we have no good thing. Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. You, O Lord, alone are our portion. You make us secure; therefore, may our eyes always be upon You. You make known to us the path of life and fill us with joy through Jesus Christ our Lord Who is seated at Your right hand with eternal pleasures. In Him we pray. AMEN.*

Obadiah, a “servant of Yahweh”, received a remarkable vision of prophetic revelation to give hope to God’s People during a tragic time for a better future; despite what their present circumstances suggested. In this vision, we looked at God’s Sovereign working in Reversals through Deception and through Relationships. We concluded that we can love our enemies and rejoice when we are persecuted for Christ our King; because, we trust that God is willing and able to bring about His promises despite our apparent circumstances. Today, we will look at two more reversals through which God sovereignly works for our good and His glory.

#### **3. Reversal through Reckoning (READ Verses 8-18)**

- a. Verse 8 is a day of Reckoning for Edom that points to “The day of the LORD...for all nations” in verse 15
  - i. What happens to Edom will be true for all the nations.
  - ii. Verses 15-18 articulate reversals through God’s just reckoning. In verse 14, Edom tries to capture survivors trying to escape, but in the end according to verse 17, there will be deliverance on Mount Zion. God’s faithful assembly will escape God’s judgment, and there will be no survivors from Edom in verse 18. All who oppose

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God's people will be cut down and destroyed like Edom in verses 9-10.

b. **READ Verse 16**

i. Obadiah is using the metaphor of “the cup of God’s wrath” developed in a parallel passage from *Jeremiah 49:12-18 (READ)*

1. Bozrah was Edom’s capital, and this city would experience the same fate as Judah in 553 BC when Edom also fell to the Babylonians under Nabonidus.

4. **Reversal through Rule (READ Verses 19-21)**

a. While *verses 1-18* record what “The Sovereign Lord says”, these concluding verses appear to be Obadiah’s commentary regarding Israel’s restoration, which seems to point to more than just the two tribes of the Southern Kingdom, Judah and Benjamin. Rather, this appears to include the ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom already dispossessed by the Assyrians, and this inclusion, in turn, points to a greater worldwide restoration of “all Israel” that includes the Gentiles.

i. That *Verse 18* states “Jacob will be a fire” seems to imply that Israel, God’s People, will be the means of God’s judgment against Edom. That “Joseph [will be] a flame” seems to allude to all Twelve Tribes of Israel. “Joseph was a son of Jacob and father of Ephraim and Manasseh [whose] territories formed the core of the northern kingdom...” (Faithfile NIV Study Bible). The House of Joseph refers to the Northern Kingdom. Also, notice “people of Israel” (“Israelites” NIV) in *verse 20*. So there seems to be more to the restoration of just Judah and the territory of the Southern Kingdom in view here.

ii. James seems to have this view when he quotes *Amos 9:11-12* in Acts *15:13-19 (READ)*. James appears to reference the Greek/Septuagint version of Amos 9:11-

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12 in Acts 15:16-17 in a deliberate effort to broaden Edom to include all “mankind” (aka: all the peoples/nations/Gentiles) who seek God and bear His Name (thanks to Mike Heiser for these insights). The remnant of Edom, once God's enemies, is the remnant of humanity that will be called by God's name.

- b. “...Israel [takes] possession of the nearest disputed...or enemy territory.” This includes not only Edomite territory, but territory from the Philistines. Benjamin, mentioned in *verse 19*, was a tribe that occupied territory between Judah and Ephraim (north and south). While Benjamin is typically lumped in with the tribe of Judah making up the Southern Kingdom, here they possess Gilead which is across the Jordan to the northeast (Faithlife NIV Study Bible). So, God's People occupy southern territory up to the fields of Ephraim in the Northern Kingdom including Samaria, its capital. Additionally, in *verse 20*, Zarephath was a Phoenician coastal town in Sidon, and Sepharad could be Sardis in Western Asia Minor. The point? God's exiled people from all over, not just Babylon, will come and repossess all of what God has promised. While Babylon exiled Judah from the Land and while the Edomites gladly occupied some of the southern portions of it, Judah (“Jacob”/Israel/Gods' People) will regain rightful possession. Even more is that Jacob will rule the very mountain of Esau upon which Edom pridefully perched (**READ *verse 21***).
- i. “The mountains of Esau” also mentioned back in *verse 8*, means Edom, which had a mountainous terrain that the Edomites wisely, yet pridefully, believed ensured their safety. Another common name for Edom was Seir or Mount Seir according to Ezekiel in chapter 35.
- ii. While, God's People will be an instrument of judgment in *verse 18*, they also appear to be the ones described as “deliverers”, or “saviors”, in *verse 21*. So, while God's

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People bring judgment, they also bring deliverance from such judgment. I can't help but think of Acts 2 and Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles as "tongues of fire" and how the proclamation of the Gospel is both a proclamation of salvation for those who receive it and judgment for those who oppose it.

- c. Edom dispossessed Judah, but Judah will dispossess Edom; and not because of Judah's righteousness, but because of God's gracious faithfulness to His promise – and all for His glory. As long as Edom occupied the Land and as long as Judah remained in exile, God could not be seen by the world as the faithful and sovereign God He truly is. This must be reversed, and it will be through Divine Reckoning.
  - i. The truth is that God destined Edom to be ruled by Judah; therefore, God will sovereignly bring this about for His glory as the King of all the nations of the earth. And, God will do this according to His own time frame and in His own manner. Nevertheless, just because God, the Creator of all peoples, is not seen to be the Great King He truly is for His glory, does NOT mean He is not the Sovereign King in control. We must not be discouraged by our present circumstances; doubting that God is both sovereign and faithful. This is why God gave visions of prophetic revelation; to encourage His People and to assure them of His Sovereign Faithfulness despite their present unfavorable circumstances.

When our circumstances are inverted and opposed to what God has promised, we can trust in His Sovereign and Gracious Reversals. When God reverses the inverted and opposing nature of our circumstances according to His promises, then His Sovereign ability and

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willingness to fulfill His promises are realized by everyone for His glory. This is our present hope; because, we have seen God's Sovereign and Gracious Reversal in the Gospel of Jesus. The Father promised the Son that He would have a delightful inheritance with boundary lines fallen in pleasant places; that He would not abandon His Son to the realm of the dead to decay, but that the Son would be filled with joy and eternal pleasures at the Father's right hand (*Psalm 16:6, 10-11*). As Jesus hung on the Cross as the proclaimed Messiah, the Son of God, it appeared that either: 1) Jesus' claims as the Messiah were false, or that 2) Yahweh's promises to His Son had failed. But, in God's greatest gracious reversal ever, even after three days dead and in the tomb, Jesus was raised in a glorious body. He ascended into heaven as the Ruler of the World at the Father's right hand where He continues to reign in fulfillment of God's promise to His Son, the King of all Nations.

And, those of us who believe in this Good News are children of Abraham by our faith, and we are co-rulers of the world with Jesus as God promised. I understand that this seems contradictory to our present status in the world. But, it is all true, and, on that Day, we will be vindicated like Jesus was after three days in the tomb. We will be resurrected and ruling in glory with our King. Then, on that Day, God's Great and Gracious Gospel Reversal will be fully realized for all to see for our good and God's glory. Therefore, we, as Christians, can be assured that whoever curses us, God will curse; because, Christ's Kingdom of heaven will take over the earth. God has promised this, and He is a Sovereign, Good and Gracious God we can trust. AMEN.