

Obadiah 1:1–21 — Pride, Judgment, and the God Who Restores

1. Introducing Obadiah and His Message

We do not know for certain who Obadiah was, what family he came from, or exactly when he lived. Scripture does not tell us, and when the Bible is silent, our best guesses are still only guesses. What we do know is his name and his message.

The name Obadiah means “servant of the Lord” or “worshiper of the Lord.” God chose this unknown “worshiper of the Lord” to deliver a very strong word of judgment—not to Israel first, but to Edom, the descendants of Esau.

Obadiah’s prophecy shows us that:

- God sees how nations treat one another.
- God remembers how people treat His people.
- God will not ignore pride, cruelty, or indifference.

2. The Pride and Fall of Edom (Obadiah 1:1–9)

“The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom... ‘Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock... You who say in your heart, “Who will bring me down to the ground?”’”
Obadiah 1:1–3, NKJV

Edom descended from Esau, Jacob’s twin brother. The tension between those two brothers did not die with them. It continued in their descendants. Edom became a proud, hostile neighbor to Israel.

They lived in the rugged mountains south of the Dead Sea. One of their major cities was **Petra**, a city literally carved into the rock. High cliffs, narrow canyons, and easily defended passes made them feel untouchable. From that height and supposed safety, they said in their hearts, “Who will bring us down?”

God answered that question.

“Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” says the Lord. *Obadiah 1:4, NKJV*

They trusted in their geography, their fortresses, their alliances, and their wisdom. But the Lord warned that:

- Thieves might leave something behind.
- Harvesters might leave a few grapes.
- But the judgment coming on Edom would be thorough.

Their allies would betray them. Their wise men would be confused. Their warriors would be shattered. And in the end, they would disappear as a recognizable people.

History confirms this. The Edomites eventually vanished as a distinct nation. God's word came to pass.

3. Why Was Edom Judged? (Obadiah 1:10–14)

God is never unjust. He tells Edom precisely **why** they are being judged.

“For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.”
Obadiah 1:10, NKJV

Edom was related to Israel. Esau and Jacob were twin brothers. There was a natural bond that should have produced compassion, protection, and loyalty. Instead, Edom chose hatred.

When foreign armies attacked Jerusalem, Edom:

- Stood by and watched with satisfaction.
- Rejoiced over Judah's destruction.
- Plundered what was left.
- Blocked refugees at the crossroads.
- Handed survivors over to their enemies.

“You should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity... nor laid hands on their substance... nor stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped.” *Obadiah 1:12–14, NKJV*

They did not just fail to help; they actively took advantage of Israel's disaster. They joined in the violence, fueled by long-standing resentment and pride.

This is a sober warning for us as well: when God disciplines someone—even when they truly deserve His correction—we are not called to gloat, exploit, or pile on. God reserves discipline of His people for Himself. When we cheer for someone else's suffering, we put ourselves in a dangerous place.

4. The Principle of Sowing and Reaping (Obadiah 1:15–16)

Obadiah now places Edom's judgment in a larger frame: **the day of the Lord** and the moral order of God's universe.

“For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head.” *Obadiah 1:15, NKJV*

This is the spiritual law of sowing and reaping:

- What we do to others eventually comes back to us.
- What we plant in attitudes, words, and actions will bear fruit in our own lives.

Edom drank joyfully on God's holy mountain—celebrating Israel's collapse. But God says the nations who defy Him and abuse others will drink a different cup: the cup of His judgment.

“For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually... and they shall be as though they had never been.” *Obadiah 1:16, NKJV*

God is patient, but He is not indifferent. Sin is not ignored; it may be delayed, but it is never forgotten unless it is forgiven.

5. Hope, Restoration, and the Lord’s Kingdom (Obadiah 1:17–21)

After all this judgment language, the prophecy ends with hope—not for Edom, but for God’s people.

“But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” *Obadiah 1:17, NKJV*

Israel had often failed to possess all God had given them. The Lord had promised them territory and blessing, but unbelief, fear, and compromise kept them from entering into the fullness of His promises.

God now points to a future work of deliverance and restoration in Zion:

- Deliverance — God will rescue His people.
- Holiness — God will cleanse and set them apart for Himself.
- Possession — God’s people will finally enter into what God intended for them.

The prophecy looks forward to a time when:

- The house of Jacob is like a fire.
- The house of Esau is like stubble.
- The people of God inherit territory once held by their enemies.
- And above all:

“Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” *Obadiah 1:21, NKJV*

Ultimately, all of this points us forward to the day when God’s kingdom is fully revealed in and through Jesus Christ, the true King. All earthly kingdoms fade. Human pride collapses. But “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Practical Application

1. Beware of pride and false security.
Edom trusted in cliffs, fortresses, alliances, and wealth. We can trust in bank accounts, careers, health, education, or even our religious background. None of those can save us. Only the Lord can.
2. Do not rejoice in someone else’s pain.
Edom celebrated when Judah fell. They took advantage of a wounded people. God took that personally. When God disciplines others, our role is not to mock or exploit, but to pray, to show mercy, and to examine our own hearts.

3. Take seriously the principle of sowing and reaping.
“As you have done, it shall be done to you” is not just for Edom. Our choices matter. Bitterness, cruelty, and selfishness do not disappear into thin air; they come back in ways we may not expect. The same is true for kindness, mercy, and obedience.
4. Step into all that God has given you in Christ.
Israel failed to fully possess their inheritance. Many believers today live underneath what God has already provided in Jesus Christ—forgiveness, peace, spiritual growth, purpose, and hope. It is time to “possess your possessions” in Him, by faith and obedience.

A Challenge for Believers

Believer, let Obadiah search your heart.

- Is there someone you secretly enjoy seeing “brought low”?
- Are you harboring resentment like Edom did toward Jacob?
- Have you been content with partial obedience and partial inheritance, when God has so much more for you in Christ?
- Are you trusting more in your circumstances than in your Savior?

God calls you away from pride, bitterness, and passivity, and calls you into:

- Humility before Him
- Compassion toward others
- Active faith in His promises

Ask the Lord to show you where you have withheld forgiveness, where you have settled for less than He desires, and where you have been relying on your “high places” instead of His grace. Let Him bring you into deeper deliverance and holiness.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have not yet turned to Jesus Christ, Obadiah’s message is a warning and an invitation.

The warning is clear:

You cannot hide from God. Pride, cruelty, and rebellion will not stand forever. There is a day when “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s,” and every knee will bow, willingly or unwillingly.

But the invitation is even more powerful:

Jesus came to rescue you from the judgment your sins deserve.

He saved us when He shed His blood on the cross, bearing our guilt and our shame.

His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He alone can:

- Forgive your sins
- Cleanse your heart
- Give you a new life
- Bring you into God's family
- Give you an eternal inheritance in His kingdom

You do not have to end like Edom, cut off and empty. You can become part of God's redeemed people through Jesus Christ.

Scripture says:

"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:13, NKJV

If you turn to Him in faith—admitting your sin, trusting in His finished work on the cross, and surrendering to Him as Lord—He will receive you, forgive you, and give you new life.