

Obadiah

Original Historical Setting

Author: Obadiah

Written: Either ~845 B.C. or ~585 B.C.

Audience: Initially the descendants of Esau (Edomites) who lived on Mt. Seir. Ultimately the descendants of Jacob (Israelites).

Occasion: Practically brothers to the Israelites, instead of helping Israel through the ages, they were a cause of constant grief including helping the Babylonians ransack Jerusalem rather than help defend Israel.

Timeline:

605 BC – Babylon invades Judah and takes captives

597 BC – Babylon suppresses Judean rebellion and takes more captives

586 BC – Babylon destroys Jerusalem

World Events that occur simultaneously

600 B.C. – Temples to Zeus and other gods built on Olympia

551 B.C. – Confucius born (according to tradition)

Features and Structure

- Obadiah, being the shortest prophetic book does not have any chapters, only 21 verses
- **Outline**
 - 1-14** –Edom’s sins against God’s people
 - 15-16** –God’s judgment against Edom
 - 17-21** –God’s blessings on Israel

Key text(s)

4 – Though you soar like the eagle

12 – You should not look down on your brother

15 – As you have done, it will be done to you

Genre/Literary style

Prophecy written in Hebrew poetry

What to look for

- Obadiah, Jonah and Nahum are the only prophetic books addressed specifically to an audience outside of God’s people
- There is great similarity between verses 1-9 and Jeremiah 49:7-22. Obadiah and Jeremiah may have been contemporaries and it is possible there was some collaboration...although Jeremiah wrote the longest prophetic book and Obadiah the shortest.

Interesting facts

- There was continuous animosity between the Israelites (Jacob’s descendants) and the Edomites (descendants of Jacob’s twin brother, Esau).
- Esau eventually settled in the land of Seir. Interestingly, Seir is similar to the Hebrew word for “hairy” which is also the meaning of “Esau.”
- Edom was famous for its wise men. One of Job’s well-educated friends was from Edom.
- Obadiah means “Servant of the LORD.” This could either be his personal name or a title. Even though there are at least a dozen Obadias in the Bible, we don’t know anything about the author of this book, not even his father’s name.
- In the 5th century B.C. the Edomites were forced by the Nabateans to leave their territory and settle in southern Palestine and came to be known as Idumeans. Herod the Great (the supposed “king of the Jews” was an Idumean. The enmity between Esau’s descendants and Jacob’s descendants was, in a sense, continued in Herod’s attempt to murder the infant Jesus.

Memory Verse: Obadiah 4