

# Discovering the God of Second Chances

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## **What Should God Do with Those Who Sin?**

God uses different ways to get our attention when we sin. Sometimes God sends another person to us in love to help us see our error and correct our ways. Sometimes He uses less comfortable circumstances to expose our sin in embarrassing ways. Sometimes He delivers a rebuke through His Word as we read God's message and the Holy Spirit quickens our spirit, reproving and correcting us.

Often God used Israel's enemies to show the nation and its kings their sin. But according to the prophet Zechariah, whoever came against Israel, whoever touched Israel, touched the apple of God's eye. Thus God judged nations who afflicted Israel. God might temporarily afflict Israel by another nation, but He also protected Israel in the long term by judging that nation, stopping it in its tracks.

God delivered a message through Obadiah. Will we listen to that message and let it ring in our ears and pierce our hearts? Will we see the love God has for Israel and the justice He imposes on those who harm the one He loves?

### **DAY ONE**

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Obadiah is a short book—just 21 verses. Although prophecy can be complicated, this message isn't; the subject is clear. Quickly read through the book to get the flavor of the message. Then go back and read verse 1 and note who has the vision, what the vision is about, and whom Obadiah is addressing.

Before we do any more in Obadiah, you should understand who Edom is and what its relationship to Israel is. Read the following passages and in a separate notebook, summarize what you learn about Edom: Genesis 25:20-34; 27:1–28:9; Numbers 20:14-21; Deuteronomy 2:1-8,12; 1 Kings 11:14-17; 22:45-47; 2 Kings 8:16-22; Romans 9:10-13; Hebrews 12:15-17.

## DAY TWO

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Today, read through Obadiah again, marking every reference to *Edom* or *Esau*. As you read and mark key words and phrases in the Word of God, keep focused by asking questions and letting the text give you the answers. Be an investigator—ask Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? We call these the 5 W's and an H questions. They help you find truth that is there. Marking key words will help you see God's emphasis on people, places, and ideas. Use a symbol or color to distinctively mark each key word. Genesis 25:25 and 30 give a pretty good idea of what color to mark *Esau* and *Edom*.

In your notebook, list what you learn in Obadiah about Edom. Listing what you observe is a good technique to summarize and crystallize what you learn. Writing also helps seal truths in your memory. How does this description of Edom compare to what you saw in the cross references yesterday? Verse 7 speaks of allies and those at peace. Read the following and note which nations have been allies or at peace with Edom at various times: 1 Samuel 14:47; 2 Samuel 8:11-14; 2 Kings 3:5-27; 1 Chronicles 18:9-13.

## DAY THREE

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You'll find several key words and phrases that show you clearly what the message of Obadiah is about, so mark them to help you see the message. To help you remember what to mark and how, make a bookmark from an index card. Write the words and mark them on the card. This will also help you keep track when you mark the same words or phrases elsewhere in the Bible. As you observe and mark, remember to ask the 5 W's and an H questions.

Read Obadiah again, and mark any references to God speaking such as *Thus says the Lord*, or *declares the Lord*, references to *Jacob*, and references to *the nations*. Choose a different color or marking symbol for each. Jacob is Israel, so mark both blue, the color of the star of David in Israel's flag. Be sure to mark synonymous references to Jacob besides Israel. One way to mark *the nations* is to color it green and underline in brown. *The nations* refers to Gentiles—any nation other than Israel.

## DAY FOUR

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Today read through Obadiah and mark *that day* and *the day of the Lord*, which are key in much of

prophecy. If you don't know how to color it, color it pink with an orange box. Make sure you include any pronouns or synonyms used for the day of the Lord.

This phrase answers a "when" kind of question, but not by setting a specific date. The time phrase *the day* is quite different from *that day*. *That day* speaks of a future event, while *the day of his/their destruction, distress, or disaster* in verses 11-14 speaks of a past event. Mark the phrase *the day of* in these verses differently from the way you mark *that day*. This will help you understand the context of Obadiah's message. What does the Lord say He will do to Edom? What or whom will God use against Edom? When will this happen?

Among the things God declares He will destroy are the "wise men" and "understanding." Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. How would you compare these verses to Obadiah 8-9?

## DAY FIVE

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Read through Obadiah one more time, and this time mark any reference to *Mount Zion* or *My holy mountain*.

Now that you've read Obadiah and marked key words and phrases, let's see what truths we can glean from all your hard work. Make a list of the offenses of Esau/Edom. The wording might sound like it points to the future, but God is reviewing what Edom has already done. What did God tell Edom not to do?

Also read Jeremiah 49:7-22 and record your insights. This cross-reference will show you that God didn't bring a message about Edom through only one prophet. What similar phrases do you see? Note the verb tenses of Jeremiah 49:10,15.

What did God promise Mount Zion in contrast to the mountain of Esau? To whom does Mount Zion refer?

## DAY SIX

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Read Obadiah 10-14 again. Be sure you have noted and perhaps underlined each *do not* phrase and each *in the day of* phrase. Verse 11 says that "strangers" carried off Jacob's wealth and that Edom stood aloof as "foreigners" entered Jerusalem's gates. The text does not clearly state when this took place, and commentators are divided. However, despite the uncertainty we have about the dating of the events in Obadiah 10-14, is there any uncertainty in verse 10?

What does this say about the certainty of verse 8, even if we don't know that date either? In other words, what understanding, what principle, can we learn from the phrase *declares the Lord*?

When we read, study, and meditate on God's Word, how should we take it—as stories, suggestions, ethical principles rooted in fables? What do you say?

What does God promise Israel?

In light of all you have studied in this short prophecy, what do you think is the central theme (message)? Record it on OBADIAH AT A GLANCE on page 25.

You'll also see on OBADIAH AT A GLANCE a place to record the themes of the three paragraphs of Obadiah. Determining the main idea in each paragraph and recording it on the AT A GLANCE chart will help you remember the message later when you come back to Obadiah.

The additional chart THE DAY OF THE LORD on pages 26–27 is taken from the *New Inductive Study Bible*. If you record what you learn about the Day of the Lord from Obadiah there and add to it as you study Joel and Amos, you'll have the start of a great topical study of that important prophetic day.

## DAY SEVEN

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Store in your heart: Obadiah 21

Read and discuss: Obadiah 1-21; Matthew 25:31-33

### ***QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY***

- What did Edom do that displeased God?
- What did God say He would do to Edom?
- What will happen in the day of the Lord?
- In what way can we apply this lesson about Edom to our own dealings with Israel?
- How do you think God will deal with nations that behave in the way Edom did? With individuals? How certain is God's justice?
- What kind of relationship to Israel pleases God? How do you view Israel?
- How do the warnings God gives to Edom apply to us today? What is God saying about behavior toward His people? What is God saying to you and how you act toward His people?
- What do you think the Lord's *attitude* is toward arrogance directed to Him and His Word? What is His *response*?

## ***THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK***

Esau was Jacob's twin brother. While they were still in the womb, God declared that the elder would serve the younger, and what God said came to pass as it always does. Consequently, although Esau was Isaac's firstborn, Esau despised his birthright and sold it to Jacob for a single meal. Later, Jacob deceived Isaac and secured for himself the blessing intended for Esau. While many get stuck on Jacob's methods, the important point is that God said the older would serve the younger, and that's exactly what happened.

If this order was God's decree, Esau should not have been jealous, envious, angry, or malicious toward Jacob. Nor should he have had these attitudes toward God. Esau (Edom) should not have gloated over Jacob's (Israel's) misfortune or in any way participated in the evil that others directed toward Jacob. Jacob, whose name God later changed to Israel, was God's chosen heir to His original promise to Abraham and Isaac. Nothing Esau thought, felt, said, or did would change the truth that God chose Jacob over Esau, because God Himself, not man, chose Jacob. Isaac didn't, Rebekah didn't, and Jacob didn't. God did.

But Esau (Edom) did not accept that truth. The nation of Edom stood by while others plundered Jacob, and then Edom gloated over Jacob's losses and looted and enslaved its remnant (survivors). For this, God would judge Edom. No amount of confidence in their safety, no amount of arrogance would prevent the judgment of God. Judgment for Esau and vindication for Jacob were equally certain.

If a man acts like Esau, seeking revenge for a perceived offense, can he be sure he's right? Can he be sure what has occurred is not part of God's plan to refine us, to shape us, to mold us into the image of Christ?

Think about the injustice of Jesus' death on the cross. He committed no crime and never sinned. But it was according to God's plan. Should Jesus have reviled Jewish or Roman authorities?

In the end, God will judge those who act as Esau did against Israel (as we saw in Obadiah). They act against God, and God will cause the end to be just.

So it is with you and me and everyone else. Justice from God will be the result. Anyone who acts *against* the Word of God will be judged *by* the Word of God (John 12:48). Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. God will be perfectly just. Each of us is accountable before God, and each nation is accountable before God. The day of the Lord is a day of judgment, a day of reckoning, a day of recompense, a day of justice. The wicked will be laid low, and the righteous will be exalted.

God will judge the "brother" of Israel for participating in destroying Israel. The "brother" of Israel who gloats over Israel's misfortunes, who arrogantly stands aloof in their day of trouble and does not lend a hand, will be consumed.

Obadiah's message presents three points to consider, three questions for you to answer for yourself: How do I respond when things don't go the way I think they should? How do I respond to

events in Israel's life? And how does God deal with sin?

Your answer to the first question may well determine your answer to the second. Your answer to the third should guide your answers to the first two. "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye'" (Zechariah 2:8).

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