

Obadiah

Obadiah is the shortest “book” in the Old Testament, although in the Hebrew Bible it was grouped along with the other 11 shorter prophets into one book, the Book of The Twelve. The prophet’s name means “servant of YaHWeH/Jehovah,” a name shared by other characters in the Old Testament.

Obadiah’s theme is judgment upon Edom, the heirs of Esau. The prophecy appears to have been delivered in about 586 B.C. shortly after Jerusalem was destroyed (v11-14) and reflects the cruel profiteering of the men Esau, plundering the remains after the Babylonian reconquest, capturing refugees to sell as slaves, occupying territory recently evacuated by the Jews, and generally being haughty, cruel, and utterly selfish. A couple of phrases in Obadiah are also found in Jeremiah, suggesting proximity in times and circumstances (v5-6, Jeremiah 49:9-10). The doom of Edom wasn’t far off, with their own conquest and Babylonian exile occurring about 5 years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

V15-21 move beyond the mere consequences upon a nation for its sins to the grand scheme seen over and over again in the prophets of God judging all the nations on the “day of the LORD” and bringing salvation to those who take refuge on Mt. Zion. Not the geographic Zion overrun by the Babylonians, but the celestial mountain of God. Notice the repetition of the word “possess” in v19-20 (rendered both possess and occupy in the NIV). This is fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 15:7, 22:17) and no doubt the “saviors” in v21 are those who bring good news (gospel) in Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15.