

Obadiah

Obadiah 1-21

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2020-01-05

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I. Introduction - the danger of pride mixed with bitterness

About a month ago I read a mini-history of family feuds in America, and was astonished at how many bloody feuds our country has had. I heard about them in Scotland and I heard about the Hatfields and the McCoys (who hasn't heard about them?). But the huge number of clan feuds in Scotland and the huge number of family feuds in America that actually escalated into murder is astonishing. And we are not talking about the family feuds between gangs, or factions of the Mafia, or other criminals. This history just dealt with the respectable ones - the 14 major feuds and range wars in the West and the respectable clan feuds in the Appalachian region. Anyway, as I read through those histories it dawned on me that there were two things that all of these feuds had in common - pride and bitterness. Those two sins can destroy an individual and can be passed on from generation to generation.

Well, Obadiah addresses a longstanding feud that had been going on between Edom and Israel for centuries. And surprisingly, that feud started 1,250 years earlier (1836-586 BC) - at least on my dating of the book to 586 BC.¹ There is debate on the dating, but I totally agree with those who date it to 586 BC. It may well be the second longest non-stop feud in history. I think the longest ones are the feuds in the Middle East between the Arabs.

By calling the nation of Edom "Esau" six times (vv. 6,8,9,18,19,21) and by calling Israel "Jacob," Obadiah wants us to understand that the hatred that the Edomites showed to Israel in 586 BC can trace its history all the way back to the pride and bitterness of Esau in Genesis 25 - 1250 years earlier. Let me give you some of the scattered details of how this happened.

Isaac and Rebekah conceived non-identical twins in Genesis 25. And verse 22 of that chapter says that the two boys were already fighting with each other in the womb. Rebekah wondered why the constant wrestling, so she asked God what was going on. God told her that these two boys would produce two nations that would be constantly vying for dominance. Esau was born first and was called "Esau" (which means hairy) because he was covered with red hair so thick that it completely covered his entire body like

¹ See appendix A

a hairy garment (v. 25). And because his hair was red, he was also called Edom. As soon as Jacob came out, he grabbed Esau by the heel. So they called him Jacob, which means “One Who Takes the Heel,” but is an idiom for Supplanter or Deceiver. Already the character of these two people was being prophetically lined out.

You would think that the parents would take seriously their job of disciplining their children out of their sinful tendencies. But sadly, each parent played favorites with one of the boys and coddled them. Esau was Isaac’s daddy’s boy who could do no wrong and Jacob became Rebekah’s mommy’s boy. And they both knew that they were loved less by the other parent - and it set up further resentment. Favoritism generally does that.

Genesis 25 then sets up Esau’s present-oriented selling of a distant birthright for a bowl of soup while he was presently hungry. Though Esau didn’t care about his birthright on that particular day, a later chapter shows that he resented the fact that Jacob had taken advantage of his hunger. Just because he was willing to make the trade when he was hungry does not mean there was no resentment. He didn’t forget about it.

Later Jacob deceived his dad and robbed Esau of his blessing. Genesis 27:41 shows that this was the last straw for Esau and he vowed to get even by killing Jacob. To be willing to kill his brother shows the incredible depth to which bitterness had already been allowed to take root. And the bitterness mentioned in verse 34 leads to hatred and murder in the heart in verse 41. People do not outgrow these sins. Time does not heal all wounds. If you do not look to God’s grace to crucify pride and bitterness, those two sins will grow into monsters that get completely out of control. Hebrews 12:14-15 uses Esau’s bitterness as a warning that we must crucify these sins. It says,

Heb. 12:14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...

The root of bitterness that sprang up in Esau defiled many people. Scripture is quite clear that Esau passed on this antipathy for Jacob to his descendants, so that the Edomites became a symbol of the world that fights against God’s people. And what an amazing symbol it becomes in the book of Obadiah.

Now, I will hasten to say that not all of Esau’s descendants shared in his pride and bitterness. And that is encouraging. We saw in the book of Job that Job was a descendant of Esau and was very humble and godly. He threw off the negative poison that had been passed on. So its not a foregone conclusion that kids have to be like their parents. But it does seem like the

two sins of pride and bitterness kept stirring up conflict for hundreds of years. Just type in the words Esau and Edom into your computer concordance and you will see that it was a continuing saga of hatred no matter how much the Israelites tried to reach out and bridge the gap.

And they did do so a number of times. Though the Narrated Bible gets the chronology wrong, their thematic contrast between Israel's feeding and clothing their enemy soldiers and sending the soldiers back by returning good for evil and then introducing the book of Obadiah is a powerful contrast. At least thematically I think that is appropriate, but it is not in the right order.

In any case, there are many examples of Israel trying to stop the feud with Edom. In fact, Jacob tried to pacify Esau when he came back to Canaan. And I will skip over their unsuccessful attempts to get together. I'll just give a sampling of Scriptures from later history that shows that this feud persisted. I believe that Obdiah expects his readers to already have an understanding of this history before they read the book. So let me give just a few highlights.

198 years after Jacob died you would think that the Edomites would have totally forgotten about Israel - especially since Israel was in Egypt - far, far away. But the stories that get passed on from generation to generation can keep the bitterness going - just like some people today are ready to get into a fight if you disagree over the war between the States. When I went to Covenant College, I had just come from Canada, and I had no idea that people still fought over the War Between the States. But I found out very quickly that this spirit that generates feuds is still at work at a deeply emotional level. Christians were ready to get into fist fights over it. And there may be some who hear this sermon that will object to me calling it the War Between the States - which is a partial agreement with at least the concept of secession, even though I think there were faults on both sides.

So what happened 198 years after the death of Jacob? The Exodus of Israel out of Egypt happened (1689-1491 BC). Interestingly, Exodus 15:15 says that Edom was dismayed that Israel had escaped from slavery in Egypt. Why would they be dismayed? Why would they even care? You would think that anyone would be glad that a people got rescued out of slavery. It's a cool story. It's a heart warming story. But even though this was 198 years after Jacob and Esau had died, the descendants of Esau didn't want anything good to happen to Israel. It bothered Edom that Israel had gotten out of slavery. It's a feud mentality.

In Numbers 20, Moses asked the king of Edom if he could pass through the

country and promised that they would stick to the main road and wouldn't violate anything and would pay for what they needed. The king absolutely refused and threatened war if he tried.

In Numbers 24:18 God promised that Israel would one day possess all the territory of Edom. But that would not be through most of its history. It would be in the latter days - latter days that Obadiah refers to. In the meantime God's instructions were to try not to antagonize Edom. He said,

4 "You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. 5 Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. (Deut. 2:4-5) So Israel tries to be real sensitive to Edom and tries not to antagonize. They offer to be friends and brothers. No deal. Edom refuses.

Count forward another 339 years and you come to Jephthah (counting from 1491 to 1152 BC). Jephthah was astonished at the feud resentment and hostility that was still being exhibited by Edom, Moab, and Ammon against Israel. Jephthah asks Ammon why they are invading, and the king of Ammon hotly replies that Israel had taken their land away more than 300 years ago. 300 years ago?! Well, it was still a hot issue for him. By the way, Jephthah shows that the king of Ammon had his history wrong. And that is many times the case in these feuds - different versions of history. But the effect of his bad history produced the same hatred for Israel that Edom had. And in trying to stop Ammon's aggression, Jephthah recites the history of how respectful Israel had been to Ammon, Moab, and Edom and how Israel had tried to reach out to them and to be friends and had not doing anything against them. In effect he said, "Look, we are brothers." But if you have bitterness and pride, you will be blind to the attempts of others to stop the feud and to reach out in conciliation. And throughout Israel's history, Edom had been a major problem.

Amos 1:11 castigates Edom for past cruelty, saying, "For three transgressions and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." That in a nutshell was the problem with this clan warfare between brothers - He kept his wrath forever. Unresolved anger guarantees defilement. That's why Paul warns us, "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." If you nurse the anger and the grudge, you are on the path of these two brothers. Anger that continues day after day and week after week shows that there is something wrong with your heart. Don't excuse it by all the bad that's been done to you. Jacob had done plenty

of bad to Esau, but Esau allowed the bad to control his heart. You can't let the evil done to you control you.

Anyway, back to Obadiah. In Obadiah, the exile had just happened, and Edom watched from a distance with glee as Israel was being reduced to rubble. And then they dove in to share in the spoils. In fact, Edom encouraged Babylon that they were not being tough enough; they needed to be tougher. And when Babylon seemed like it didn't care, Edom helped out to make sure they cared. Rather than letting refugees escape, they either killed them or handed them over to the Babylonians. This was when Psalm 137 was written. That Psalm remembers the mocking and remembers Edom's cheering. Verse 7 says,

Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, "Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!"

Though Judah was evil, it had done nothing to Edom to warrant such hatred. But all of this bitterness sprang from past history. And this is why Obadiah singles Edom out for a special judgment from God. They had pridefully sided with Babylon, little realizing that Babylon would turn on them within a few years and destroy them as a kingdom. I know that was a long introduction, but it is critical background for understanding this book.

II. Overview of the book

Let me give you a brief overview of the book before making some applications. You will notice from the outline that the book is once again patterned after the common Hebrew chiasmic form of abcdcba. But it is a chiasm with forward movement in terms of timetable, and it is a contrastive parallelism.

Outline of Obadiah	Timing
Introduction (v. 1a) A covenant lawsuit by the sovereign Lord	586 BC
A Proud Edom will be defeated by the nations (vv. 1-4)	Nebuchadnezzar 580 BC
B Edom will be completely plundered by its former allies (vv. 5-7)	Nabonidus 552
C Edom's population will be slaughtered (vv. 8-9)	552
D The 10-Fold indictment of Edom (vv. 10-14)	Overall opposition 586-AD 70
C' Edom and the nations will be judged completely (vv. 15-16)	536
B' Israel will regain what it had lost and will plunder Edom (vv. 17-18)	500ff
A' Humbled Israel will be victorious over the surrounding nations (vv. 19-21)	167 BC-AD 70
Conclusion (v. 21b) A day when the kingdom will be the Lord's	AD 70

Verse 1 is almost identical to Jeremiah's words against Edom in Jeremiah 49:14. Who-quoted-whom is a debate. It may be that Obadiah is the messenger sent among the nations and Jeremiah refers to him or it may be

that Obadiah quotes Jeremiah. But in the first four verses the pride of Edom that Jeremiah hugely expands upon will be contrasted in the last part of the chiasm with the future humbled Israel who would be allowed by God to conquer Edom. God resists the proud in the first A of the chiasm and gives grace to the humble in the second A. So it is a contrasting parallelism. Though Edom's pride was abominable to God, God used that pride to humble Israel and purify Israel. So He brings good out of even this evil. That's one of the things that helps us to not get bitter even when evil people don't get what they deserve - we know God is bringing good into our lives through it.

Verses 5-7 are the second part of the chiasm, and they deal with how Edom was completely blindsided by its allies and fooled into complacency and ended up being plundered by its former allies - about six years later actually. This is contrasted in the second B section (verses 17-18) with how Israel would regain what it had lost and would plunder Edom in the distant future, leaving no survivors within its borders.

The first C section of the chiasm (verses 8-9) shows the slaughter of Edom and the second C section shows the slaughter of the nations that had sided with Edom.

The central D section (verses 10-14) is a 10-fold indictment of Edom. And since it is the heart of the book, I want to spend more time on that. If Obadiah was a referee in a football game, he would be giving 10 fouls here. Let's read that section on why God said that the whole deal was unfair. Starting at verse 10.

The first foul was needless violence. God is not against all violence, but He is definitely against needless violence. Verse 10 says, ““For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.”” Edom was related by blood, but they had still engaged in violence against Israel.

Foul two - Identifying with Babylon when there was no requirement to do so. They were meddling in a fight that was not theirs. This can be seen in the first phrase of verse 11: “In the day that you stood on the other side...” In other words, the other side of the battle. Commentators point out that this was a hostile standing, not a neutral observing. Edom was not required to join the fight, but they did. For their own gain they entered into league with Babylon.

Foul three - profiting from Israel's pain. Verse 11 goes on to say, “In the day

that strangers carried captive his forces, when foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem — even you were as one of them.” Whatever demerits there were in Babylon’s imperialistic war with Judah, they were at least at war. Edom had absolutely no reason to be involved. They were like vultures swooping in to take advantage as lots were cast for slaves and for plunder in Jerusalem.

Foul four - Gloating over Judah’s suffering. The first phrase in verse 12 says, “But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity.” Ten translations render the word for “gazed” as gloated. It is gazing with a sense of satisfaction and smugness that Judah got what she deserved. Well, Judah did get what she deserved. So why is God punishing Edom for finding satisfaction in that? I believe it was Edom’s prideful motives. There was no zeal for God’s law or God’s glory in this gloating. It was self-satisfaction that the competitor has been taken out. It was revenge stroking their bitterness.

Related to this is foul five - celebrating Israel’s defeat. They didn’t just gloat, but they danced on the grave (so to speak). Verse 12 goes on to say, " Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction." Why is this a problem when Israel deserved it? Well, the book of Lamentations tells us why. Lamentations was the godly man’s response to that same catastrophe. Jeremiah fully admits that Judah deserved what God had given to her, but it still made him sad that they had not returned to God. It did not make him dance on their graves or rejoice in their slavery. He wept. Proverbs 24:17 says, “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles.” Scripture calls us to be saddened by such sinful wars, not to rejoice in them.

Foul six - Speaking proudly or arrogantly at Israel’s fall. The last clause of verse 12 says, “Nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.” Pride was at the heart of Edom’s bad attitudes, and it implied that they were better than Judah when in reality they were not. They were worse. But prideful people rarely recognize sin in themselves. They can clearly see sin in others, but not in themselves. And this is not the only place that pride is mentioned.

Foul seven - Entering where they did not belong. Verse 13 says, “You should not have entered the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction in the day of their calamity.” Why would this be a foul? Because it was not their war. They were piling on.

Foul eight - taking plunder. If the previous points are true, then it was not Edom's place to plunder Israel. So verse 13 goes on to say, "Nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity." If it was not lawfully their war, it is not lawfully their plunder.

Foul nine - Cutting off the only way of escape for civilian refugees. Verse 14 says, "You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped." Several commentators say that the word "cut off" refers to killing refugees who were trying to leave the country. Since it was not their war, they were guilty of murder.

Foul ten - enslaving people after Babylon had left. The NKJV does not bring out this meaning very well, but the word for "delivered up" means to put someone in a cage or to imprison. So even after Babylon had left the area, Edom was taking advantage of helpless people left behind and imprisoning them; perhaps putting them into slavery. So those warnings really constitute the heart of the book. And they are verses we ought to pay attention to since pride and bitterness are native to every human heart.

Because there are so many opinions on the dates of each section, I want to date them for you. I have worked hard at making sure every clue is taken into account, and you can find commentators who agree with each of these dates. But I'm not going to try to prove them; I'm just going to give you my conclusions.

Verses 1-4 prophesy a judgment that is not as severe. You cannot lump all of these paragraphs together as so many people do. For example, later paragraphs speak of total annihilation (not one survivor), whereas verse 2 speaks only of making Edom much smaller in power than it currently was. They are clearly different judgments. This one happened within six years of Jerusalem's fall, and it happened under Nebuchadnezzar in his campaign against Tyre. Edom was conquered and subjected. But Babylon was fairly generous with them. They continued to exist. They just didn't have independence. So I have put 580 BC beside verses 1-4.

Verses 5-9 deal with a slaughter that would take place in 552 under Nabonidus, a later emperor of Babylon.

Because verses 10-14 are the heart of the book, it covers all the dates of the book. It deals with God's opposition to Edom covering the entire period. So verses 10-14 predict perpetual opposition that the Edomites will receive until they are annihilated - or as verse 10 words it, until they are "cut off forever." So this covers everything from 586 BC all the way up to AD 70,

when the last surviving Edomites were killed. But it starts during the Babylonian empire.

The next section predicts the end of the Babylonian empire itself. Verse 15 makes a transition to when all the nations in the Babylonian empire will come under judgment. This is probably a reference to Cyrus' conquering of Babylon and the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire in 536 BC.

Verse 17 shows that Israel would re-occupy all of Israel and all of the region of the Edomites during the Persian time. This is a reference to the times of Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Post-Exilic Prophets. So you can put 500 BC next to verse 17.

17 "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

To possess your possessions involves a lot of hard work and sacrifice. But they are not possessing someone else's possessions; they are possessing the possessions that God had stewarded them with, and thus it was done in holiness. And the post-exilic community was very successful. In the decades and centuries following that, the remainder of Obadiah was fulfilled.

Beginning at verse 18:

18 The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau," For the LORD has spoken.

Malachi 1:3-5 says that in his future the Edomites would continue to be a problem. But no matter how many times they tried to rebuild, God would tear them down. In the third and second centuries BC the Edomites were called Idumeans. 2 Maccabees records a Seleucid general who was the governor of Idumea. Judas Maccabeus conquered their territory in 163 BC. Because of the continued hostility of the Edomites (or the Idumeans), a later governor, John Hyrcanus forcibly converted them in 125 BC and incorporated them into Judaism and into the Jewish nation. But forcible conversions don't work really well. Much later Herod was one of these Idumean converts who professed to believe in Judaism but who was really an unbeliever and who really continued the hatred between Edom and God's people. But if you trace the history of the Idumeans, you see a perfect fulfillment of verses 19-21 in the years from the Maccabees up to AD 70, when the last of the Idumeans was killed. Verses 19-21:

19 The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, And the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim And the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20 And the captives of this host of the children of Israel Shall possess the land of the Canaanites As far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad Shall possess the cities of the South. 21 Then saviors shall come to

Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau,
The Hebrew word for “saviors” simply means deliverers - such as military leaders. From the Maccabees on, Edom was ruled by Israel for the rest of its history until every Edomite was killed off in the siege of Jerusalem, of AD 70. In fact, the Idumeans were a main reason why the whole city of Jerusalem perished. They were a major thorn in the flesh right up to the end. But the bulk of these verses refers to the heirs of the Maccabeans possessing their possessions.

So it is not surprising that when Edom ends, the kingdom is declared to be the Lord’s. Since Edom is repeatedly used as a symbol of the world that is passing away, the first century kingdom of Christ is such an appropriate place to have this statement: “And the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.” It’s the only Messianic statement in the whole book, and it refers to either AD 30, or more likely, to AD 70,² when the last of the Edomites was killed. But either way, it is a reference to the world losing out to Christ’s kingdom. It’s a great way to end the book.

III. Take home lessons on Obadiah

Let me end my sermon by giving you five further applications from this book.

A. Treat bitterness as a dangerous characteristic (Acts 8:22-23; Rom. 3:14; Eph. 4:31; Heb. 12:15)

One of the first lessons that the New Testament teaches us from the life of Esau and Edom is the danger of nursing bitterness in our hearts. Hebrews 12:15 tells us that if we have the bitterness that Esau had, it has the potential of doing four things to us. And those four things are so scary that they should convince us that bitterness is not worth holding onto.

First, it makes us fall short of God’s grace. All by itself, that ought to convince us that it is simply not worth holding onto. We need God’s grace, but Hebrews 12:15 says that bitterness always makes us fall short of God’s grace.

Second, it grows or springs up like a noxious plant. It never stays static. If we don’t kill it, it will grow until it kills our spirit.

Third, it causes trouble. Obviously other people are troubled by our bitterness, but it troubles our soul as well. It is likened to a poison.

² See appendix B.

And fourth, it spreads to others and defiles many people. If you don't want clan warfare, nip bitterness in the bud. If you don't want permanent alienation from generation to generation, nip bitterness in the bud. Esau and Edom are a warning to all of us.

Of course, this means that you need to cry out to God because bitterness is indigenous to every heart. Even as a pastor I have had to fight against bitterness in my own heart and put it to death. Romans 3:14 describes the natural man as having a mouth full of cursing and full of bitterness. You might not think of yourself as having bitterness, but Romans says that bitterness is our natural state, and if you are not working against it, it is probably there. So if it is part and parcel of the natural man, it takes supernatural grace to get rid of it. And being in the church is not enough. Peter baptized Simon Magus into the church and then quickly realized that his heart was not right with God. He told him, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." (Acts 8:22-23) Wow! Poisoned by bitterness right in the church. And because he never got rid of his bitterness, church history tells us that Simon Magus became the leader of a destructive anti-Christian cult. Your first lesson from Esau is that you must put off bitterness and coach your children to put off bitterness.

B. God hates pride (vv. 2-4; James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5) and is able to abase the proud (Dan. 4:37; Obadiah 4)

The second lesson from Obadiah is that God hates pride and opposes it wherever he sees it. James 4:6 says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." This means that we ought to take pride much more seriously than we tend to. It is a mortal enemy to our souls that always guarantees that God resists us. How do we get rid of pride? Well, first, we need to recognize it. Proudful people rarely recognize that they are proud. Pride deceives. Obadiah 3 says, "The pride of your heart has deceived you." It took a powerful work of God in my heart before I even began recognizing my pride let alone crucifying it - and that was after I had been a pastor for years. It's deceitful; it pulls the wool over our eyes. Such pride can destroy you. Think of it. You already have the world, the flesh, and the devil against you. But if you have God resisting you too, you have no hope. Ask God to expose your pride and to help you to put it to death. You don't want to turn out like Esau, and you don't want your descendants to turn out like Edom.

This is a book that exposes God's war on pride. Verse 4 says, "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." He brings down prideful people.

C. The laws of harvest guarantee that you reap what you sow (v. 15)

Third, the laws of harvest guarantee that you will reap what you sow. Verse 15 words it, "As you have done, it shall be done to you." The whole book shows that Edom reaped what it sowed.

Repentance can reverse the degree to which we reap a bad harvest, but it never wipes out 100% of the bad harvest. That is the key thing to remember. And it ought to make us less cavalier about sin, repentance, and forgiveness. Too many people think, "Aah, no big deal. I'll ask forgiveness of God." Yeah, you'll be forgiven, but you'll still have to put up with a lousy harvest. Though God forgave David of his sin with Bathsheba, he still reaped a harvest. It was a reduced harvest from what it could have been, but this is one of the unalterable laws of harvest - you do reap what you sow, and you always reap a multiplied increase. It ought to motivate us to pursue holiness.

D. Benefiting from the evils of others makes you "as one of them" (v. 11)

Verse 11 gives another lesson. It indicates that benefiting from the evils of others makes you "as one of them." This is why Scripture didn't allow the temple to receive a tithe from the labors of a prostitute. Benefiting from that sin not only endorsed the sin, but God says that it makes you implicated in that sin.

E. Edom stands as a symbol of the world. Edom's complete passing away in AD 70 symbolizes the fact that the world is passing away (1 John 2:17)

The last lesson is an encouraging one. Since Edom stands as a symbol of the world, Edom's passing away stands as a symbol that Christ will gain the victory in time and in history. He actively fights against the world so that His kingdom will eventually triumph. But it doesn't happen overnight. It was gradual. total annihilation of Edom symbolizes the total triumph of Christ.

And what was true of this symbol is true of related symbols that symbolize the world. Let me quickly list three.

- Genesis 3:15 speaks of the enmity between the two seeds - the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. And who wins? Jesus does. He not only crushes the head of

the serpent, but eventually converts the world.

- A second symbol of the world is the struggle between Isaac and Ishmael in Genesis 21:9-11 and Galatians 4:29-30. And who triumphs? Ishmael is disinherited and the sons receive the inheritance. In other words, Christ's kingdom will eventually win and the meek shall inherit the earth.
- The third symbol of the world is the Amalekites in Exodus 17:14, Numbers 24:20, and Deuteronomy 25:19. They too had an irrational bitterness against Israel. But who wins? God does. God slated Amalek for destruction in the Pentateuch, and the last Amalekite was killed when Haman the Agagite lined up the world against Israel in the time of Esther. There were no more Amalekites after that.

Well, in the same way, verse 21 of Obadiah affirms that the Spirit will eventually triumph over the children of the flesh. Where sin abounds, God's grace abounds much more. Verse 17 affirms that there can be holiness in history. Verse 21 ends by contrasting the destruction of Edom with the kingdom being the Lord's enduringly. That is the message of Obadiah. Amen.

IV. Appendix A - Dating of Obadiah to 587 BC

There is huge controversy on the dating of this book, with some dating it to the plundering of Jerusalem in 845 BC, while others date it to shortly after the plundering of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. I take the later date. The dating all falls down to two factors:

- The first factor has to do with possible quotations: Do Amos and Jeremiah quote Obadiah (as Keil, Archer, and Freeman hold), or does Obadiah quote from Amos and Jeremiah (as Brewer and Amerding contend). And actually, a third possibility is that all those prophets used a common source (as Allen and Bullock believe).

Obadiah

vv. 1-6

v. 4

v. 14

v. 19

Jeremiah/Amos

Jer. 49:7-22

Amos 9:2

Amos 1:6

Amos 9:12

- The second factor deals with other Scriptures that explicitly tie Edom together with a plundering of Jerusalem. There is nothing in 2 Chronicles 21 indicating that Edom joined with the Arabs in plundering the city. But there are a number of passages that connect the Edomite hatred with the final exile of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar (Ps. 137:7; Lamb. 4:20-22). While I probably shouldn't be dogmatic, I personally think the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of linking this with the plundering by Nebuchadnezzar. Edom was particularly vicious in their racial prejudice and their mistreatment of the Jews who survived.

V. Appendix B - Dating of the Messianic phrase in verse 21

Many people place that during the life of Christ. And that's a possibility. But I place it in AD 70 because of so many other references that tie the kingdom to that point. Written in AD 66, Hebrews quotes Haggai's prophecy of God shaking the earth and says that this shaking will continue after AD 70 until only those things that cannot be shaken will remain. And then it says, Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

That's why Revelation 11:15 identifies AD 70 as the inheriting of the kingdom:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

In some sense the fullness of the kingdom is ushered in in AD 70. That's why Daniel 7:13-14 places AD 70 as the time when Christ is given a kingdom and glory so that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. That's why the Revelation 20 kingdom comes right after the Revelation 19 tribulation. It doesn't come before the tribulation; it comes after. Symbolically it is so appropriate to have the symbol of the world, Edom, destroyed at the very moment that Christ begins to possess His possessions throughout the world. AD 70 ended the old age and fully ushered in the new.

Just look up all the occurrences of the Greek word μέλλω, which means "about to happen," and you will see that AD 70 is significant. It ushered in something momentous. Hebrews 2:5 says that the world that is about to come is to be placed under Christ's feet. Hebrews 6:5 says that pre-AD 70 people have tasted of the powers of the age that is about to come. 2 Timothy 4:1 speaks of an imminent judgment and appearing of Christ's kingdom that was about to happen. And there are many other statements that point to an imminent ushering in of the kingdom in a way that goes beyond the AD 30 seeds of the kingdom. But even if you tie this to the life of Christ, a similar point is made. So even though it is a little book, it covers a lot of territory that I have barely dipped into. You could spend several weeks on the book of Obadiah.