

OBADIAH - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What is the message in this short book? Does it add anything of consequence to our understanding of God? Would it say much about God, that He'd use some precious space in Scripture to give us this one page of instruction and correction for those who gloat over their enemies misfortunes? Does that say anything to us in our day? What kind of a person gloats over the discipline of another? Do we have many key texts out of Obadiah?
2. Was this message primarily for the Edomites or do you think that this might have been written to encourage the Jews? Do we have any evidence that the message ever got to the Edomites? How is it that the Jews were being disciplined, and these descendants of Esau were not? The Jews at least had made a profession of being God's people. What about these Edomites?
3. What do you think of this "golden rule" in reverse--"As you have done, it shall be done to you?" (Obadiah 15; compare Matthew 7:12) Isn't this the way many people act in our world? How is this different than "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"? (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21; See Matthew 5:38-42)
4. Did not the Edomites know a lot about God's purposes? Do we have any evidence that the Edomites had been long term rivals and enemies of the Jews? Psalm 137:7,8. What was the general feeling between the Jews and the Edomites throughout the Old Testament? See Obadiah 1-14; Ezekiel 25:12-14; 35; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11,12; Malachi 1:2-4
5. What is implied about the state of the dead by Obadiah 16, "They shall be as though they had not been?" Is that our key text for everything coming completely to an end, so there is no such thing as an eternally-burning hell? Or is that a poetic way of saying they will simply be eliminated? What's your strongest evidence for believing that in the end the wicked will be totally destroyed, and be as though they had never been? How do you fit this with "their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched?" (Isaiah 66:24, *NRSV*) See also Isaiah 43:17; Malachi 4:1; Revelation 14:9-11, 20:7-10. Do we have any demonstration of what happens to the wicked in the end anywhere in the Bible? (See Malachi 4:1-3; Exodus 15:7; Isaiah 5:24; 40:24; 41:2; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Nahum 1:8-10; 2 Peter 2:6) Was Jesus "made to be sin, though He knew no sin?" (2 Corinthians 5:21) Did He die to demonstrate that death is indeed the result of sin? Is He still burning in the fires of hell?
6. We sometimes jokingly talk about "hell" as if it were next to the New Jerusalem so people from inside the city could go out and take a look once in a while—perhaps while having a picnic lunch! Is this what is suggested by Isaiah 66:24? Do we need this kind of reminder to keep us in line for eternity? But what about some of these verses that talk about God apparently getting back at the nations around Judah? Don't you think that God's whole attitude toward vengeance is involved here in the Book of Obadiah? At the end, assuming that we will be

saved, and we watch as the glory of God is unveiled, how do you expect to feel? Does Hosea help us to understand how God feels when His children are destroyed? Hosea has God crying, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" (Hosea 11:7,8, *Phillips*) Are bad people His children, just as much as good people? Is God losing His own children? Will He ever see them again?

7. Was Obadiah written partly to encourage Israel, in the right sense, with the promise, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay," says the Lord?" (Deuteronomy 32:35,41,43; Romans 12:19; Hebrews 10:30)
8. What do you think of God sending a message of warning to the Edomites at all? Does God bless people outside of the main line? We have several books dealing with this, don't we? Job, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum. Have there been messages to others in the past that were not of the Jewish line? Aren't all those warnings for the purpose of winning and correcting people, even Edomites?
9. The Edomites thought their nation was impregnable because they lived among the rocky crags and mountains east and south of the Dead Sea. Their capital city was literally carved out of rock. Do we feel that we have "rock-like security" in our lives? Our 401 (k)? Our bank account? The family inheritance? The "remnant" church? Could God ever shake this "security blanket?"

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