



## Obadiah

### Get Started

I came across this quote in my reading this week. It's about an ancient form of punishment for murderers. It reads, "the body of the murderer is sometimes tied to the corpse of his victim..."

It's from a book titled *Sociology Based Upon Ethnography* published in 1893. The particular chapter was on Tibet.

There are other accounts of ancient people punishing murderers in this manner. They fastened the body of the victim to that of the killer, tying shoulder to shoulder, back to back, thigh to thigh, arm to arm, and then drove the murderer from the community. So tight were the bonds that he could not free himself, and after a few days the decay in the body of death spread to the living flesh of the murderer. There was none to help him remove the body of death. He had only the frightful prospect of his own slow, gangrenous death.

Drawing from this physical analogy, the apostle Paul, in Romans chapter seven, makes a spiritual application of the body of death. He describes himself by saying, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (v24).

This body of death has several different names and descriptions:

1. "...I am carnal..."
2. "...sin...dwells in me..."
3. "...evil is present with me..."
4. "...the flesh..."

This body of death is the flesh that continues to exist within you after you are saved. Think of yourself as the new spiritual person you are, having been born-again, but surrounded by your flesh.

Why am I telling you this ghoulish tale? Obadiah is going to present the destruction of the nation of Edom, who are the descendants of Esau. Esau and his twin brother, Isaac, are the Bible's classic illustration of the struggle, of the warfare, between the flesh and the spirit.

## **Get Studying**

In Genesis there is this comment: "Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom" (36:1). Also this: "Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir" (36:8–9).

The Edomites were those who were descended from Esau; the Israelites are those who are descended from Jacob.

The story of Esau and Jacob is that of twin brothers, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. The boys were not identical twins; actually, they were opposites. The record given back in Genesis 25 begins as Rebekah is about to give birth to these twins:

Genesis 25:22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all* is well, why *am I* like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

Genesis 25:23 And the LORD said to her: “Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.”

Esau was delivered first; he was the older. But Jacob would become the prominent son. Jacob had a spiritual discernment that Esau did not have. Esau was a man of the flesh and did not care for spiritual things. In fact, he so discounted his birthright that he traded it to Jacob for a bowl of soup. He didn't sell his birthright because he was so hungry that he was about to perish, nor because there wasn't anything else to eat in the home of Isaac, but because his was a desire of the flesh and he was willing to trade all of his spiritual heritage for a whim of the moment.

The man who had the birthright was in contact with God, and he was the priest of his family. He was the man who had a covenant from God. He was the man who had a relationship with God. In effect Esau said, “I would rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God.”

Obadiah 1:1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom (We have heard a report from the LORD, and a messenger has been sent among the nations, *saying*, “Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle”):

Obadiah is one of the Minor Prophets about whom we know absolutely nothing. His name was a very common one in Israel, and it means “servant of Jehovah.”

He received his prophecy in the form of a vision. God revealed to Him that an ambassador from a nation allied with Edom was visiting other nations to convince them to join forces and attack Edom.

As you continue reading, you realize that the Lord was allowing these nations to align against Edom in order to accomplish His purpose of destroying them.

Why destroy Edom?

Obadiah 1:2 “Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised.

Obadiah 1:3 “The pride of your heart has deceived you, *you* who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; *you* who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’”

It was because of a kind of national pride that God would destroy Edom. “Pride of... heart” is the attitude of a life that declares its ability to live without God.

Edom’s pride came from three sources: Her *defenses*, her *alliances*, and her *wisdom*.

Her defenses are seen in verses three through five:

Obadiah 1:3 The pride of your heart has deceived you, *you* who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; *you* who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’

The Edomites considered themselves impregnable and invulnerable because they were situated in a region of rugged mountains with high cliffs that protected them from attack. Petra, the major city, could only be entered by a narrow, winding canyon. By “narrow” I mean maybe fifteen feet at its widest. A dozen men could easily defend it against an entire army.

Even if the entrance were breached, the Edomites could carry on a successful defense from the mountains. In their culture and at that time it was hard to imagine a more secure spot.

Petra, by the way, was only rediscovered in the late 1800's, but is now a major historical site and tourist spot.

Secure as they were in their high mountain cities, God would bring them down:

Obadiah 1:4 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.

Obadiah 1:5 “If thieves had come to you, if robbers by night - Oh, how you will be cut off! - would they not have stolen till they had enough? If grape-gatherers had come to you, would they not have left *some* gleanings?

Thieves generally leave something behind; grape-gatherers leave gleanings behind. But when God destroyed Edom, it would be complete and thorough.

Edom’s alliances were a part of her pride, and these are seen in verses six and seven:

Obadiah 1:6 “Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! *How* his hidden treasures shall be sought after!

Obadiah 1:7 “All the men in your confederacy shall force you to the border; the men at peace with you shall deceive you *and* prevail against you. *Those who eat* your bread shall lay a trap for you. No one is aware of it.”

If you are not allied with God, you will be allied with the ungodly - and those alliances will fail you at best, and destroy you at worst.

How many marriages, for example, have been destroyed by the so-called best friend getting inappropriately involved?

Edom’s wisdom was the final component of her national pride; look at verses eight and nine:

Obadiah 1:8 “Will I not in that day,” says the LORD, “Even destroy the wise *men* from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau?”

Obadiah 1:9 “Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.”

Edom was noted as a center of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in the ancient world. Located along a notable trade route, Edom absorbed much information from many parts of the world. She was sought out by other nations for counsel and direction.

According to God’s Word, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

There is a wisdom in the world, but human wisdom is nothing to be proud of. We need the wisdom of God’s Word to counsel and direct us.

Bible scholars are not in agreement as to when the events of verses ten through fourteen occurred. The traditional view is that Obadiah was referring to the Babylonian invasion of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC. As the Jews in Judah were being overwhelmed and overrun, the Edomites rejoiced.

Obadiah 1:10 “For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever.

Obadiah 1:11 In the day that you stood on the other side - 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.

Obadiah 1:12 “But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

Obadiah 1:13 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, nor laid *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity.

Obadiah 1:14 You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off those among them who escaped; nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained in the day of distress.”

Edom’s reaction to the Babylonian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem was to rejoice and gloat.

They actively betrayed the Jews; they cut-off their possible escape and delivered them to the Babylonians. Then they went in and looted and plundered their cities.

Obadiah closed the shortest book in the Old Testament by looking ahead beyond even our own time to the future restoration of the nation of Israel. He used the technical phrase, “The Day of the Lord,” which describes the Last Days of human history that begin with the darkness of the Tribulation period on earth.

Obadiah 1:15 “For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head.

Obadiah 1:16 For as you drank on My holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been.”

Obadiah predicted a future judgement by God upon all nations. It will be centered around their respect for “My holy mountain,” a reference to Israel and Jerusalem.

## God judges nations with regard to their respect for Israel.

Obadiah 1:17 “But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

Obadiah 1:18 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.

Obadiah 1:19 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.

Obadiah 1:20 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.

Obadiah 1:21 Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.

When it says “then saviors shall come,” the word “saviors” indicates that Jesus Christ will appoint *judges*, or co-rulers, to help Him rule and reign. This looks forward, beyond the Church Age, to the reign of Jesus upon the earth – His 1000 year reign known as the Millennium.

## Get Spiritual

Esau pictures the flesh and Jacob pictures the spirit.

What is the flesh? It is a little hard to define and commentators are all over the map.



- The flesh is not my sin nature I was born with. I know that because the Bible distinguishes between my sin nature and my flesh.
- It is not the physical body itself. The physical body has its needs but they are neutral.

The flesh is something I find at work within my physical body. It is that tendency, that inclination, those impulses, to use my physical body in sinful ways.

Am I doomed to be overcome by the body of death?

Not at all. When I am saved, God the Holy Spirit comes in me. Now I can yield to His tendencies, His inclinations, His impulses, to use my physical body to serve Jesus.

The defeat and destruction of Edom is an illustration of the ultimate destruction of our flesh when we are absent from our bodies, and the daily defeat of our flesh as we yield to the Spirit of God.

Warren Wiersbe says, "There is no need for the believer to be defeated. He can yield his body to the Spirit and by faith overcome [the flesh]."

What'll it be - a bowl of soup or your birthright as a child of God? Whenever we yield to the flesh, to the body of death, we are Esau. It's not that we are hungry, but rather that we are despising spiritual things.

Let's walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.