





THE FENIAN TRIAL. "THE BRUIERS OF THE BIRD."





Question: What does the little book of Obadiah say about God?

A quick sub-question: Why do I ask that?

Answer (to the quick sub-question): Because that is the most important Bible study question to ask.

Why is that the most important Bible study question?
Because the Bible is the book of God.

- “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” ~ Luke 24:27
- “These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ~ Luke 24:44

What the book of Obadiah says about God ~

- He speaks.
- He speaks to man, and man can understand.
- He knows the thoughts and hearts of people.
- He knows the future.
- He is the King of the nations—He is sovereign.
- He is faithful to His covenants.
- He is able to fully carry out His will.
- He ensures that perfect justice is done.
- He hates pride and arrogance.
- He will judge His people, but that is not the end.
- He will judge all nations.
- He works in history to accomplish His will.

What the book of Obadiah says about God –

There is probably more that could be said, but that's a good start. But remember:

- This is a very short book...
- ...it concerns a nation that doesn't exist anymore
- ...at first glance it doesn't seem very relevant
- ...and you've probably never heard a sermon on it.

And yet...

- ...it has a majestic, high, and exalted view of God
- ...and it has a message that is powerfully relevant.

Like any other book in the Bible, it yields its riches to diligent study – 2 Tim. 2:15.

Ok—here we go ~

Here's the outline we're going to use for Obadiah's short book—

- The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2
- The certain destruction of Edom—v. 3-16
- The certain restoration of Israel—v. 17-21

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

Big picture, these two verses give us God's decree of judgment against Edom. Remember: Edom was descended from Jacob's twin brother Esau...they were blood relatives of the Israelites, yet fought with them regularly, and mocked—and helped—at Israel's destruction and exile in 586 BC.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

There are 3 things we need to see in these verses, and the first is this: *The introduction of the vision.*

Obadiah tells us right off what this short book is: it is “The vision of Obadiah.” Which tells us what?

- Its origin: this is not something he made up, it is not of human origin – see 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
- Its nature: this is divine communication, not human.
- Its delivery: “vision” denotes the means of communication of the Lord’s message.
- Its authority: notice v. 1, 4, 8, 18; it is fully divine.
- Its purpose: divine direction for God’s people (Ezek. 1:1, 7:26; Is. 1:1. Notice the toll seeing these visions took on Daniel: 7:1, 15; 8:26-27; 10:8).

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision – next, Obadiah identifies the Speaker: “Thus says the Lord GOD...”

Ok—who did Obadiah deliver his prophecy to? Who heard him say it? Who was his audience?

- Likely not Edom—they couldn't have cared less what some Jewish prophet said. It is likely that the only audience who heard—or cared—was Israel.
- Remember the context: Israel was languishing in exile—crushed, judged by God, they knew they had failed, and what really stung was that their brothers the Edomites stood by and laughed.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

So when Obadiah showed up early on in the exile and gathered the elders of Israel together and said, “Thus says the Lord GOD...” they listened.

Question: Does it matter when an OT writer says God, Lord, LORD, Lord GOD? Aren't they just kind of all saying the same thing?

Answer: It matters. Maybe you've noticed that *Lord* and *God* have different capitalization in different contexts: notice Gen. 1:1, 2:18, 15:2, 23:6; Ex. 4:13; Deut. 4:28; Ps. 23:1

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

God reveals His covenant name in Ex. 3:13-15.

- When the Hebrew word is transliterated into English, it is YHWH.
- The word is related to the Heb. verb “to be,” so the name expresses the reality that God simply is (Ex. 3:14)—He is absolute and unchangeable.
- The Israelites took the third commandment (Ex. 20:7) really seriously, so to avoid misusing His name they began to use *adonai* instead, a Hebrew term meaning *lord* or *master*.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

- Hebrew was originally written only with consonants, so the pronunciation of the divine name has been debated, but most modern scholars believe that the best option is Yahweh.
- By the 6th or 7th century AD, the ability to pronounce Hebrew waned as the population gradually used Aramaic and then Arabic. So vowels were added to aid in pronunciation. Given the desire to pronounce *adonai* instead of Yahweh, the vowels of the term *adonai* were inserted into the consonants of YHWH to render it YaHoWaH.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

- Early English translators, having little knowledge of the background of the term, simply assumed YaHoWaH as the proper pronunciation and rendered it *Jehovah*. Even though Jehovah was clearly not the original pronunciation, it has retained some degree of familiarity in English.

Ok—so now that we understand that, back to the original question: Why all the different capitalization stuff with these names in the OT? And does it matter?

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

Generally, what do the different terms mean?

- YHWH is always used of the one true Creator God. He is absolute and unchanging.
- Adonai is a generic term which simply means lord or master. It can be used of a human master or the one true God depending on the context.
- Elohim, el, and eloah are all generic terms which simply mean god or gods. They can all be used of idols, spiritual beings such as angels and demons, or the one true God depending on the context.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

Ok—so, in general...

- When you see LORD, the specific name YHWH is used and it always refers to the covenant name that He revealed to Moses.
- When you see lord, the word *adonai* is used to refer to a human master or lord.
- When you see Lord, the word *adonai* is used to refer to the true God as Master and Lord.
- When you see God, the Hebrew words *elohim*, *el*, or *eloah* are used to refer to the one true God.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The introduction of the vision –

- When you see god or gods, the Hebrew words *elohim*, *el*, or *eloah* are used to refer to idols, spiritual beings, the objects of other nations' worship, etc.
- When you see Lord GOD, the author (Obadiah, in this case) has used both *adonai* and YHWH together to emphasize both His relationship to man (as supreme Master), and His divine, absolute, and unchanging nature. This is the term Obadiah introduces his vision with.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The summons of the nations –

The vision is “concerning Edom.” And the first thing Obadiah hears in his vision is the voice of the Lord calling the nations to war against Edom.

- Take a look at Is. 13:1-5. What do you think is going on here?

This is God, the King of the Nations, sovereignly influencing them to come—in their own thinking by their own plans and designs—to be His chosen instruments of judgment.

An interesting question that we can't know the answer to: do you think all wars have this as their origin?

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The summons of the nations –

This is God, moving human history forward for the benefit of His people.

- The exiles of Judah would see in Obadiah's opening words that all of the nations are completely subject to the sovereign will of God. See also Is. 45:1-7.
- This is also God exercising His exclusive right to take vengeance: Deut. 32:35-36; Ps. 94:1-7. He is the only one who can see clearly enough to exercise vengeance and bring about justice. He may act slowly (in our eyes), but He will act perfectly.

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The declaration of judgment –

“I will make you small...utterly despised.”

- Edom held Judah in contempt as Babylon was destroying Jerusalem and taking the Israelites captive...so now the nations will hold Edom in contempt. In Obadiah's vision the Lord goes into great detail on this in v. 3-16; we'll get into that next week.

- Notice the description of God's divine decree: “I will make you...”, and the sure result of that decree: “you shall be...”

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The declaration of judgment –

Here's an interesting thing...

- All of the prophetic books except Hosea and Haggai contain oracles against foreign nations. For example: Isaiah chs. 13-23; Jeremiah chs. 46-51; Ezekiel chs. 25-32, 35; and Amos 1-2.
- But of all the nations spoken against, “Edom is the subject of more separate oracles against foreign nations and more brief or passing hostile references in the prophetic books than any other nation.” – Longman, Dillard: *An Introduction to the Old Testament*

The call for judgment on Edom—v. 1-2

The declaration of judgment –

I wonder about the Edomites...

- Did they ever hear, or read, Obadiah's prophecy? And if so, did any ever repent?
- There is no indication in the book that there was an offer of forgiveness or turning back from judgment if they were to repent, but there are cases in the OT where that was the case.
- See, for example, Jonah 3:4-10 and Joel 2:12-14. God is always far more willing to forgive and restore than man is to seek it from Him.

John Calvin's prayer:

“Grant, Almighty God, that as Thou seest us to be on every side at this day beset by so many enemies, even by those who constantly devise means to destroy us, while we are so very weak and feeble,—O grant, that we may learn to look up to Thee, and that our trust may so recumb on Thee, that however exposed we may be to all kinds of danger according to what appears to the flesh, we may not yet doubt but that Thou art ever armed with sufficient power to terrify our enemies, so that we may quietly live even amidst all dangers, and never cease to call on Thy name, as Thou hast promised to be the sure and faithful defender of our safety in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.”