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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON
OBADIAH

by Adam Clarke.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

HOLY BIBLE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.

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THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET OBADIAH

Chronological Notes relative to this book, upon the supposition that it was written about five hundred and eighty-seven years before the commencement of the Christian era

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3417.
- Year of the Jewish era of the world, 3174.
- Year since the Flood, 1761.
- Year from the vocation of Abram, 1335.
- Year from the foundation of Solomon's temple, 425.
- Year since the division of Solomon's monarchy into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 389.
- Year of the era of Iphitus, 298.
- Second year of the *forty-eighth* Olympiad.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Varronian or generally received computation, 167.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Fasti Consulares, 166.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Polybius the historian, 165.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 161.
- Year since the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, 135.
- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, 2.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4127.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, 161.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 583.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 587.
- Cycle of the Sun, 11.
- Cycle of the Moon, 4.
- Thirtieth year of Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of the Romans.
- Thirty-ninth year of Cyaraxes or Cyaxares, the fourth king of Media.

- Nineteenth year of Agasicles, king of Lacedæmon of the family of the Proclidæ.
- Twenty-first year of Leon, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Eurysthenidæ.
- Thirty-third year of Alyattes II., king of Lydia.
- Sixteenth year of Æropas, the seventh king of Macedon.
- Eighth year of Apries, king of Egypt; the same with the celebrated Pharaoh-hophrah.
- Ninth year of Baal, king of the Tyrians.
- Twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

CHAPTER 1

God is here represented as summoning the nations against Edom, and declaring that his strongholds should not save him, 14; that not a remnant, not a gleaning, should be left of him, 5; that the enemy would search out his people, and totally subdue them; and that none of their allies should stand by them, 6-9. He then enlarges on their particular offense, and threatens them with a speedy recompense, 10-16. The Babylonians accordingly subdued the Edomites, and expelled them from Arabia Petræa, of which they never afterwards recovered possession. The remaining verses contain a prophecy of the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and of their victory over all their enemies, 17-21. Some commentators think that these last verses were fulfilled by the conquests of the Maccabees over the Edomites. See 1Macc 5:3-5, 65, &c.

Who was this prophet? where born? of what country? at what time did he prophesy? who were his parents? when and where did he die? are questions which have been asked from the remotest antiquity; and which, to this day, have received no answer worthy of recording. There is a multitude of opinions concerning these points; and their multitude and discrepancy are the strongest proofs of their uncertainty. All that seems probable is, that, as he prophesied concerning the destruction of Edom, he flourished a little before, or a little after, the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, which happened about five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ; and the destruction of Idumea by the same monarch, which took place a short time

after; probably between 588 B.C. and 575 B.C., in the interval of the *thirteen* years which Nebuchadnezzar employed in the siege of Tyre, which he undertook immediately after the capture of Jerusalem.

Obadiah foretells the subduction of the Idumeans by the Chaldeans, and finally by the Jews, whom they had used most cruelly when brought low by other enemies. These prophecies have been literally fulfilled for the Idumeans, as a nation, are totally extinct.

Whoever will be at the trouble to collate this short prophecy with the *forty-ninth* chapter of Jeremiah, will find a remarkable *similarity*, not only in the *sentiments* and *words*, but also in *whole verses*. In the above chapter Jeremiah predicts the destruction of the Idumeans. Whether he copied *Obadiah*, or *Obadiah* copied him, cannot be determined; but it would be very strange if two prophets, unacquainted with each other, should speak of the same event precisely in the same terms. See the parallel texts in the margin, and see **Clarke's notes on "^{<2440>}Jeremiah 49:1"**, &c.

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

Verse 1. We have heard a rumour] See ^{<2494>}**Jeremiah 49:14**, where the same expressions are found. The prophet shows that the enemies of Idumea had confederated against it, and that Jehovah is now summoning them to march directly against it.

Verse 2. I have made thee small among the heathen] God ever attributes to *himself* the *rise and fall of nations*. If they be *great* and *prosperous*, it is by God's *providence*; if they be *low* and *depressed*, it is by his *justice*. Compared with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Syrians, Arabs, and other neighbouring nations, the Idumeans were a small people.

Verse 3. The pride of thine heart] St. Jerome observes that all the southern part of Palestine, from Eleutheropolis to Petra and Aialath, was full of *caverns hewn out of the rocks*, and that the people had subterranean dwellings similar to ovens. Here they are said to *dwell in the clefts of the rock*, in reference to the caverns above mentioned. In these they conceived themselves to be *safe*, and thought that no power brought against them could dislodge them from those fastnesses. Some think that by [**I s sela**, *rock*, *Petra*, the capital of Idumea, is intended.

Verse 4. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle] Though like this bird thou get into the *highest cliff of the highest rock*, it will not avail thee. To

defend thee, when Jehovah has determined thy destruction, thy *deepest caves* and *highest rocks* will be equally useless. See ^{<244916>}**Jeremiah 49:16**.

Verse 5. If thieves came to thee] That is, if *thieves* entered thy dwellings, they would not have taken every thing; they would have laid hold on thy wealth; and carried off as much as they could escape with conveniently; if *grape-gatherers* entered thy vineyards, they would not have taken *every bunch*; some *gleanings* would have been left. But the Chaldeans have stripped thee bare; they *have searched out all thy hidden things*, ^{<310106>}**Obadiah 1:6**, they have left thee nothing. *Hour art thou cut off!* Thou art totally and irretrievably ruined! The prophet speaks of this desolation as if it had *already taken place*.

Verse 7. All the men of thy confederacy] The Chaldeans are here intended, to whom the Idumeans were attached, and whose agents they became in exercising cruelties upon the Jews.

Have brought thee even to the border] Have hemmed thee in on every side, and reduced thee to distress. Or, they have driven thee to thy border; cast thee out of thy own land into the hands of thine enemies.

The men that were at peace with thee] The men of *thy covenant*, with whom thou hadst made a *league*.

That eat **thy bread]** That professed to be thy *firmest friends*, have all joined together to destroy thee.

Have laid a wound] Placed a snare or trap *under thee*. See *Newcome*.

There is **none understanding in him.]** Private counsels and public plans are all in operation against thee; and yet thou art so foolish and infatuated as not to discern thy own danger.

Verse 8. Shall I not—destroy the wise men] It appears, from ^{<244907>}**Jeremiah 49:7**, that the Edomites were remarkable for wisdom, counsel, and prudence. See on the above place.

Verse 9. Thy mighty men, O Teman] This was one of the strongest places in Idumea; and is put here, as in ^{<310101>}**Amos 1:12**, and elsewhere, for *Idumea* itself.

Mount of Esau] Mount *Seir*.

Verse 10. For thy violence against thy brother Jacob] By this term the *Israelites* in general are understood; for the *two* brothers,—*Jacob*, from whom sprang the *Jews*, and *Esau*, from whom sprang the *Idumeans* or *Edomites*,—are here put for the *whole people* or descendants of both. We need not look for particular cases of the *violence* of the *Edomites* against the *Jews*. *Esau*, their founder, was not more inimical to his brother *Jacob*, who deprived him of his birthright, than the *Edomites* uniformly were to the *Jews*. See ^{<142817>}**2 Chronicles 28:17, 18**. They had even stimulated the *Chaldeans*, when they took Jerusalem, to destroy the temple, and level it with the ground. See ^{<19707>}**Psalms 137:7**.

Verse 11. Thou stoodest on the other side] Thou not only didst not help thy brother when thou mightest, but thou didst assist his foes against him.

And cast lots] When the *Chaldeans* cast lots on the spoils of Jerusalem, thou didst come in for a share of the booty; “thou wast as one of them.”

Verse 12. Thou shouldest not have looked] It shows a malevolent heart to rejoice in the miseries of those who have acted unkindly or wickedly towards us. The *Edomites* triumphed when they saw the judgments of God fall upon the *Jews*. This the Lord severely reprehends in ^{<31012>}**Obadiah 1:12-15**. If a man have acted cruelly towards us, and God punish him for this cruelty, and we rejoice in it, we make his crime our own; and then, as we have done, so shall it be done unto us; see ^{<31015>}**Obadiah 1:15**. All these verses point out the part the *Edomites* took against the *Jews* when the *Chaldeans* besieged and took Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and divided the spoils.

Verse 14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway] They are represented here as having stood in the *passes* and *defiles* to prevent the poor *Jews* from escaping from the *Chaldeans*. By *stopping these passes*, they threw the poor fugitives back into the teeth of their enemies. They had gone so far in this systematic cruelty as to deliver up the few that had taken refuge among them.

Verse 15. The day of the Lord is near] God will not associate thee with him in the judgments which he inflicts. *Thou* also art *guilty*, and shalt have *thy punishment* in due course with the other sinful nations.

Verse 16. For as ye have drunk] This address is to the *Jews*. As ye have been visited and punished upon my holy mountain in Jerusalem, so shall

other nations be punished in their respective countries. See ~~24912~~ **Jeremiah 49:12**.

Verse 17. But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance] Here is a promise of the return from the Babylonish captivity. They shall come to *Zion*, and there they shall *find safety*; and it is remarkable that after their return they were greatly befriended by the Persian kings, and by Alexander the Great and his successors; so that, whilst they ravaged the neighbouring nations, the Jews were unmolested. See *Calmet*.

And there shall be holiness] They shall return to God, separate themselves from their idols, and become a better people than they were when God permitted them to be carried into captivity.

The house of Jacob shall possess] They were restored to their former possessions. But this may refer also to their future restoration under the Gospel, when they shall be truly converted, and become holiness to the Lord; for *salvation* and *holiness* shall be the characteristics of *Zion-the Christian Church*, for ever.

Verse 18. The house of Jacob shall be a fire] After their return from captivity, the *Jews*, called here the *house of Jacob* and the *house of Joseph*, did break out as a flame upon the Idumeans; they reduced them into slavery; and obliged them to receive circumcision, and practise the rites of the Jewish religion. See **1Macc 5:3**, &c.; **2Macc 10:15-23**; and *Joseph. Antiq.*, lib. xiii. c. 17.

There shall not be any remaining] As a *people* and a *nation* they shall be totally destroyed. This is the meaning; it does not signify that *every individual* shall be destroyed.

Verse 19. They of the south] The Jews who possessed the *southern* part of *Palestine*, should render themselves masters of the mountains of Idumea which were contiguous to them.

They of **the plain]** From Eleutheropolis to the Mediterranean Sea. In this and the following verse the prophet shows the different districts which should be occupied by the Israelites after their return from Babylon.

The fields of Samaria] Alexander the Great gave Samaria to the Jews; and John Hyrcanus subdued the same country after his wars with the Syrians. See *Josephus*, contra. App. lib, ii., and *Antiq. lib. xiii.*, c. 18.

Benjamin shall possess **Gilead.**] *Edom* lay to the *south*; the *Philistines* to the *west*; *Ephraim* to the *north*; and *Gilead* to the *east*. Those who returned from *Babylon* were to extend themselves everywhere. See *Newcome*; and see, for the fulfilment, **1Macc 5:9, 35, 45; 9:35, 36.**

Verse 20. Zarephath] Sarepta, a city of the Sidonians, ^{<1170>}**1 Kings 17:9.** That is, they should possess the whole city of *Phœnicia*, called here that of the *Canaanites*.

Which is in Sepharad] This is a difficult word. Some think the *Bosphorus* is meant; others, *Spain*; others, *France*; others, the *Euphrates*; others, some district in *Chaldea*; for there was a city called *Siphora*, in *Mesopotamia*, above the division of the *Euphrates*. Dr. *Lightfoot* says it was a part of *Edom*. Those who were captives among the *Canaanites* should possess the country of the *Canaanites*; and those whom the *Edomites* had enslaved should possess the cities of their masters. See *Newcome* and *Lowth*.

Verse 21. And saviours shall come up] Certain persons whom God may choose to be deliverers of his people; such as *Zerubbabel*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and the *Maccabees*.

Some think these *saviours*, $\mu\gamma[\gamma\upsilon\upsilon\omega\mu\mu$ *moshiim*, mean the *apostles* of our Lord. Several MSS. have $\mu\gamma[\upsilon\omega\mu\mu$ *mushaim*, the *preserved*; those *that are saved*, i.e., they who were *delivered* from the captivity; and *those of Mount Zion* shall *judge*, that is, shall *execute judgment* on the *Edomites*. And as the *Asmonean* princes joined the *priesthood* to the *state*, it might be what the prophet means when he says, “the kingdom shall be the Lord’s,” the high priest having both the *civil* and *ecclesiastical power* in his own hands. And these actually were masters of *Edom*, and judged and *governed* the *mountain of Esau*. And thus this prophecy appears to have had a very literal fulfilment.

But if we take the whole as referring to the *times of the Gospel*, which I believe is not its *primary* sense, it may signify the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and that under *JESUS CHRIST* the original *theocracy* shall be restored; and thus, once more, in the promised land, it may be said,—

hkwl mh hwhy! htyhw

hammeluchah laihovah vehayethah.

“And the kingdom shall belong to Jehovah”