

VICTORY FOR GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

TEXT: v. 17-21

- 17 But in mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
- 18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall burn among them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining to the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it.
- 19 And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau, and they of the lowland the Philistines; and they shall possess the field of Ephraim, and the field of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.
- 20 And the captives of this host of children of Israel, that are among the Canaanites, shall possess even unto Zarephath; and the captives of Jerusalem, that are in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South.
- 21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's.

QUERIES

- a. Where is Mount Zion and how shall it afford escape?
- b. How shall the houses of Jacob and Joseph consume the house of Esau?
- c. Who are the "saviours" to judge Mount Esau?

PARAPHRASE

While God's Day of Judgment is coming upon all His enemies, He will be delivering His covenant people; they shall be made holy and shall be given the spiritual blessings He promised they would possess when He spoke to the patriarchs. The re-united covenant people of God shall become as a fire sweeping through the enemies of God as if they were dry stubble and God's people shall devour their enemy until the house of Esau shall be completely obliterated. The Lord has spoken it and it shall surely come to pass. And the literal conquest of Edom will be one more step in God's plan of redemption symbolizing the ultimate fulfillment of all that God has promised to the Messianic people, including victory over the Gentiles and establishing of the Messianic kingdom in every land and among all peoples of the earth.

Many saviors of God shall be raised up to preserve a remnant of the Covenant people looking forward to the One Great Savior when God shall manifest Himself to the world as King of the world and ruler of His kingdom.

SUMMARY

Obadiah comforts the covenant people with God's promise of victory over their inveterate enemies. Not only will they have victory but they will possess the promises God made with their fathers. Obadiah's promises find their ultimate fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom, the church, when the "kingdom shall be Jehovah's."

COMMENT

v. 17 BUT IN MOUNT ZION SHALL BE . . . ESCAPE . . . IT SHALL BE HOLY . . . AND JACOB SHALL POSSESS . . . Obadiah speaks of the "day of Jehovah . . . near upon all nations" in verse 15. Now God, through the prophet extends His strong right arm of salvation and victory to the covenant people, in verse 17, making "Zion" a place of escape. Mount Zion, the southeastern hill of Jerusalem, is the place where the presence of God dwelt according to the Old Testament way of saying things. The prophets used Mount Zion to mean the place where God would manifest His salvation—in other words the Messianic kingdom (the church). Mount Zion became the symbol of Messianic deliverance, peace, security and realization of the promises made to the fathers (patriarchs). The prophets were not intending that all they predicted of Mount Zion would be fulfilled literally—their predictions of the glorious things that were to happen there were intended to be fulfilled in the Messiah and His kingdom. This is plainly apparent when one compares just a few scriptures (Isa. 33:17-24; Ezek. 34:11-31; Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:6; Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5; Isa. 59:20-21; Rom. 11:25; and especially, Gal. 4:25ff; Heb. 12:22-24). That the members of the New Testament church were to be the recipients of the prophetic blessings is shown quite conclusively by the following scriptures (Acts 3:11-26; 13:29-37; 15:13-18; Rom. 3:21-22; 9:2-8; 15:8, 12, 20, 21, 27; 16:25-27; Heb. 12:18-29). Now God started His work of redemption through the Messianic kingdom when He made promise first in Genesis 3:15. All who, by faith, kept covenant with God (in whatever covenant they found themselves) found their deliverance in Mount Zion. Abraham saw His day and rejoiced (John 8:56). The verb "shall be deliverance" is in the imperfect and indicates a continuous flow of the deliverance to be found in Mount Zion (this

mountain being symbolic of Messianic promise and covenant). All who remained true to God in Old Testament times—ever looking forward in faith to what God was going to do on Mt. Zion—had deliverance, for Christ died for the transgressions done aforetime (cf. Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:15-17).

As a result of the future deliverance which will be accomplished ultimately by the Messiah there shall also come an imputed holiness or perfection. Other prophets spoke much about this cleansing the Messiah would bring (Isa. 35; 4:2-4; Zech. 13:1; Ezek. 36:25ff) and the writer of the Hebrew epistle explained it in Heb. 9-10. Of this holiness the apostle Peter speaks more than once (I Pet. 1:15-16; 2:9-10; II Pet. 1:4; 3:11-14).

Jacob possessing his possessions was never completely fulfilled until the coming of the Messiah. In the Old Testament God promised to the patriarchs a certain land for their habitation—He promised a prolific progeny—He promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through their seed. The Lord did give them a land and numerous offspring. And even when God took them from their land in chastisement for their idolatry and sent them into exile, He promised to return them to their land. But the careful student of the O.T. will discover that when the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity under Ezra and others, they did not repossess all their former land. A large portion of the land originally given them by God was possessed by other nations and never regained by the Jews.

v. 18-19 . . . JACOB SHALL BE A FIRE . . . JOSEPH A FLAME . . . ESAU . . . STUBBLE . . . NOT ANY REMAINING TO THE HOUSE OF ESAU . . . THEY OF THE SOUTH SHALL POSSESS MOUNT ESAU . . . PHILISTINES . . . FIELD OF BPHRAIM . . . SAMARIA . . . AND GILEAD.

In spite of the fact that the Jews never again repossessed the entire land promised to them Obadiah prophesies that they shall not only regain all that had been promised to them but the covenant people would also possess territory which had never been promised them—namely Edom. In verse 18 Jacob represents the southern kingdom, Judah, while Joseph represents the northern kingdom, Israel. Thus Obadiah sees the great victory over Edom coming to a re-united covenant people. The fulfillment of this prophecy had its beginning when the Edomites were expelled from their homeland sometime between 550 and 400 B.C. by the Nabateans. The Edomites were driven to the southern wastelands of the desert Negeb, where they became the Idumeans. Simon of Gerasa (see Josephus, War, IV, ch. IX, 7) attacked Idumaea, ravaging cities and villages, laying waste the whole country.

By promising them the liberty to plunder and murder at will, Simon succeeded with the aid of Idumean mercenaries in entering Jerusalem where he engaged in bloody battle against other leaders of the city then under siege by Titus the Roman general. At the beginning of of the Roman siege, Simon had about 5000 Jews and 5000 Idumeans under his command. The Idumeans, seeing the hopelessness of resisting the Romans any longer, sent messengers to Titus asking him to spare them if they surrendered. Their plea granted, they were about to leave the city, but Simon discovered it, killed the messengers, imprisoned the Idumean commanders and forced the remaining Idumeans to fight on. The few survivors took refuge among the desert tribes and were absorbed into their communities. Thus ended the proud and cruel nation of Edom. But this was not the ultimate fulfillment as we shall see.

v. 20 AND THE CAPTIVITIES OF THIS HOST OF CHILDREN OF ISRAEL . . . SHALL POSSESS . . . When and how, then, were the promises of vv. 19 and 20 fulfilled? The Bible itself indicates both the manner and the time of fulfillment. As long as the Old administration of the Covenant continued, God had promised a literal, temporal portion of land as the possession of a repentant Israel (cf. Deut. 30:1-5). The Lord kept His promise and raised up Cyrus, king of Persia, as His servant (Isa. 45:1ff; II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4), to return a repentant remnant of Jews to their Land of Promise. But this was not the final goal toward which God was working. It was a step in that direction, but not the final one. The ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy of Obadiah concerning Jacob and Joseph possessing even Edom is to be tied directly to the prophecy made by Balaam in Numbers 24:17-18. There it is prophesied that Edom (Seir) is to be a possession of Israel when "the star comes forth out of Jacob and the scepter out of Israel." This, of course, points to fulfillment in the Messianic age. Amos 9:11-12 reveals that when the "tabernacle" (family, dynasty) of David has been rebuilt, not only will the remnant of Edom be possessed by the covenant people but all the nations. There can be no doubt about the fulfillment of this for it has the sanction of apostolic pronouncement (Acts 15:13-18) as having been fulfilled when the Gentiles were received into the New Testament church. And so the book of Acts records the fulfillment of Obadiah, 17-21, the church's (the true Mt. Zion) victorious conquest of the Gentiles by the preaching of the gospel.

v. 21 . . . SAVIOURS . . . ON MOUNT ZION TO JUDGE THE MOUNT OF ESAU; AND THE KINGDOM SHALL BE JEHOVAH'S. This

word "saviours" is the same word used of the "judges" (Samuel, Samson and company). These "saviours" would not come upon mount Easu to inflict punitive judgment but to bring deliverance. Deliverers will be sent (in the Messianic age) to Edom so that even a remnant of Edom (Amos 9:12) will be saved. These "saviours" are those who were ambassadors of *The Savior* taking His gospel to all the world enlarging His kingdom.

The last phrase is majestic! Both Edom and Zion fade from view as all becomes His! All kingdoms are united in that one kingdom, and God is all in all. It began when the "One Shepherd" united all God's sheep in "one flock" (Ezek. 34; John 10) and will find its consummation when the Savior appears the second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him (Heb. 9:28).

God's goal, as Obadiah sees it, is the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. In one form or another this is the closing note of almost every prophetic book in the Old Testament (cf. Obad. 21; Joel 3:21; Amos 9:14; Micah 7:20; Hab. 3:18; Zeph. 3:17; Hag. 2:19; Ezek. 48:35; Zech. 14:20-21, etc.). The composite picture given by such passages as these is that of the victory of God and His kingdom over every foe; of unbroken fellowship between a people finally made holy to the Lord and their everpresent faithful God; of a new Covenant which does not supplant but fulfills the old. God reaches this goal through a series of successive acts of judgment and redemption in history culminating in the Messianic judgment—redemption which is to be consummated at His second coming.

And, so to speak, Obadiah becomes a proto-type of all the later prophets who, speaking the portion God has given them to speak and in the manner God has lead them to speak, (Heb. 1:1), amplify his brief but basic message.

QUIZ

1. What is the "holiness" which Obadiah says will be in Mt. Zion?
2. What are the possessions which Jacob would possess according to Obadiah?
3. What does verse 21 show as to the ultimate purpose of God and thus the principle message of Obadiah?

EXAMINATION

CONSIDERATIONS

1. What are the advantages of having the revelation of the prophets in poetic, literary style? There are four.