Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Obadiah

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Summary

Edom's perpetual hatred to Jehovah's people: the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem

Edom is frequently spoken of in the prophets. This people, who, as well as Jacob, were descended from Isaac, had an inveterate hatred to the posterity of the younger son who were favoured as the people of Jehovah. Psalm 137 tells of this hatred in the seventh verse. In Psalm 83 Edom forms a part of the last confederacy against Jerusalem, the object of which was to cut off the name of Israel from the earth. Ezekiel 35 dwells upon this perpetual hatred, shewn from the first in the refusal to give them a passage through the land, and upon the desire of Edom to possess the land of Israel. Our prophet enlarges upon the details of the manifestation of this hatred, which burst forth when Jerusalem was taken. It is possible that there was something of this sort when Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. Edom is united with Babylon in Psalm 137 as the inveterate enemy of Jerusalem.

Their future attitude and complete destruction: the armies of the nations to be assembled in Edom's land

But it is evident that the prophecy extends to other events. Jerusalem shall again be attacked by these Gentiles, who seek to satiate their hatred to the city of Jehovah, and to gratify their ambitious purposes. Edom plays a sorrowful part on this occasion, and its judgment is proportioned to its sin. The nation is entirely cut off. When the rest of the world rejoice, the desolation of Edom shall be complete. Edom had purposed to take advantage of the attack of the nations upon Jerusalem, to possess itself of the land, and had united with them to take part in the attack, by lying in wait — as was natural to a people whose habits were those of the Arab tribes — to cut off the retreat of the fugitives, laying hands, when possible, on their substance, and giving them up also to their enemies. The men of Edom knew not that the day of Jehovah was upon all the nations, and that this conduct would but bring down an especial curse on their own heads. Their judgment is thus described: God takes away their wisdom, their pride deceives them, their strength fails them, in order that they may be entirely cut off. We have seen them joining the last confederacy against Jerusalem, and taking part in the destruction of that city. But it appears that their confederates deceive them (v. 7); and Edom, thus ill-treated by former allies, become "small among the heathen" (v. 1, 2). The nations are the first instruments of Jehovah's vengeance. But another and yet more terrible event is linked with the name of Edom, or Idumea, and is the occasion of Jehovah's judgment falling upon that people. It is in Edom that the armies of the nations will be assembled in the last days. We have the account of this in Isaiah 34 and 63. See Isaiah 34:5-6, the rest of the chapter displaying the judgment of desolation in the strongest possible language. Isaiah 63 shews us Jehovah Himself returning from the judgment, having trodden the winepress alone. Of the peoples there were none with Him.

Edom's judgment reserved for Israel as Jehovah's instrument

Finally, Israel itself shall be an instrument in the hand of Jehovah for the judgment of Esau (Obadiah 18). The destruction in Isaiah relates especially to the armies of the nations, which, in their movements, find themselves assembled in Edom. The part which Israel takes in the judgment is on the people in general; and, I suppose, afterwards, when Christ is at their head as the Messiah (compare v. 17, 18); and Isaiah 11:14 appears to confirm this view of the passage. At all events it takes place after Israel's blessing.

Complete destruction predicted by other prophets

That none shall be left of Edom is also declared in Obadiah 5, 6, 9, 18; Jeremiah 49:9-10-22; and it will be observed that there is no restoration of a remnant, as in the case of Elam and others (Jer. 49:39). A part of the latter prophecy establishes the same facts as that of Obadiah, in nearly the same words. The same judgment is pronounced in Ezekiel 35, and in Isaiah 34, already quoted. We see in these chapters, as well as in Isaiah 63, that it is the controversy of Jerusalem, that Jehovah pleads with Edom (Ezek. 35:12; Isaiah 34:8; 63:4). In these passages Jehovah does not forget His thoughts of love towards Zion and His people.

The effect of God's call to repentance, of His unchangeable faithfulness and unwearying love: deliverance upon Mount Zion

He closes the prophecy of Obadiah with the testimony of the effect of His call to repentance, of His unchangeable faithfulness to His promises and unwearying love. Power and might against those formidable enemies should be given to Israel, who should in peace possess the territory which their enemies had invaded. Deliverance should be on Mount Zion; from thence Mount Esau should be judged, and the kingdom should be Jehovah's.

As corrupt power had been judged in Babylon, so in Edom hatred to the people of God.