

The Book of Obadiah

from the book

Minor Prophets: Major Messages

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Contents

How To Use This Study Guide.....	3
Introduction.....	4
The Author.....	5
An Overview of the Literal Sense of Obadiah.....	6
Chapter One.....	8
Obadiah 1:1-3.....	8
Obadiah 1:4-5.....	12
Obadiah 1:6.....	16
Obadiah 1:7.....	18
Obadiah 1:8-9.....	21
Obadiah 1:10-14.....	23
Obadiah 1:15-16.....	29
Obadiah 1:17-18.....	32
Obadiah 1:19-21.....	36
Epilogue: A Summary of the Book of Obadiah.....	42

How To Use This Study Guide

1. A slow unhurried reading of Obadiah is essential. Read each chapter before you look at the related section of the Study guide. Read the chapter again while you are using the study guide, and read it a third time when you are finished. This process will give you a powerful sense of the series of events and meanings in each chapter. It is important to feel comfortable with all the names, places, and announcements in Obadiah's prophecy. When possible, some historical information will be included in the study guide to increase reading comprehension and enhance application.
2. Our reading of the one chapter of Obadiah will begin with quotes from a work of the Writings called *Summary Exposition of the Prophets and Psalms* (hereafter referred to as *P&P*). This work has a verse-by-verse overview of Obadiah that summarizes the internal sense. Our research will help move us from this general summary to the particulars of the internal sense.
3. Another important reference tool is *Searle's General Index to Swedenborg's Scripture Quotations*. This reference shows where in the Writings a verse(s) of the Word is either explained specifically or used to illustrate a doctrinal point that we can use in our study. There is also another use of this work. As we study, each researcher will be led by the Lord's Providence in myriad of ways and according to specific needs or states. Knowing how to use this book will help us look up related passages that will add to our knowledge of the three-fold Word.
4. You will soon discover that not every verse, word, name, etc. is directly quoted and explained in the Writings, but there are often other references to the same name, place, or thing in the explanation of a different verse of the Word. The hope is that reflection on these other references and their associated doctrine will help us see possible applications to our full study of Obadiah. We will need to use "derived doctrine" often. Please don't run away from this maligned term. If we use it properly, admitting openly that it is derived, we bring no harm to the internal sense.
5. Keep a notebook handy during your study times. Write out insights, questions, and any summaries you find helpful in organizing your thoughts about each chapter. **The goal of this study guide is not to give a detailed summary of the internal sense but to start each researcher's quest for deeper insight.**
6. At the end of each chapter in the study guide, you will find a study review. The review includes a summary of each section to help you reinforce and build on your understanding of several of the key points.

7. Begin each study unit with a devotional prayer asking the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts. Studying in this sphere has the power to inspire and open our minds with a higher spiritual priority that will keep us in the company of the Lord's angels. As the Writings teach, we must seek to love truth for truth's sake. Such an approach will free each reader from preconceived ideas that might limit his or her ability to "see" the intent and message of the Lord's Word.

Introduction

Welcome to the study of **the shortest book in the Word**. Obadiah has one chapter and twenty-one verses. As brief as this book is, scholars raise many questions about it. They debate its author and date of composition, and they point to the striking similarity between passages in Obadiah and Jeremiah to question whether Obadiah actually witnessed the things he wrote about or saw them in a dream or vision from the Lord. As always, we need to briefly consider the interesting issues the scholars raise. Some of their observations wonderfully highlight things the Lord intended us to find in the Word that serve as a base or "containant" for the deeper spiritual things of the internal sense. On the other hand, we can set aside some of their debates because they are resolved when the spiritual sense is opened to reveal and explain the internal sense of the Word.

Let's consider a specific issue to illustrate this point. Biblical researchers note several similarities or parallelisms in Obadiah and Jeremiah. For example, the words "grape gatherers came to you" appear in both *Obadiah 1:5* and *Jeremiah 49:9*. Who, ask the scholars, wrote that prophetic sentence first? Jeremiah wrote it first, they have determined. Here is how they came to that conclusion: *Obadiah 1:10-14* seems to refer to the capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar. They believe *Jeremiah 49* was composed following the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Ergo, Jeremiah said it first.

In its introduction to the book of Obadiah, the *Oxford Annotated Bible* suggests another explanation for the similarities: that both prophets borrowed these passages "from a collection of sayings transmitted orally by prophetic circles."

At this point, it seems prudent to ask if these theories have any spiritual importance for us. Do we really need to determine who wrote these prophetic words first? Does a collection of "oral prophetic sayings" have anything to do with the internal sense? Isn't the repetition itself of greater spiritual significance than those who said it?

The Writings answer, as noted below, that repetition is good and intrinsically necessary for the message of the spiritual sense. Repetition is the work of the Lord and not individual prophets!

Repetition in the Word is not there because one prophet borrowed from another. So that we can better answer future criticisms that the Word is repetitious, let's consider these teachings:

- *Arcana Coelestia (AC)* 435, 707, 734, and 1015 teach us that the Lord uses repetition to signify certain states people pass through.
- *AC 734* states emphatically that there is no such thing as repetition in the Word.
- *AC 1259* helps us to understand that **if** repetitions accidentally occurred in the Word, **if** phrases were creatively lifted from other sources, and **if** prophets plagiarized lines, it would cause the Word to lose its holiness.
- “It is common in the Word, especially the prophetic, for one thing to be expressed in two ways; and he who does not know the mystery in this, cannot [but] think it a mere repetition for the sake of emphasis.” (*AC 4691*)
- *AC 5888* states that repetition occurs to indicate the state of the will and understanding. See this concept explained also in *AC 6343[3]*, *AC 7945*, and in *The Doctrine of Sacred Scriptures 81, 84, and 86*.
- *AC 9565* states that if something is repeated three times, each single thing has a plenary conjunction in the internal sense.
- *Divine Providence (DP) 193* gives reasons why repetitions occur in the Word.

THE AUTHOR

We have no direct information about Obadiah’s life and the dates of his birth and death. We know that his name means “a servant of the Lord.” Among the Jewish people, Obadiah was a popular choice for a name, so it is not surprising to find numerous Obadiah’s mentioned in important Old Testament events. There are some scholars willing to go out on a limb to identify one of the Obadiah’s mentioned in the Word as the author of this prophetic book. For those who would venture into such a pursuit, there are at least nine Obadiah’s in the Old Testament to consider.

- In *I Kings 18*, there is a steward in King Ahab’s household named Obadiah. This Obadiah was a friend to many prophets. He saved more than a hundred of them, hiding them from Jezebel, feeding and giving them water. For his devotion to the Lord’s prophets and his kindness to them, he was made a prophet. (*I Kings 18* tells of a time when Obadiah met and talked with the prophet Elijah.)
- In *I Chronicles 7:3*, an Obadiah who is a son of Izrahiah (four other sons are named) is called a chief man: “All five of them were chief men.”
- In *I Chronicles 8:38*, Azel had six sons, one of whom was named Obadiah. The lineage of this family can be traced to Saul, the first king of Israel.
- *I Chronicles 9:16* mentions an Obadiah whose lineage is traced to Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites. Is this the Elkanah who was the father of Samuel?
- In *I Chronicles 12:9*, there is an Obadiah from the Gadites who joined forces with David in Ziklag.
- In *I Chronicles 27:19*, there is a prince of Zebulun named Obadiah.
- *II Chronicles 17:7* mentions a prince named Obadiah being sent by Jehoshaphat to instruct the people in the laws of the Lord.

- In *II Chronicles 34:12*, a Levite named Obadiah was appointed by King Josiah to be an overseer to repair the temple.
- In *Ezra 8:9*, a man named Obadiah accompanied Ezra on the return of the exiles from Babylon.

Whenever the Word withholds background information on one of the Lord's "chosen," I can't help but think it is the Lord's way of keeping us focused on the message of the Word and not the individual. Therefore, tying Obadiah's lineage to one of the nine Old Testament references seems superfluous. What's your point of view on this quest to find a historical connection?

AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERAL SENSE OF OBADIAH

Obadiah's prophecy expresses the Lord's displeasure with the Edomites. What sin or evil had they committed that would cause their downfall? Their heritage goes back to Esau, so Jacob was their uncle. In other words, they were blood relatives to the children of Israel.

- The Edomites stood by when Jerusalem was invaded.
- The Edomites rejoiced over the captivity of the sons of Judah.
- They actively participated in the looting of Jerusalem.
- The Edomites set up roadblocks to prevent the people of Jerusalem from escaping the attack of the Philistines.
- They were callously indifferent, "un-brotherly," and lacking in charity to the neighbor.

Note how the Word uses correspondences to identify Edom's transgressions:

- They had a cruelty of feet (verse 11): "you stood on the other side."
- They had a cruelty of heart (verse 12): "...rejoiced over...the day of their destruction."
- They had a cruelty of tongue (verse 12): "...nor should you have spoken proudly."
- They had a cruelty of eyes (verse 13): "...should not have gazed on their affliction."
- They had a cruelty of hands (verse 13): "...nor laid hands on (Judah's) substance."

Let's take one last look at the outline of the literal sense of Obadiah. We can identify four major sections of Obadiah:

1. In *Obadiah 1:1-9*, Edom is about to be driven out of its land by a confederacy of nations selected by the Lord.
2. *Obadiah 1:10-14* describes the kind of punishment Edom will receive for its participation in the capture of Jerusalem.

3. *Obadiah 1:15-16* announces a day of judgment upon all nations. “As you have done, it shall be done to you.”
4. *Obadiah 1:17-21* tells that in that day Judah and Israel shall escape and shall regain the lands that the Edomites and other enemies took from them.

With this introduction and overview, let's enter this wonderful and helpful study of Obadiah as it announces and celebrates the birth of the New Church.

Chapter One

OBADIAH 1:1-3

“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’): ‘Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. 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?’”

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- “Concerning those who are in self-intelligence, and who pervert the literal sense of the Word, who are Edom; that they are to be combated, because they imagine themselves more intelligent than the rest, vers. 1-3...”

AC 3322 [8]

- “In Obadiah (i: 1-10, 18, 19)...‘Esau’ and ‘Edom’ denote the evil of the natural man originating in the love of self, which despises and rejects all truth, whence comes its devastation.”

Apocalypse Revealed (AR) 338

- “...they who have pretended before the world that they were in the good of love, and yet were in evil, hide themselves after death in caves; and they who have pretended that they were in truths of faith, and yet were in the falsities of evil, hide themselves in the rocks of the mountains.” Obadiah 1:3 is cited along with other passages.

Posthumous Theological Works, Vol. 1, Invitation to the New Church 35.

- “[The ‘rock’ is spoken of in the Word] The ‘fissures of the rock’ mean falsified truths...” Obadiah 1:3 is cited along with many passages.

AC 10582

- “To dwell in the holes of a rock is [to be] in falsities of faith. The subject here is those who exalt themselves above others, believing that they are more

learned than the rest of mankind, when yet they are in falsities and cannot even see truths. Such in the other life dwell in the holes of rocks, and sometimes thrust themselves forth upon the rocks.... his is meant by holding the height of the hill, and mounting on high as an eagle...and yet being brought down." Obadiah 1:3-4 are cited.

Apocalypse Explained (AE) 410 [5]

- "In Obadiah (i. 3-4)...Edom, who signifies here the pride of learning which is from self-intelligence, and falsity therefrom destroying the church.... 'the clefts of the rock' signify the falsities of faith and of doctrine, because those dwell there who are in such falsities..."

Derived Doctrine

"The vision of Obadiah."

- *DP 134* explains that there are two kinds of visions: Divine and diabolical. Divine visions are "such as the prophets had; who, when they were in vision, were not in the body, but in the spirit..."
- Obadiah's name means "servant of the Lord," so this helps us identify which kind of vision we are studying. It is a Divine vision received in a spirit of willingness to serve the Lord. It is a spiritual mission that is not limited to time and space but to eternal ends.

"We have heard a report from the Lord."

- Who or what are we to make of the "we have heard"? Does the "we" represent the will and understanding? The rest of the derived doctrine seems to validate such an assumption.
- *AC 4674* helps us answer this question when it explains that a "report" or "news" signifies that which is from the divine truth. A report's purpose is to help us discern the quality of evil and falsity.
- The words "A report from the Lord" clearly makes this "report" more than a rumor or gossip. It is a report from infinite Love and Wisdom.

"...a messenger has been sent among the nations, saying..."

- *AR 667* teaches that nations in the positive sense signify those who are in the good of love and charity from the Lord. Whereas in the negative sense, nations signify those who trust in their own selfhood. (*AE 249*)
- Which sense of nations is being used here? To find a possible answer, let's check the correspondential meaning of "sending a messenger."
- A messenger, or to send a messenger, signifies to communicate. (*AC 4239*)Near the end of *AC 4239*, it mentions that Jacob sending messengers to

Esau represents bringing conjunction between the “truth Divine of the natural (which is Jacob) and the good Divine therein (which is Esau).” The point being illustrated is that the Lord was forming a coalition of those who had a common spiritual interest. Uniting the “brothers” would bring an end to the haughty estrangement that the falsity of self-intelligence felt was invincible.

- Let’s not overlook that very last word, “saying.” In the internal sense, “saying” can represent the following things: to reveal; a new light is to come; to perceive; to think (and to do); and to predict.

“Arise, and let us rise up against her for battle.”

- AC 2326 gives us this meaning of “arise.” It signifies having an elevation of the mind, or to enter a state of affection from charity.
- “Rise” in AC 2028 signifies the elevation of spiritual truth to agreement with external truth. This process might give us a fuller mental picture of the meaning of “let us rise up.”
- The Lord is calling for a battle to be waged against Edom’s arrogance. Where does arrogance reside and draw its life? The heart or affections is where it (hides) lives. The affections correspondently are called she, her, woman, etc.
- To battle “her” represents to call on and use the Lord’s power against the affections of the hells. See AC 1663-1664 and AE 817 [7] for illustrations of wars and battles.

“Behold, I will make you small among the nations;”

- Do we need derived doctrinal quotes to perceive this meaning? Do we not feel in our hearts what the Lord is predicting? Edom, with its smug self-assurance, will be brought into a low state. Like a giant balloon, its conceited air will be expelled in an instant. In the Lord’s presence, Edom cannot stand tall.

“You shall be greatly despised.”

- There is a law of the Lord stated in the literal sense of Obadiah. “As you have done, it shall be done to you.” (1:15) The Edomites despised good and truth and fervently loved falsity. What is loved becomes one’s life. Therefore, the enlightened, the nations called to do battle against Edom, will “greatly” despise the falsities of Edom’s way of life. In effect, the hatred the Lord’s army felt for Edom is not the ugly face of war but a shining face that reflects a holy fear to protect the Lord’s Word from those who would profane and mock it.

“The pride of your heart has deceived you...”

- Pride is called “the love of self.” (AC 1306) Pride comes about when the external man develops self-confidence bolstered and inspired by false reasonings. (AC 1585 [4]) Pride enjoys and attempts to have a dominating power over others. (AC 8678) Pride seeks to have its own way and tolerates others to the degree they favor its self love. (AE 518 [34])

“You who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high...”

- This passage is well covered in the **Passages from the Writings**.

“You who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’”

- Do we hear arrogance? Do we hear pride? Do we hear mental giants bragging about their reasoning abilities? This passage is dripping with contempt to and for the Lord and His Word.
- There is a challenge in these words that cannot be missed or excused. The Lord faced the most grievous temptations the hells could bring to bear. They mocked Him from the beginning of His ministry in the wilderness to the cross. “You saved others, now save yourself.” Hell is full of contempt and rebellion. Here in the literal sense, we see it clearly stated: Who will bring me down?

Putting It All Together

1. The passage in *P&P* pulls all of the above together beautifully. “...those who are in self-intelligence, and who pervert the literal sense of the Word...they are to be combated, because they imagine themselves more intelligent than the rest...” We are called to be brave soldiers in the Lord’s army. We need to despise the life of evil because it loves falsity and hates truth: it favors self and hates the Lord.

The choice is plain. It’s Edom’s way or the Lord’s way. The outcome is not debatable. Edom will be made low in spite of its pretentious bragging. No matter how cleverly Edom lays out its strategy, it will fall. Edom’s height on the mountain will not save it from the Lord’s presence. Wherever the Lord brings good and truth, evil and falsity cannot remain in His presence.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P* again.
Read Obadiah 1:1-3 again.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. Have you ever met, read, or heard someone who imagines they are more intelligent than the rest of the human race? How does that person relate to other people? How do other people relate to him or her?
2. Did you try to wage a mental battle against their thinking? What was the outcome?
3. Hiding up in the mountain gives the person up an advantage on the one below who is climbing up the mountain. Those on top can cause an avalanche of stones to advance on the persons below. They can use poles, javelins, arrows, or hot oil to push people backwards. What does this tell us about hell's imagined defense against the truth of the Lord?
4. What about the other side of this issue? Is there confidence in these verses that the up-hill battle can be won with the Lord's help? Give examples.
5. The confederation of nations, the brotherhood of the will and understanding being called by the Lord, is a force to fight with against hell. What ways can you see this happening in the church? What about in daily life?
6. If a modern-day prophet were to give us a report on what we are doing to the literal sense, do you imagine we might hear some strong words of condemnation? How do we treat the Lord's Word as an organization? As individuals? What informs our choices about the Word?

OBADIAH 1:4-5

"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.

"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?"

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- "...That they defend falsities through natural light [lumen], but that they will perish, and the very falsities with them, vers. 4, 5..."

AC 10582 [8]

- "The subject here is those who exalt themselves above all others, believing that they are more learned than the rest of mankind.... This is meant by holding the height of the hill, and mounting on high as an eagle, and setting his nest among the stars, and yet being brought down."

AE 410 [5]

- “In Obadiah i. 3, 4...pride of learning which is from self-intelligence, and falsity...destroying the church...are compared to an eagle because the eagle from its lofty flights signifies the pride of self-intelligence; so, too, a ‘nest for habitation’ is mentioned, and ‘to set it among the stars’ signifies in the heights where those dwell who are in the knowledges of truth, for the knowledges of truth are signified by ‘stars.’ “

AC 3901 [7 & 8]

- “In Obadiah 1:4 by ‘eagles’ signifies rational things that are not true...by ‘eagles’...is signified falsity induced by reasonings, which is induced from the fallacies of the senses and external appearances.

AR 649

- “Hence it is, that (to gather grapes)...by these things the Lord’s operation from the good of His love by the Divine truth of His Word is signified.” Obadiah 1:4-5 is cited among many other passages.

AE 920 [5]

- “In Obadiah 1:5... ‘Grape-gatherers’ signify falsities, and ‘thieves’ evils, which lay waste the truths and goods of the church; but ‘destroyers’ signify both falsities and evils; that ‘they would leave no clusters’ signifies that there are no goods because there are no truths. But ‘to gather the vintage’ signifies to gather for uses such things especially as will be serviceable to (the person’s) understanding ...”

AC 5135 [8]

- “ ...in Obadiah 1:5... ‘grape-gatherers’ denote falsities which are not from evil; by these falsities the goods and truths stored up by the Lord in man’s interior natural (that is, remains) are not consumed, but by falsities derived from evils, which steal truths and goods and also by wrong applications employ them to confirm evils and falsities.”

AC 8906 [3]

- “...a thief...is falsity, which will then take possession of the whole man, both of his will and of his understanding, and thus will take away all truth and good. The like is signified by a ‘thief’ in Obadiah 1:5.”

AR 164

- “...good without its truths is not good, only merit-seeking or hypocritical; but evils and falsities take it away like a thief. This is done gradually in the world, and completely after death, and also without the man knowing when and how.... Since the taking away of good and truth from them that are in dead worship is done as by a thief in darkness ...in the Word as in the following passages...” Obadiah 1:5 is among the examples cited.

True Christian Religion (TCR) 317

- “Priests who minister only for the sake of gain or attainment of worldly honor, and who teach such things as they see or may see from the Word to be not true, are spiritual thieves; since they deprive the people of the means of salvation, which are the truths of faith. Such are called thieves in the Word in the following passages...” Obadiah 1:5 is cited.

AE 193 [6]

- “In Obadiah 1:5...falsities and evils are called ‘thieves,’ and are said to ‘steal’; falsities are ‘thieves,’ and ‘robbers by night’; it is said ‘by night,’ because ‘night’ signifies a state of no love and faith.”

AE 1005

- This passage explains “His coming and Last Judgment” are meant when the Lord is referred to as a thief coming in the night. Obadiah 1:5 is cited.

Derived Doctrine

“Would they [robbers and thieves] not have stolen till they have enough?” “Would they not have left some gleanings?”

- Might these questions serve to show that Edom’s goal was to “steal till they had enough” but that as much as they wished to take it all, they couldn’t help but to leave some behind? What was left behind? *AC 5135 [8]* has what appears to be the answer. The Lord stores up “remains” in each person’s interior, and they cannot be consumed by self-love because they are kept in a secret place known only to the Lord. Hell is a robber and thief, but it cannot spoil what the Lord protects.
- “Remains, gleanings” will be left. That must drive the hells to a degree of distraction and despair. They cannot completely rid themselves of all connections with the Lord.

Putting It All Together

1. Building on the last point in the derived doctrine section might help us pull things together. Edom saw itself as smarter than anyone else in the world. They polished their external reasoning with such brilliance that it impressed their sensual nature. They were able to bend truth with “wrong applications.” Was there anything they couldn’t do? Couldn’t they rob people of the truths if they put their minds to finding just the right blend of falsity? Edom believed so!
2. Edom did plunder good and truth. They hurt the people to whom they should have ministered, but the Lord still had their “remains” in His control. Why? When the insanity in hell is almost totally out of control, the Lord brings the hells back into order for the briefest of moments. In that “sane” moment, they return to a degree of clarity and feel shame for their actions. But then they lapse (leap) back into the falsities of self-intelligence. What does the Lord touch within them? He touches their gleanings, their remains, or their soul. He touches what could have been their greatest individual and unique potential. They could not rid themselves of the delights of innocence that were impressed on their memories of childhood. Not the smallest of them is lost. (*AC 530 and 561*) Edom might have forgotten them, but the Lord does not forget them. He knows where they are. He protects them to eternity.
3. These verses, like a Divine beacon, tell everyone that Edom’s natural light and its falsities will perish. Edom cannot extinguish the light of the Lord. He will not be robbed. Edom is not wiser than the Infinite Mind.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.
Read Obadiah 1:4-5.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. *TCR 317* mentions priests preaching and teaching things they know are wrong and contrary to the Word. I wonder what contrary things might be taught in our day. I have tried to think how that might be true today. Can you identify with this portion of the prophecy?
2. If you were asked to share your views about the power of the soul, or remains, what points would be your favorite to highlight in your response?
3. Without feeling smug, is it not good to read that evil will be vanquished? The loud, bragging voice of the “intimidator” will be silenced. Its imagined strong defense in the caves of the mountains will be emptied of its arsenal.
4. Most of us have encountered bullies in our lives. How is hell like a bully? How do you vanquish a bully?
5. Our reading referred to the negative correspondence of eagles. In this case, eagles represent a pride in learning from self-intelligence. At the time I read

that, I wanted to quote *Isaiah 40:31*: "...those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." *AR 244* explains that eagles in this passage from Isaiah signify rising into knowledges of truth and good, and so into intelligence. This isn't so much a question as it is a reminder that "good eagles" study with a purpose to learn and apply the good and truth we receive from the Lord.

OBADIAH 1:6

"Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! How his hidden treasures shall be sought after!"

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- "...that they are haughty and conceited, ver. 6..."

Derived Doctrine

"Esau shall be searched out!"

- "There is frequent mention in the Word of Esau, and also of Edom; and by 'Esau' is there signified the good of the natural before the doctrinal things of truth have been thus conjoined with this good, and also the good of life from influx out of the rational; and by 'Edom' is signified the good of the natural to which have been adjoined the doctrinal things of truth. But in the opposite sense, 'Esau' signifies the evil of the love of self before falsities have been thus adjoined to this love; and 'Edom' signifies the evil of this love when falsities have been adjoined to it." (*AC 3322*)
- In this same number (*AC 3322 [7]*), we read "...by 'Esau' and 'Edom' are represented those who turn aside from good through the fact that they altogether despise truth, and are unwilling that anything of the truth of faith should be adjoined, which is chiefly owing to the love of self..."
- *AC 3322 [8]* tells us that "'Esau' and 'Edom' denote the evil of the natural man originating in the love of self, which despises and rejects all truth, whence comes its devastation."
- To be searched or to search represents an assessment by the Lord regarding the order of good in the spiritual man. If a person is receptive, the Lord helps order his or her natural. (*AE 434 [13]*)
- *AR 140* focuses on the meaning of *Revelation 2:23*: "I am He that searchest the reins and hearts..." This is said "that the church may know that the Lord sees what truth and good every one has."

“How his hidden treasures shall be sought after.”

- It is interesting to read the *Revised Standard Version's* (RSV) translation of this verse. “How Esau has been pillaged, his treasures sought out!”
- Let’s look at the correspondences for hidden gifts or hidden treasures. They signify the truth and good that were given without an individual’s knowledge. (AC 5664)
- Treasure signifies divine truth contained in the Word. (AE 840)
- “Hidden” means to lose track of because good and truth were discarded. (AC 222) It also describes being hidden because of the protection of the Lord. (AC 8764) Hidden can mean a withdrawal of divine truth from those who are in falsities and evils. (AE 329 [27]) Hidden can represent a defense against influx from heaven by those who deny the Lord’s Divinity. (AR 339)
- This last reference to “hidden” needs to be seen apart from the list above. AR 339 offers much to think about when we read that those who wish to be good “suffer a great deal at first,” while those who confirm and cover up (hide) falsities, “suffer much less.”
- We should also reflect on the meaning of the words “pillage,” “plunder,” “take away,” and “empty” in this verse.

Putting It All Together

1. *P&P* sets the tone for what is at issue: it is a haughty and conceited spiritual state that the Lord visits. He comes to search out the reins and the heart of everyone. He visits the hidden treasures He gave us without our knowledge. These gifts were hidden for our protection. They do not remain dormant or passive. Like a vital power source, they contribute daily in thousands of secret ways. So the Lord also comes “to see.” Have we lost sight of the treasure through neglect or because we put up a defense against the influx of heaven? Did we lose it because we denied the Lord’s Divine Human? Did the treasure get layered over with a hardened heart?
2. In the parable of the talents, the one who buried his talent in the ground said he did so because he perceived the master as a hard taskmaster. Fear of his master led him to burying the talent lest it be lost. What happened to this man and his talent? It was taken from him and given to those who wisely invested their talent and earned a return for the Master.
3. There seems to be a bit of this parable in Esau’s hidden treasure being sought after. The evil perceive the Lord as someone who wants to plunder the hidden treasure. What they forget is that the Lord is the owner of the treasure. The hiding place of these gifts is to be known by Him. They are the ones who want to put the treasure in harm’s way through their haughty and conceited ways.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Obadiah 1:6.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. Please remember that the Writings teach that each truth has a myriad of avenues to follow. The summary offered above is but one little side trip. You must find and trace the spiritual sense, too. What other avenues would you like to pursue? Are you pursuing your own questions and insights along the way?
2. What do you think about the meaning of those who come to seek out Esau's hidden treasure? Do they really represent the Lord's good and truth coming in to see our internal state? Do we notice when the Lord does this? How might we know He is present?
3. The Writings teach us that the angels greet us in the World of Spirits with a question: What have you loved? That question is so powerful that it begins the opening process of the 3 steps a newly arrived spirit passes through. How ready are we to have our hidden treasures looked at? What might we tell an angel about what we love?
4. "Oh, how Esau shall be searched out!" These words are filled with reality, forewarning, and certainty. What else comes to mind when you read them regarding the haughty and the conceited?

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."

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- "...that they have no truths, ver. 7..."

Derived Doctrine

"...your confederacy..."

- The word "confederacy" implies that the Lord is forging an alliance, an allegiance, or confederacy that has a love for the Lord and genuine faith as its centerpiece. See *AE 102 [2&3]*. In the opposite sense, confederacy represents that which hates the Lord and forges an alliance against good and truth. Which sense is being expressed in this passage?

“...shall force you to the border...”

- The correspondence of “border” is interesting. Let’s look at some representative teachings.
- When worship is far removed from what is internal “it is said that they ‘removed them far away from their border.’” (AC 1151 [6])
- In AC 1211, we learn that “...the borders to all cognitions that have regard to worship, whether external or internal, move in that direction, for all worship stems from faith and charity.”
- “In heaven every one has intelligence and wisdom, and has happiness, according to the sphere of extension.... From all this it can be seen what is signified in the spiritual sense by ‘in all thy border,’ that in good there must not be any falsity; for falsities are outside of the sphere...(falsities) begin where truths leave off...” (AC 8063)

“...the men at peace with you shall deceive you and prevail against you.”

- It appears that Esau felt at “peace” with his thinking, haughtiness, and conceit. In order to get into this mode of thinking, Esau needed “men” or an understanding that gave legitimacy or peacefulness to his life. That is, until the Lord visited his heart. Then his understanding and his consequent life were shown to be shallow, false, and self-centered. His “men” deceived him and in time were used to prevail against him.
- Consider what true peace is and what it does for us: “...when evils and falsities are removed and no longer infest, the Lord flows in with peace, in which and from which is heaven and that delight that fills with bliss the interiors of the mind...” (AE 365 [14])
- “...peace signifies...the mind may not be borne hither and thither.” (AE 365 [18])

“Those who eat your bread shall lay a trap for you.”

- Eating represents to communicate, to be conjoined, and to appropriate. See AC 2343.
- Bread signifies love. To eat bread represents to communicate, conjoin and appropriate love.
- To lay a trap signifies having a plan or desire to destroy the love of a spiritual life. See AC 9348 [7].

“No one is aware of it.”

- If a conscience is silenced; if a watchman fails to warn the city; if the heart and mind are deprived of the Lord’s good and truth, then when the enemy comes, “No one is aware of it.”

Putting It All Together

1. Imagine thinking that you are so right and everyone else is so wrong. Imagine believing you see things more clearly than anyone else. And then all of what you believed and did is exposed as not only empty but SO WRONG! Those who “appeared” to be your best friends are gone when you turn to them in your moment of need. They are not there to give approval. Instead, they are now on the other side providing incidents and intimate details proving what foolishness you participated in all of your life. No longer are you the trendsetter. On the contrary, you become the epitome, to eternity, of what not to be and what not to do.
2. Listen again to the words of *P&P*: “...they have no truths...” In effect, the Lord’s revelation of what IS showed up their what is not. They were spiritually, morally, and ethically bankrupt. It is a sad commentary on the heritage of Esau. “For Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field ...and he sold his birthright to Jacob.” A red stew or mass of pottage was the asking price. Not a good beginning for those who fell in love with their own wisdom and imagined they were wiser than all the people of the world.
3. So we have the story of Esau to awaken us, to alert our minds so we see the approach of the enemy and the traps set to snare us. More than that, we need to know that we do have someone to help us see and confront the enemy. The Lord will be with us, and He is aware of all things that hell wants to confuse us about.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.
Read Obadiah 1:7.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. Going back to the first quote from *P&P*, what two major evils brought Esau to its spiritual demise?
2. How many times have we felt that we were all alone with, seemingly, no one alert to our plight? Does this have to be the case? The Writings remind us that we feel alone during temptation, but the reality is just the opposite. The Lord is near and fighting for us. Will we believe it is so? What can we do to remind ourselves?
3. Breaking bread with the enemy is something we need to avoid. Do you remember the story about Peter on the night of the Lord’s religious interrogation? Where was Peter? He was outside warming his hands by the fire with those who were curious, neutral, or against the Lord. As finite beings, we find ourselves eating with those who would set traps for our spiritual life. How can we be better prepared to not be compromised with time/space values or antagonism regarding eternal ends?

4. Could this prophecy have another meaning about eating bread, falling into snares, and being alone? To the haughty and conceited, the Lord might be perceived as the One deceiving them. He seeks to share the bread of life with all. But those who reject Him and His Word see the Word as worthless and empty of help. Do you remember the words of Karl Marx? "Religion is the opiate of the masses." He saw religion as a means to dull and confuse the people. It appears that Marx saw religion as a cruel and heartless trap.

OBADIAH 1:8-9

"Will I not in that day," says the Lord, "even destroy the wise men from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau?"

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."

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- "...that they will perish in the day of judgment, because they have oppressed the church, vers. 8, 9..."

AE 448 [11]

- • destroy the wise out of Edom, and the intelligent out of the mount of Esau,' meaning those who from the letter of the Word have confirmed themselves in such things as favor their loves."

Doctrine of the Lord 4

- In this passage, quote after quote from all the prophets are cited where by "that day", "in that day", and "in that time," refer to the Coming of the Lord. Obadiah 1:8, 12-15 are used to illustrate this truth.

Derived Doctrine

"Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed."

- What is the correspondence of Teman?
- *AE 400 [10]* reminds us that when we read of Edom and the inhabitants of Teman, we are not to think of inhabitants but "the evils and falsities that are opposed to the goods and truths of the celestial kingdom..."

- “Mighty men” signifies those who are strong in faith. (AC 1179) “Mighty ones” signify those who love good. (AE 922 [2]) “Mighty” signifies a power in captivating lower minds. (AC 1179)
- In the negative sense, it appears that the mighty men of Teman represent those who were powerful in opposition to the Lord’s Divine Human, His love, and a life of faith.

“...everyone from the mountains of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.”

- AC 3322 [8] explains the meaning of “the mountains of Esau” as the natural man, from self-love, rejecting and despising all truth.
- “Slaughter” signifies the Last Judgment, when the wicked will perish spiritually. (AE 315 [15]) Actually, this number uses “perdition and damnation.” Some strong words and bone chilling images.

Putting It All Together

1. We need to use a notebook or pad of paper for a moment. Let’s first put down the direct teachings from the Word about the wise men “**from** Edom and understanding **from** the mountains of Esau.” Then let’s write out the second prophecy about “your mighty men, O Teman...everyone **from** the mountains of Esau....”
Before we begin making specific applications, circle every “from” you see in the two prophecies.
2. How are they being used? I am “from” Bryn Athyn, PA. The use of “from” in this instance helps to identify my place of residence. If I say I borrowed this book “from” the library, it helps to identify where I got the book and where it is to be returned. If someone runs away “from” home, that “from” indicates what they tried to leave behind—perhaps parental or jurisdictional control. If someone is tied down or blocked, we say they were kept “from” playing or completing their task. If someone changes, for better or worse, we note that they are long way “from” what they used to be. Again, in what sense is the word “from” being used in these prophecies?
3. In the positive sense, Edom represents wonderful things: the Lord’s human essence; His strength; His power or good of the natural principle. (AC 3322) If Edom operated “from” these spiritual things, the “from” would be significant and laudable. But that is not what happens here. There was movement away from their good beginnings. Shouldn’t we note this to see how far they had come “from” those principles? Instead of acknowledging the Lord’s essence, power, and good in the natural, they were using the letter of the Word to get away “from” the jurisdiction of the Lord to confirm themselves and their loves. They were not “from the mountain of the Lord,” but they were “from” the mountain of self-love.
Esau in the positive sense signifies the Lord’s infancy; the celestial good in the natural principle. (AC 3599 and AC 4239) These principles can lift a

person into the mountains of celestial splendor. But that is not where Esau's people stayed. They traveled from such beginnings, and now "everyone" from the mountains of Esau rejected and despised the celestial good in the natural principle. Could this be the reason their movement away from celestial good caused the words such as "slaughter, perdition, and damnation" to be used?

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Obadiah 1:8-9.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. Did you look up the word "perdition"? If you did, were you surprised with its meaning and application to our lesson? Where else have you heard this word used?
2. Loss of one's innocence, loss of solid foundational principles, is an issue in this prophecy. Growing up, maturing, moving from innocence of ignorance to innocence of wisdom is a step-by-step process. We move "from former states" into "newer states." The Writings give us a look at the steps of faith: Historical, Persuasive, Blind, Hypocritical, and Spurious. All of these may be passed through, but an end must be in view. True Faith is the goal. This faith is FROM the Lord. Can you identify with any of these?
3. Misuse of the literal sense is a prevalent topic of the Writings. We are not perfect in our thinking process. Errors in judgment and application will occur. How might we avoid the extreme of being fearful to apply the literal sense of the Word and being careless with applications? How can we guard against and correct any errors?

OBADIAH 1:10-14

"For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off 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 with them.

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. 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. 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."

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- "...that they destroy the church still more, and that this their delight, vers. 10-14..."

AC 10287 [14]

- "Mention is also made of 'foreigners,' which is expressed in the original tongue by another word than 'strangers,' and by 'foreigners' are signified falsities themselves, as in these passages [Obadiah 1:11 is cited.] ...'to cast a lot upon Jerusalem' denotes to destroy the church, and to dissipate its truths."

AR 591

- "By leading into captivity is signified to persuade others and draw them over so that they may consent and adhere to that heresy...and thus to lead them away from believing and living well.... By captivity spiritual captivity is here meant, which is to be seduced, and so led away from truths and goods, and to be led on into falsities and evils. That this spiritual captivity is meant by captivity in the Word, may be evident from the following passages..." Obadiah 1:11 is cited.

AE 811 [16]

- "In Obadiah (1:11) 'In that day aliens led his strength captive, and strangers entered his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem'...this is said of Edom, which signifies the truth of the natural man, but here falsity; 'the aliens that led his strength captive' signify the falsities of the church destroying its truths, 'strength' signifying truth, since spiritual strength rests in truths; 'the strangers who entered the gates' signify falsities of doctrine destroying the truths through which entrance is given into interior truths; 'Jerusalem, upon which they cast lots,' signifies the doctrine of the church from the Word thus dispersed, 'to cast lots' means to disperse."

AC 2851

- "...[by] the gates to the New Jerusalem and the gates to the new temple... nothing else is meant than the entrances to heaven.... Hence Jerusalem is called the 'gate of the people' (Obadiah 1: 13)."

Derived Doctrine

"For violence against your brother Jacob..."

- Let's look first at the meaning of violence.
- Violence signifies filthy lusts to which those of the declining church had degenerated. (AC 621 [3])
- Violence signifies that there is no longer any good-will. (AC 632)
- Violence signifies falsities and evils are against goods and truths. (AC 4502)
- Violence signifies the purposeful perversion of the truths of the Word. (AE 734 [17])
- Violence signifies the adulteration of the good of the Word. (AE 730)

"...your brother Jacob..."

- Brother signifies the life of faith which is charity. (AE 746 [2])
- Brotherhood signifies the conjunction of the goods and truths of heaven and the church. (AE 746 [20])
- Jacob "represents various things...in the beginning the Lord's natural as to truth, in progression the Lord's natural as to good of truth, and at the end the Lord's natural as to good. For the Lord's glorification proceeded from truth to the good of truth, and finally to good..." (AC 4537)

"Shame shall cover you..."

- In addition to shame, we need to consider the correspondences of these synonyms too: embarrassment, disgrace, disappointment, dishonor, guilt, shame and nakedness.
- Consider this quote from AR 705: "By walking naked is signified to live without truths. By the shame of nakedness, or the secret parts, filthy loves, which are infernal loves.... Ignorance of truth is signified by nakedness, and infernal love by the shame of nakedness....A man can indeed live like a Christian without truths; yet only before men, but not before the angels. The truths which they should learn are concerning the Lord, and the precepts according to which they should live."
- Who is doing the covering? Is it the Lord or is the Lord showing Esau's true intentions to mask, cover, or veil over evil with respectability? AC 4859 describes veiling as truth obscured while pretending to be from good. Doesn't this sound like a shameful cover-up plot being exposed by the Lord?

"...you stood on the other side -..."

- Is there any difficulty perceiving what is being said here? Standing represents obedience to the Lord's truth. It means getting a fix on a spiritual goal or

objective. In this case, Edom (Esau) is fixed on opposite things. They want to be disobedient and contrary.

“In the day that strangers carried captive his forces...foreigners entered his gates...”

- To help us see what is at stake and involved in this prophecy, let's consider these teachings regarding strangers, foreigners, gates, and forces.
- Strangers are those within the church who do not acknowledge the Lord. (AC 10169 [4])
- Strangers signify evils and falsities that will destroy a church. (AC 10287 [5])
- “Concerning strangers, a law was delivered, that if they would receive peace and open their gates, they [strangers or foreigners] should be tributary and serve (Deut. xii.; I Kings ix. 21, 22).” (AC 1097 [2])
- Gates signify the teachings that introduce a person to the truths of faith. (AC 2943)
- In a work titled *The Athanasian Creed*, paragraph number 97, we read the following about forces: “There are three forces inherent in every thing spiritual; the active, which is the divine love, or living force; the creative forces which produces causes and effects from beginning to end through intermediates; and the formative forces which produce (many things) from the ultimate substances of nature.”
- In AC 6343, “‘forces’ signify the power of truth...”

“...and cast lots for Jerusalem-even you were as one of them.”

- To cast lots signifies to disperse (scatter) the truths of the church using falsity.(AE 863)
- What made this even more heinous is the fact that they appeared to scatter truths as members of the family. The Lord warned us about the enemies of the household.

“...you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity...”

- The RSV translation of this verse reads, “you should not have gloated over the day of your brother in the day of his captivity.”
- The message of the spiritual sense is reasonably clear. Esau enjoyed seeing Jerusalem seduced by falsity. Edom enjoyed pointing to the mistakes of Jerusalem but failed to “apply himself, and study [to find ways] to bend minds.” (AC 1949 [2]) The bending of minds means finding ways to amend and return to the truth of the Lord. Instead, Edom enjoyed the seduction and captivity of his brother.

“...the children of Judah and the day of their destruction...”

- Judah represents the doctrine from the Word relating to the Lord’s celestial kingdom—the celestial of the church. (AR 350) More directly, Judah represents teachings that dealt with Divine Love. Why is this so significant? Where there is no will (love), there is no learning, retention, or application. Judah being carried off to destruction was a serious issue, and yet Esau mocked and did nothing to help.

“...nor should you have spoken proudly...”

- To speak signifies to both perceive and to will. (AC 2965)
- Pride signifies love of self. (AC 2220)
- Pride extinguishes and suffocates the light of heaven. (AC 2959)
- Pride glues falsities together. (AR 421)

“...nor laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity.”

- “Laying hands on” in the positive sense represents conveying blessings, inaugurations, such as when we anoint priests to consecrate the office or use.
- Here, they laid hands on their substance. Substance represents things pertaining to the will. The will is the very substance of a person. (AC 808)
- Hence Esau had no interest in blessing or passing on power. He wished to rob them of their very “substance,” their will.

“...you should not have stood at the crossroads to cut off [block]...them who escaped...”

- We have no correspondences for crossroad. We do for “the way.” “Way” signifies a desire to make a change of state. It means to abstain from some attitude toward truth and good. (AC 2333) “Way” signifies some doctrine by which one may be instructed or led into a deeper understanding of truth. (AC 2231)
- These teachings help us to see the gravity of Esau’s transgression. He offered discouragement when an escape plan came to mind, blocking the attempt with reasons why this or that doctrine would not work.

“...nor should you have delivered up those among them that remained in the day of distress.”

- Those who remained may easily be seen as the “remnant” or “remains.” When a church nears its end, the Lord always preserves a remnant upon which to establish the new church. Esau wanted or hoped that small core would fail as well. Because Esau was in the family, we can feel the betrayal. He must have helped the enemy look for every “brother” so as to eliminate the church.

Putting It All Together

1. Read the selection from *P&P* again. "...they will destroy the church still more, and that this is their delight." Can we review our notes and see that clearly? All of our references highlight the hellish glee Edom (Esau) had in watching and participating in the demise of Jerusalem and Judah.
2. What is sobering is that we probably found ourselves thinking of personal examples of similar things happening to us. We all have had the experience of wanting to make amends, make a change, to improve. Before we get underway, a voice in our mind throws "cold water" on the intention. Past efforts to change are paraded before us. With glee the voice mocks and asks us, "Who are you trying to kid?" It reminds us many times of past failures. That voice stands in the crossroad of our intention, blocking our effort to make a change.
 - Look back and notice how many times the Lord told Edom, "You should not!" Can we hear hell saying, "That is just like the Lord. He always expressed things in the negative. Negative phrases cause the mind to dwell on obsessive themes and ultimately retard our freedom."?
3. The Lord is saying "you should not" specifically to the hells and not to us. The Lord calls us to His presence. Take My yoke. My burden, He says, is light. The "you should not" is a phrase we need to use. We can say to hell, "You should not assume that you can take from me the power of regeneration." All that we have and receive from the Lord is freedom. It is hell that brings us the blockage. Hell stands in the way with its pride and tries to remove from us the light of heaven. Hell's pride is the thing that tries to glue all kinds of falsity together. Prayerfully, we need to say with the Lord to hell, "You should not..." because the Lord says so. That, with a loving heart, "should" send them off and out of our way.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*
Read Obadiah 1:10-14.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. The Introduction section of this study called your attention to the cruelty of feet, heart, tongue, eyes, and hands. Do you think that series (which we just looked at) might be helpful to remember what kind of delight Esau (Edom) had in the destruction of Jerusalem? How can knowledge of this delight help us?
2. Do you have any ways to push or fight off the boastful phrases hell uses to block or discourage us? Do you have a verse or series of verses that stand the

test and trials of hell? If not, do you think any of what we just studied might become one of your verses?

3. Were you asked to memorize verses from the Word when you were in school? Have you ever found that you have something memorized simply because you have read or enjoyed it frequently? What purpose can be served by memorizing passages?

OBADIAH 1:15-16

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

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- “...that ruin will come over them in the day of judgment, vers. 15, 16...”

AC 10011 [3]

- “That by the ‘head;’ is meant the whole man, is...evident from many passages in the Word...” Obadiah 1:15 is cited as an example.

AR 706

- “Since it is the consummation of the age, that is, the end of the church, when the Lord’s coming and the beginning of a new church take place, in many places therefore the end of the former church also is signified by the day of the Jehovah...” Obadiah 1:15 is cited among many other references.

Derived Doctrine

“All nations...”

- The word “all” gives us an insight into the extent and thoroughness of the consummation of the age that will occur prior to the beginning of a new church.

“...as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head.”

- So there is no mistake thinking this is the Lord getting revenge or retaliation, let’s look at a passage in *AC 8223 [3]*:

- It frequently happens in the other life that when evil spirits wish to inflict evil on the good...the evil they intend to others returns upon themselves. At the time this appears as if it were revenge from the good; but it is not revenge, neither is it from the good, but from the evil...they who are in heavenly love ought not to have delight in retaliation or revenge, but in imparting benefits....”

“For as you drank on My holy mountain...”

- To drink, in the good sense, means to investigate and inquire how a truth may be conjoined or appropriated into ones life. (AC 1071 and AC 3089) In the opposite sense, it represents to investigate and inquire how to abuse the truths of the Lord instead of conjoining and appropriating them to life.
- Esau and Edom in the good sense had drunk of these things on the mountain of the Lord. But with the passing of time, self-love entered the “drink” and added falsities. (AC 3322)

“All the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow...”

- The RSV has the following wording: “all nations round about shall drink; they shall drink, and stagger...” How are the words “swallow” and “stagger” similar in meaning? The RSV has a footnote indicating the Hebrew word for “stagger” comes from their word for “swallow.” So we are left with a temporary dilemma because the Writings teach that to swallow, or devour, signifies the extermination of useful knowledges by those (knowledges) which are useless. See AC 5217 and 5258.

“And they shall be as though they had never been.”

- Does this portion of the text give us a clue that “swallow and stagger” might be talking about the same thing? Could this be about the vastation process the church will go through prior to the birth of the New Church? Before a new church can be built, an emptying-out process must happen. Some false concepts in the church are swallowed “hook, line, and sinker.” Some ideas of the dead churches were staggering, and minds became quite unbalanced and “drunken.”
- This is an interesting point to ponder, but remember that it is a derived doctrine so we must remain open to the possibility that it is a wrong view of what the Lord meant by “swallow or staggering.”

Putting It All Together

1. There is a happy summation coming to Obadiah’s prophecy. The Lord is rounding up His angels, and the great day of “right winning out over evil” is at hand. This theme comes back to us often. We need it. Otherwise the hells will

- try to convince us that we are alone. The Psalmist felt the mocking of hell: "... they continually say to me, 'where is your God?'" (*Psalm 42:3*) Our answer? "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." (*Isaiah 59:1*) "With God all things are possible." (*Matthew 19:26*) Edom's end is at hand.
2. What happens to Edom is not the result of anger and retaliation from the Lord. It is a return of the evil and falsity Edom planted. It brings meaning to the literal sense when it says that we shall reap what we sow. For us, there is time to sow a new crop that will yield "some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." (*Matthew 13:23*)

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.
Read Obadiah 1:15-16.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. What "staggering" drinks or concepts of "faith" does the world offer us to swallow? What, in hindsight, would have been harmful in your life if you had swallowed it? Put another way, can you recall something you wanted (badly) but were not able to get – only to find out later that not getting your wish was a blessing in disguise?
2. We all have to go through varying degrees of vastations. Vastation is that great emptying out of concepts formed by self-intelligence and self-love. Do you think we ought to pray for that process to come about in our lives? Would it be best to let the Lord show us the right time to face vastation? What comes to mind is that parable about the enemy coming to sow seeds of darnel while the owner slept. The owner of the field told his workers to wait until harvest time. If they had pulled the tares out too soon, they probably would have pulled out the good with the bad. Good idea? On the other hand, procrastination seems to be a common weakness when it comes to doing painful things. I wonder what little push might get us started on the task of regeneration?
3. *P&P* reminds us that "ruin" will come to those who knowingly abuse the letter of the Word. It doesn't sound like much fun, does it? Hold on because the next section promises better news. Those who love the Lord will not lose but gain back all that Edom took away. Do you find your heart and mind refreshed with another "good" winning out over the bad story? Why is this comforting? How do we feel about regaining something precious that was lost? Think of real life examples.
4. The words in *Obadiah 1:15*, "as you have done, it shall be done to you," remind us of the Lord's Prayer. What do you think of when you reflect on these words? Are we subject to being treated the way we treat others? What motivations are in play when we act on this principle in real-life situations?

OBADIAH 1:17-18

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

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- “...that a new church will arise, ver. 17, in place of the former church, which has been condemned, ver. 18...”

AE 448 [11]

- “In Obadiah (1: 17, 18) ‘Esau and his house’ mean those who believe themselves to be intelligent and wise not from the Lord but from self; for in the eighth verse of this chapter it is said ‘I will destroy the wise out of Edom, and the intelligent out of the mount of Esau,’ meaning those who from the letter of the Word have confirmed themselves in such things as favor their own loves. ‘The house of Jacob and the house of Joseph’ mean such as are in good of life according to truths of doctrine, ‘house of Jacob’ meaning those who are in good of life, and ‘house of Joseph’ those who are in truths of doctrine; ‘mount Zion,’ where there will be escape and holiness, signifies love to the Lord, by which is salvation and from which is Divine truth. ‘The house of Jacob shall be heir to the inheritances of the house and mountain of Esau,’ and ‘the house of Jacob shall be to him a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame,’ signifies that in place of those meant by ‘Esau’ there will be those who are in good of life according to truths of doctrine. In the spiritual world this so occurs, that those who have been in the pride of self intelligence, and have confirmed themselves from the Word in such things as favor the loves of self and the world, occupy certain tracts and mountains, and make for themselves a semblance of heaven, believing that heaven belongs to them more than to others; but when the time has been fulfilled they are cast out of their places, and those succeed to them who are in good of life according to the truths of doctrine from the Lord....this makes clear what is signified in the internal sense by ‘the house of Jacob shall be heir to their inheritances, and shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble.”

AE 405 [26]

- “Since a ‘mountain’ signified the good of love, and in the highest sense, the Divine good, and from the Divine good Divine truth proceeds, so ‘Mount Zion’ was built up above Jerusalem, and in the Word ‘Mount Zion’ signifies the

church that is in the good of love to the Lord....” Obadiah 1:16-17 are among the verses cited.

Derived Doctrine

“...on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance...”

- *AC 5899* uses these wonderful words to explain Lot’s “great escape”: “...the significance of ‘escape’ (is) deliverance from damnation, which deliverance is effected by means of remains, that is, by means of the goods and truths stored up with man by the Lord.”
- *AE 433 [8]* explains that Mount Zion signifies the advent of the Lord and the establishment of the church among those who love the Lord and among those who are in the good of love.

“And there shall be holiness...”

- What qualities bring one into a state of holiness? A clean heart and mind.
- *AR 666* gives us this standard of what makes holiness: believing the Lord is the Word, the truth, and the enlightenment.

“The house of Jacob shall possess [inherit] their possessions [inheritance].”

- A person will miss the spiritual realities “...unless one knows what is meant by ‘the house of Jacob’, ‘the house of Joseph’ and ‘the house of Esau’...” (*AC 4592 [11]*)
- “...‘the house of Jehovah’ is frequently mentioned as signifying the church wherein love is the principal; the ‘house of Judah’ as signifying the celestial church; and the ‘house of Israel’ as signifying the spiritual church. As ‘house’ signifies the church, the mind of the man of the church (wherein are the things of the will and of the understanding, or of charity and faith)...” (*AC 710*)
- *AC 5550*, *AC 8770*, and *AE 710 [3]* teach that the “house of Jacob” represents the external of the church.
- “Everyone recognizes that here ‘the house of Jacob’ was not to mean the Jewish nation or people, for the Lord’s kingdom included not merely that people but all throughout the world who have faith in Him, and from faith have charity.” (*AC 3305 [3]*)
- The house of Joseph represents “the spiritual kingdom”; “the good of the church”; “the spiritual man.” (*AC 3969 [11, 12, 13]*)
- The “house of Joseph” represents the “celestial things of the spiritual.” (*AC 6521, 6526, 6554*)
- “Possess,” “inherit,” “possession,” and “inheritance” are correspondential indicators of the return to “the first love” of the church. The inheritance promised by the Lord was never withdrawn; the people of the church lost

sight of it. So this prophecy announces that their spiritual paradise will be restored and reclaimed. How? The “house of Esau” will have no survivors. “For the Lord has spoken.”

“...the house of Jacob shall be a fire...the house of Joseph a flame”

- “...a fire (in the good sense) signifies the good of love. (AC 2799, 2804)
- AR 48 tells us that a flame signifies spiritual love, which contains charity and love of the neighbor. AC 934 [2] tells us that a flame signifies the celestial spiritual.

“...the house of Esau shall be stubble...”

- To properly understand this verse, we must recall what the doctrines taught us about Esau. The “house of Esau” represented those who were in the pride of self-intelligence. They had confirmed themselves in such things as favored their own loves. Such spiritual attitudes are now likened to stubble.
- “Evil is like fire (infernal fire is nothing but love of evil) and it consumes faith like stubble, reducing all that pertains to it to ashes.” (TCR 383)
- “...every worker of wickedness shall be stubble, and the oven shall set them on fire.” (AE 540 [3])
- “The expression ‘like stubble’ is used because complete vastation, that is, devastation is meant.” (AC 8285)
- AC 7131 explains why the Egyptians forced the children of Israel “to gather stubble for straw.” Essentially, the Egyptians were forcing Israel to accommodate truth to fit memory-knowledge experiences.

“They shall kindle them and devour them...”

- Note that the word “kindle” expresses the same meaning as “inflammation” or “burn.” Look above at the quote from TCR 383 to capture the essence of this passage.

Putting It All Together

1. Let’s begin with the goal of understanding two terms: the good of life and the truth of doctrine. Please don’t turn away from these terms as “doctrinal talk.” Look at ways these terms can come alive. For instance, try reading “love of life” where you see the words “good of life.” Now we have “the love of life.” Every love we have follows us to eternity. When the angels greet us in the spiritual world, they inquire or seek to find out what we loved most. Was it a love for the Lord and the neighbor, or was it a love for self and the world? Our loves will have varying degrees of application. Celestial love holds the Lord in the highest esteem. Spiritual love holds the Word and its truths in high esteem as the means for us to regenerate. There is a natural love that is

essential for us to live and work within the world of natural uses. All three have a unified or common purpose: Eternal life. We want to live in heaven with the Lord as our source of joy and loving our neighbors more than ourselves.

2. Let's try some transposing on the "truth of doctrine," too. Doctrine is best seen or viewed as "that which points the way." If we plan to take a trip, we pull out a map and choose what route to take. If we have plenty of time, we pick a scenic way. If we are in a hurry, we pick the most direct way. Regardless, we need a map to find the way. The Lord's doctrine is a directional help. We need the "truth of doctrine" to point out our way.
 3. On the other hand, the "house of Esau" works to ignore the good of life. In its place, it offers the "good of self." Me, myself, and I are the essentials in the "house of Esau." Others are accepted if and when they serve egocentric purposes. The doctrine of "the house of Esau" studies ways to take advantage of the neighbor.
- Stubble is the way the Word pictures this for us. Stubble is the part of the stalk that is now void of fruit and is highly flammable and dangerous. Self-love, highly volatile, sparks when it is ruffled, and thus we have a kindling and destroying fire.
 - The Lord in the midst of this "stubble" calls us to calmness. Esau will have no survivors. Esau will not remain a troublesome force. How do we know this? The closing words of these verses say it clearly: "For the Lord has spoken."

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.
Read Obadiah 1:17-18.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. Did you make note of the "houses" of Jacob, Joseph, and Esau? Think about the quote from *AC 4592 [11]* and the issue of spiritual realities.
2. How did you do with the "good of life and truth of doctrine" exercise? Don't become a literalist with doctrine. The Lord offers various ways to express "good and truth." Good is called Love. Good is called Esse. Good is called Substance. Good is called the First. Good is called Heat. (How many more can you add to this list?)
Truth on the other hand is called Wisdom. Truth is called Existere. Truth is called Form. Truth is called Middle. Truth is called Light. (How many more can you add to this list?)
3. What present things in life would you identify as stubble? Have you ever experienced the volatile nature of self-love? Have you ever felt that rush to judgment and said things that were hurtful and vindictive? What is our protection against this?

4. For those who would like to think that hell is not eternal, how would they explain the words “no survivors shall remain”?
5. “For the Lord has spoken” certainly puts things in perspective. The Lord is in charge. Esau, with its bragging nature, is not in charge at its own demise. It is kind of sad in one way, but positive in another way. What feeling came first, the sad or the happy? This might be a good time to talk about the expression “fear of the Lord.” Talk about the two sides of this “fear” and how it differs from other fears. Also think about the phrase, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (*Psalm 111:10*)

OBADIAH 1:19-21

“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. 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. Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

Passages From the Writings

P&P

- “...that the new church will have an understanding of the truth, and those who are in the church will be saved, vers. 19-21.”

AC 4592 [11]

- “In Obadiah (1:18, 19)...names signify things (and it) is very evident here, as in other places, for unless it is known what is signified by...the ‘Philistines,’ the ‘field of Ephraim,’ the ‘field of Samaria,’ ‘Benjamin,’ and Gilead,’ and moreover what by ‘them of the south,’ by a ‘house,’ a ‘plain,’ a ‘mountain,’ and a ‘field,’ nothing here can possibly be comprehended; nor were the things done that are here historically related. But the man who knows what each expression involves, will find heavenly arcana therein. Here also ‘Benjamin’ is the spiritual from the celestial.”

AC 1197 [4]

- Philistia “signifies...no love and no faith...” in things that are spiritual and celestial. Obadiah 1:19 is cited.

AC 4117 [3]

- “Because Gilead was a boundary, it signified in the spiritual sense the first good, which is that of the senses of the body; for it is the good or the pleasure of these into which the man who is being regenerated is first of all initiated. In this sense is ‘Gilead’ taken in the Prophets, as in....Obadiah 1:19....”

AC 9340 [9]

- “In Obadiah (1:19)...the setting up of the church is here treated of; but real things are unfolded in the names; ‘they of the South’ denote those who are in the light of truth...‘the mount of Esau’ denotes the good of love...‘the plain of the Philistines’ denotes the truth of faith; ‘a plain’ also denotes the doctrine of faith... ‘Ephraim’ denotes the intellectual of the church...‘Benjamin’ the spiritual celestial of the church...and ‘Gilead,’ the corresponding exterior good....”

AC 1458 [4]

- “...‘the south’ signifies a state of light...‘the south’...signifies the intelligence which is procured by means of knowledges. These knowledges are celestial and spiritual truths, which in heaven are so many radiations of light.... In Obadiah (1:20)...‘the cities of the south’ denote in like manner truths and goods; hence the very truths and goods of which they are heirs: the Lord’s kingdom is here treated of.”

Derived Doctrine

Please note that we have our work cut out for us in this section. *AC 4592 [11]* says, “unless it is known what is signified by [all the names in these verses]...nothing can possibly be comprehended...the man who knows ...will find heavenly arcana....”

The difficulty is that I can only find correspondences for some of the names, which prevents us from using derived doctrine to understand them. Here are the names for which I found no explanation:

- The RSV translation gives us “**Negeb** shall possess Mount Esau.”;
- “those of the **Shephelah** the land of the Philistines...”;
- “the exiles in **Halah** who are the people of Israel; and
- “and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in **Sepharad**.”

- The NKJV presents us with “**the south**” instead of **Negeb**;
- “the **lowland** possessing Philistia instead of **Shephelah** possessing it; and
- “**captives**” instead of “**Halah**” who are the people of Israel.

- Add to these translation differences the fact that here are no correspondences for Negeb, Shephelah, and Halah in the Writings.
- We can make some derived doctrinal applications for Zarephath when we read why Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath.

Question: What are we to do about this void of correspondential information? Will it take away our ability to comprehend these verses? Will we lack the heavenly arcana promised?

Answer: “Let’s roll.” We will do the best we can with what is given and pray for the enlightenment the Lord promises to sincere and active seekers.

“And the lowland shall possess Philistia...”

- *AE 449 [5]* explains that “lowland” signifies good and truth in the natural man. “Philistia” signifies those who are in a faith separated from charity. (*DP 326*) “Philistia” represents those who have false ideas and use these ideas to reason about spiritual things. (*AC 705*)
- To “possess” denotes purifying truths from falsity. (*AE 710 [16]*)

“...the fields of Ephraim...” and “...the fields of Samaria...”

- “Fields” represent the church as to good. The field of a church represents receiving the seeds of good and truth. (*AC 3766*)
- *TCR 247* shares with us the positive and negative meanings of Ephraim. In the good sense, Ephraim represents “the understanding of the Word, from which and according to which the church is.... the church is such as is the understanding of the Word in it; excellent and precious if the understanding is from genuine truths out of the Word, but destroyed, yea, filthy if from those that are falsified.”
- *AC 2466 [4]* explains that Samaria signifies the church (as to good) in the affection of truth. Think of the Samaritan woman at the well and her conversation with the Lord.

“Benjamin shall possess Gilead.”

- Recall that the word “possess” denotes purifying truths from falsity. Gilead represents the “first good,” “the senses of the body,” and the “first things initiated.” (*AC 4117 [3]*) Benjamin represents the “spiritual from the celestial.” Put another way, Benjamin is the truth one gets from the Lord (love). What a wonderful way for us to picture the Lord possessing the senses of the body, the first loves we had as a child. All of the things we were initiated into (remains) will be taken over by the Lord and made new and clean of falsities.

"...the captives of the host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites..."

- *AC 7950* explains that "captive" signifies a mind in darkness about good and truth. *AE 175 [12]* describes "captive" as signifying evils that possess. *AE 811 [27]* has yet another interesting description, noting that those who bar others from truth and good will themselves be captive to falsities. Isn't that what Esau did to Israel?
- "Canaanite," in *AC 1444*, signifies the evil heredity from the mother in the Lord's external man. *AC 1573-4* explains that Canaanites represent evils and falsities in the externals of the regenerating person.
- Once again, start with the word "possess" as denoting purifying truths from falsity. How does this help us focus on the meaning of possessing the land of the Canaanites?

"As far as Zarephath."

- *I Kings 17:9-24* tell the story of the widow of Zarephath.
- The Lord directed Elijah to Zarephath, in particular to the home of a widow. We are taught that the "brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land."
- A widow represents those who have good that is without truth. The widow represents those who desire truth, but for whom the "brook dried up."
- *AC 9198 [2]* explains that this story illustrates how the Lord and Divine Truth were less "well received and loved in people's hearts within the church than outside it..." Because He was born a human being, there was scarcely any acknowledgment of Him as God in the people's hearts, and they believed His Humanity to be like their own.
- Can we not see why "possession" had to go as far as Zarephath? The Lord's possession (purifying) of such spiritual apathy must go as far as it needs to correct the problem. Otherwise, a new church cannot come to fruition.

"The captives of Jerusalem...shall possess the cities of the south."

- *AC 1458* describes the "south" as meaning a movement into a clear state of the interiors that comes about when goods and truths give a greater light.

"Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau..."

- It is a curious thing that the plural, "saviors," is used here. In most cases, we would expect Savior. Could this plural term refer to the trine of Love, Wisdom, and Use? *DLW 230* states, "For love and wisdom without use have no boundary or end, that is, they have no home of their own..."
- If the saviors are to judge the mountains of Esau, it makes sense that these three would be present. Esau was full of self-intelligence and a life of self-

service. Listen to this quote from *AC 503*: “The life of love...[is a life in the performance of uses] from use, by use, and according to use...there can be no life in what is useless, for whatever is useless is cast away.” So we can picture the perceptive “saviors” present at mount Esau, judging the merits of Esau’s love, wisdom, and use (or the absence thereof).

“And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

- One almost wants to say “Amen” following these words. Do we really need derived doctrine for this portion of our study? Not really. Our hearts feel the rightness and necessity of such a truth being stated before the forces of Esau.

Putting It All Together

1. “The new church will have an understanding of the truth, and those who are in the church will be saved.” (*P&P*)
 2. We often agonize over the size of our denomination. We equate size with rightness. The fact that other churches seem to be growing faster than the New Church bothers us. What really “hurts” is that some “doomsday cult” has a larger group of followers willing to gather on top of a mountain waiting for the final judgment day. How can such nonsense attract so many devoted (fanatical) followers in such a short time? We look at the Jones massacre in Guyana and the Waco Cult in Texas, and we wonder where we are missing the boat. How can anyone really believe what they say is the matrix of their doctrinal beliefs?
- In matters of doctrine, we can’t seem to agree on much between ourselves and other New Church organizations and offer a hand of cordiality to them. Is there a sense of despair as we think of these things? I hope so. Let us use our knowledge of our church to focus on the Lord’s promise of resolution.
 - He says that He will “possess” and purify truths from falsities. He will return to our “Gilead” state and possess the “first goods” and the senses of the body and will pull forth remains of innocence.
 - He will visit the “lowlands” to bring good and truth to the natural man. Next, He will possess and make the fields of the church productive again. The field of Ephraim will once again have an understanding of the Word; the fields of Samaria will have a thirst for the good of truth.
 - Self-interests will lose their appeal and haughtiness. Uses that are idle will be judged and removed. The Lord’s people will be “from use, by use, and according to use.” The “new church” will have an understanding of the truth and will be saved. The kingdom will be the Lord’s.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Obadiah 1:19-21.

Questions to Stimulate Reflection

1. How much could we fill in the void of correspondences we had for names and places mentioned in the verses? Were we able to open some of the arcana in these verses? Did you feel a confidence building as we pushed on? What did you learn?
2. The stubble of Esau is still an issue we have to face every day. Television and magazine commercials tell us what we need. They tell us what the good life is, and they boldly tell us that “it doesn’t get any better than this.” Really? How can we take all of this with a degree of good humor and yet not buy into the “stubble” of it all?
3. To what degree should we become cautious of a “church family” member’s view of doctrines if it sounds like “doctrinal heresy”? What is the best or most charitable way to resist falsity? What is the best way to confirm whether it is indeed false?
4. How do we look for our “saviors”—LOVE, WISDOM AND USE—and try as hard as possible to keep them as our unified trine? Idleness will not endure. At the mountains of Esau, the judgment of the Lord’s saviors will perceptively sort it out. Do we wait for Providence to do this?
5. What is your feeling about this derived doctrinal view of the mountains of Esau?

Epilogue: A Summary of the Book of Obadiah

The following summary draws and expands on the outline given in Summary Exposition of the Prophets and Psalms.

Those who are in a state of self-intelligence will pervert the Word. We need to be watchful and ready to combat such overt perversion. How will we know the intent of those perverting the Word? It will become known in the attitude they express. They will imagine themselves more intelligent than the rest, including the Lord.

The followers of Esau will cleverly defend the falsities they love with the light of the natural world. Some “apparent” truths will be used illustratively with human prudence as proof. But such natural lumen will pale in the heavenly light of the Lord and with Esau’s spiritual demise, all attending falsities will dissipate, too.

Even though the Word warns of their end, Edom remains haughty and conceited. With delight, those in an Esau or Edom state will point out the deficiencies of the literal sense. Their conceit works hard to do damage to the church. For those who are in self-intelligence, there is a glee or delight in their subterfuge. Harm will slip in among those who are not alert to their falsity.

Evil might rule for a time, but the Lord will rule in the end. A new church will arise. This church will have an understanding of truth. It will love truth for truth’s sake. Those within this church will be saved.

“And the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.” (*Obadiah 1:21*)