

Obadiah 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.

Analysis

But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. After pronouncing judgment on Edom and the nations, Obadiah pivots dramatically with "But" (וְ, ve)—introducing contrast between the nations' fate and Zion's future. "Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance" (וְבָהָר צִיּוֹן תִּהְיֶה פְּלִיטָה, uvehar tziyon tihyeh peleytah) promises that while Edom and hostile nations face judgment, Zion—representing God's covenant people—will experience escape, deliverance, and salvation.

"And there shall be holiness" (וְהַיָּה קָדֵשׁ, vehayah qodesh) indicates not merely ritual purity but comprehensive consecration to God. Zion will be set apart, sanctified, dwelling in covenant relationship with the Holy One. This contrasts sharply with the defilement and violence characterizing Edom and rebellious nations. Holiness is both God's gift to His people and their calling—separated from sin and dedicated to God's purposes.

"And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" (וְיָרַשׁוּ בֵּית יַעֲקֹב אֶת מִזְשִׁיחָם) promises restoration of inheritance. The verb יָרַשׁ (yarash) means to dispossess, inherit, or take possession—the same word used for Israel's conquest of Canaan. What enemies had taken will be restored; what God promised will be fulfilled. The covenant land and blessings will return to their rightful recipients.

This verse has multiple fulfillments. Immediately, it encouraged exiles that despite Babylon's devastation and Edom's treachery, God would restore Israel. Historically, the return from exile (538 BC onward) partially fulfilled this. Yet the ultimate fulfillment is eschatological and spiritual—in Christ. He is the true Zion (Hebrews 12:22-24), the place of deliverance and holiness. Believers in Christ are the house of Jacob—Jew and Gentile united—who inherit all covenant promises (Romans 9:6-8, Galatians 3:29, Ephesians 3:6). The New Jerusalem is the ultimate Mount Zion where God's people dwell in holiness forever (Revelation 21-22).

Historical Context

For Obadiah's audience—Jews suffering exile or its aftermath—this promise was desperately needed hope. Jerusalem lay in ruins, the temple destroyed, the land occupied by enemies, and covenant promises seemingly nullified. Edom's treachery during Jerusalem's fall (verses 10-14) made the wound even deeper. Where was deliverance? Where was holiness? How would they possess their possessions when everything was lost?

God's answer through Obadiah: Mount Zion—representing God's presence and covenant faithfulness—would become the source of deliverance. Though currently devastated, Zion's future was secure because God's promises are irrevocable. The physical return from exile under Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah began this restoration. Jerusalem was rebuilt, the temple reconstructed, and covenant worship restored.

Yet the full reality awaited Christ. Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem (Acts 1:9-12), guaranteeing His return to establish His kingdom. The early church understood itself as spiritual Zion—the place where God dwells by His Spirit (1 Peter 2:4-10). Hebrews 12:22-24 declares believers have come "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." The promise continues to its consummation when Christ returns and God's people inherit the new heavens and new earth—possessing fully the inheritance secured by Christ's redemptive work.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Mount Zion as the place of deliverance point to Christ as our ultimate refuge and salvation?
2. What does it mean for believers to be characterized by holiness—set apart for God—in daily life and conduct?
3. In what ways have you experienced restoration of inheritance—spiritual blessings that sin or circumstances had stolen?
4. How does the promise that "the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions" assure you that God's covenant promises will be fully realized?
5. How should the certainty of future restoration affect your response to present losses, injustices, or discouragements?

Interlinear Text

וְבָבָה ר	תְּהִלָּה ה צִיּוֹן	פָּלִיט ה	וְבָבָה יְה
But upon mount	Zion	shall be deliverance	H1961
H2022	H6726	H6413	
וְבָבָה יְה	תְּהִלָּה ה צִיּוֹן	פָּלִיט ה	וְבָבָה ר
and there shall be holiness	shall possess	and the house	of Jacob
H6944	H3423	H1004	H3290

מִזְבְּחָהֶם:
their possessions

H4180

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:27 (Parallel theme): And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Amos 9:8 (Parallel theme): Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

Joel 2:32 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Isaiah 60:21 (Parallel theme): Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Joel 3:17 (Holy): So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Isaiah 46:13 (Parallel theme): I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

Isaiah 1:27 (Parallel theme): Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

Jeremiah 46:28 (Parallel theme): Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

Jeremiah 44:14 (Parallel theme): So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

Jeremiah 44:28 (Parallel theme): Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or their's.

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