

OBADIAH
Lesson 1
What Is Behind Pride?
Obadiah 1

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Obadiah, where is that? Is it in the Bible? If it is, surely it cannot be very important because it only has 21 verses which is the shortest book in the Old Testament. If for no other reason, this book is important because it is part of the inspired Bible (II Timothy 3:16, 17). ***II Timothy 3:16, 17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

B. Obadiah deals with key issues, and whenever crucial issues are at stake, words are not wasted. Big things come in small packages. A telegram or military orders may be brief but they often pack a big wallop.

C. Obadiah has a lot to say in a few words. This book gives us insight into God - His power and sovereignty, and His unchanging character against sin, and His unbendable will for justice. This book also gives us insight into man who is proud, arrogant, self-centered and cruel. Edom was a very small country but it was proud and God hates pride (3a). ***Obadiah 3a: The pride of your heart has deceived you.*** According to ***Proverbs 16:18, "Pride comes before destruction."*** Pride is so deceiving because proud people are so full of pride they cannot recognize it in themselves but they are quick to recognize it in others.

II. THE THEME

A. The primary theme or message of Obadiah is judgment or doom against the nation of Edom for their miserable, backhanded, diabolical treatment of Israel, God's people (10). ***Obadiah 10: Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever.*** Some have called this a hymn of hate, a divine speech of doom or a tract against the sin of pride.

B. It is not all a message of doom for the secondary theme is the deliverance of Israel. From verse 17 on we have a marvelous promise of the restoration of Israel, so we see again the promises of God are always kept because He is the covenant-keeping Jehovah-God who never fails His people.

C. This prophecy against Edom was spoken to the Edomites, but it was also spoken to the Israelites to comfort those in Israel who were the elect remnant who were loyal to Jehovah-God, even though they were suffering with the whole nation for its rebellion against Jehovah. As the remnant heard the words, ***"On Mount Zion will be deliverance"*** and ***"The house of Jacob will possess its inheritance"*** and ***"The kingdom shall be the Lord's"*** they would be spurred on to faithfulness even though the nation as a

whole had apostatized. When Israelites heard this prophecy, they would take courage, be revived in heart and persevere for God in spite of horrible conditions as they saw Jerusalem, the Temple and the Palace about to be destroyed. Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, ***“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”***

D. It is interesting to note that God is Judge at the beginning of the book and King at the end because all things are under the control of a sovereign God, both nations and individuals (Daniel 4:35). ***Daniel 4:35: All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”***

III. THE AUTHOR

A. Obadiah’s parentage, social status and occupation in life remain obscure to us. We know his name means “worshipper of God” or “servant of Jehovah.” If a person must be remembered for one thing only, what better than the title “worshipper of Jehovah.”

B. We might speculate that Obadiah was a strong man spiritually, able to stand up to great opposition to his message, and that he was a man of few words, but this is only speculation.

IV. THE DATE

A. Obadiah is the most difficult of all the prophets to date. The date is not essential for proper interpretations.

B. There are three views on the date of this book and good scholars hold all three: 1) In the reign of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat around 848-841 BC; 2) In the reign of Ahaz around 731-715 BC, and 3) Around the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 BC which would put the date at approximately 588 BC. The last possibility is the one I personally accept.

C. Obadiah, then, was a prophet living before the Babylonian exile who foresaw by the Holy Spirit through prophecy the doom of Edom, the greatest enemy of God’s people. Edom hated the Jews. The result was that judgment is spoken against Edom more than any nation in the Old Testament.

V. THE VISION OF OBADIAH 1

A. The vision of Obadiah -- Obadiah was given a vision by God about the future of Edom. He obviously was given sights, visions, pictures before his mind, but he only gives us the meaning of the prophecy. The prophecy was not a product of Obadiah’s reflection, nor was it his keen insight into the religious and political conditions of the day. He was given divine, supernatural revelation from God, and the mark of a

true prophet is that his prophecies always come to pass.

B. This is what the Sovereign Lord says, -- Behind Obadiah's vision was the Sovereign Lord. The word "sovereign" is the Hebrew word *Adonai* which means Lord, Possessor of All Authority, Creator and Ruler of all the universe. The word "Lord" is *Yahwey* which means the God who enters into covenant with His people Israel. NOTE. Let us always remember it is the Lord-God, the Sovereign-Lord who is behind the words of scripture. We are not dealing with a flimsy man but with a famous, faithful God who always keeps His word and when He speaks it does come to pass. NOTE. The terms "the Lord says," or "Thus saith the Lord" or "The word of the Lord came" occurs over 2,400 times in the Old Testament, giving divine inspiration and authority to the word of God.

C. About Edom.

1. The Nation Of Edom. Edom was a very small country located in the mountains. It was 110 miles long and 30 miles wide. It had two main cities - Bozrah in the north and Teman in the south which was part of the city of Petra. Petra was the best fortified city in the ancient world and was considered unconquerable.

#1. Hurt by father and spend the rest of your life to show him you are his superior.

#2. Hurt by a sister who is pretty so you work to be superior to her in mental abilities. Driven by pride. Must deal with those attitudes! Repent, forgive and move on!!

2. The History of Edom.

A. Edom is another name for Esau and it is where the descendants of Esau settled. (Genesis 36:1). ***Genesis 36:1: This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom).*** Edom hated Israel and this animosity can be traced back to Esau and Jacob, who were twin brothers, descending from Isaac and Rebekah.

B. This animosity between Edom and Israel goes back to a struggle and conflict that went on in Rebekah's womb (Gen. 25:21-26). ***Genesis 25:21-26: Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer; and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.*** Before these twins were born God said, "***The older***

(Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob)."

C. This conflict finds its historical basis when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of stew (Gen. 25:27-34). ***Genesis 25:27-34: The boys grew up and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished." (That is why he was also called Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.*** It was through the birthright that spiritual privilege came and this was always through the first or oldest son, and in this case it was Esau because he came out of his mother's womb first. Esau didn't care about spiritual privilege so when he became hungry he sold his birthright for some stew. Jacob, on the other hand was no saint, and he deceived Esau and Isaac in order to get the birthright. We can say Jacob (the deceiver) cheated to get his birthright, but as Dizzy Dean would say, "He stole it fair and square." NOTE. In Esau we see a man who put personal needs above spiritual privilege. He was a man who lived for the moment. He was the originator of the "now generation" who says if it feels good do it and think about the consequences later. Esau, which means hairy, undoubtedly was very handsome, a rugged man, an outdoorsman, a hunter, an individualist, a man's man who was laid back about life. Outwardly, Esau would have been more appealing to us than Jacob who was a home-body and a mama's boy. Esau we are told in the Book of Hebrews was a "godless man" (Heb. 12:16). He was a totally secular person with no respect or need of God in his life. He did not give one wit for spiritual realities. Jacob had faith at least to see the importance of a spiritual birthright, but Esau had no faith and he didn't care, for he was too busy meeting his immediate physical needs. NOTE. This was the beginning of a great feud, conflict, enmity, hatred between Esau and Jacob. From this time on, Esau becomes an incorrigible foe of Jacob. It would be a feud something like the Hatfields and the McCoys. Esau later realized what he had done but it was too late. The birthright was bartered away and Isaac had given his blessing to Jacob. Esau became angry, bitter, hateful towards Jacob. He loathed the very ground Jacob walked on. He felt he was cheated, given a raw deal, dealt with unfairly and he reeked with bitterness. From that point on, Esau had to prove to himself, the world and to God that he was superior to Jacob. Everyday of his life was lived to prove that he was better than Jacob, and the result was intense pride on the part of Esau. At the basis of Esau's pride was bitterness (Heb. 12:15-17). ***Hebrews 12:15-17: See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.*** POINT. Think about your own pride and arrogance. Have you been hurt by someone and now you are committed to being superior to that person? You have something to prove. What is it deep down inside that

makes you want to be superior to others? What is behind your pride? Is it bitterness?

D. Later Esau leaves home and settles in the area of Mt. Seir, a very mountainous region (Gen. 36:8, 9). Esau went off and married foreign, unbelieving, godless women. No doubt this mountainous region was appealing to Esau. The Edomites were a rough, cruel, fierce, calloused, free spirited and proud people.

E. This hatred for Jacob and Israel, who descended from Jacob, was continued by the Edomites. Generation after generation passed on this hatred for Israel. NOTE. All men inherit a sin nature from Adam at birth, but that sin nature clings to hatred, bias and prejudice passed on from parents to children. The Edomites never forgot what Jacob had done to Esau and they never forgave. Consequently, they were overcome by hatred, prejudice and pride towards Israel. They never dealt with their sin and it affected generations of people. NOTE. They became a very prosperous people and developed an advanced culture. They lived in caves but their caves kept them warm in the winter and cool in the summer. There was in Petra a magnificent theatre carved out of stone that seated 3,000 people. The capital city had beautiful buildings, and the city population was about 30,000. The Edomites set up a false religion opposed to the true religion of Jehovah-God. The main temple, cut out of the red stone rock stood 130' high with towering columns. There were also thousands of smaller temples and "high places" on top of mountains where vile animal and human sacrifices were made to their pagan gods. The names of their gods were "Kaush", "Ai", "Hadad" and significantly "Edom" and "Esau." NOTE. When Esau left home to settle Edom, he left his understanding of the true God as given to him by Isaac. Married women who were idolaters. Esau could have followed Jehovah but he chose to follow another false religion which actually deified Esau and Edom. Esau and Edom were so bent on being superior to Jacob and Israel, they made themselves gods, thinking, therefore, they were better than all Israelites. Esau left the true God and got involved in idolatry and all kinds of sexual immorality, child sacrifice, homosexuality in the name of his gods which he had devised in his own mind. While the Book of Obadiah has nothing to say about the religion of Edom, we do believe their religion fueled their pride as a nation superior to Israel.

F. Centuries later Israel, when they came out of captivity in Egypt and were on their way to the promised land of Canaan, Moses asked the King of Edom to cross his land and the King refused (Num. 20:14-21). Why? Because they hated Israelites who were descendants of Jacob. From that time on, there continued to be bad blood between Israel and Edom. NOTE. It is interesting to note that the Israelites did not have the same hatred towards the Edomites. Why? Because God had commanded the Israelites in the Law to love their blood brothers the Edomites (Deut. 23:7). ***Deuteronomy 23:7: Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.***

G. The animosity and hostility continued for centuries. Saul, David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Amaziah, Ahaz all had problems with the Edomites. This conflict reached its height in 587 BC when the Edomites cheered on the conquering Babylonian armies as they conquered Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple (Psa. 137:7). ***Psalms 137:7: Remember, O LORD, what the Edomites did on the day Jerusalem fell.***

“Tear it down,” they cried, “tear it down to its foundations!” This was the incident about which Obadiah wrote his prophecy.

H. This hatred did not stop even then. In the late 6th century, the Nabateans from Northern Arabia, drove out the Edomites and those fleeing settled in Idumea, the Greek name for southern Judah. About 120 BC the Idumeans, descendants of Esau, were conquered by the Maccabean Jews who forced the Idumeans to be circumcised and follow Judaism.

I. Herod the Great, King of Judea from 37 BC to 4 BC was an Idumean, a descendant of Esau, and his relative Herod Antipas was the Jewish ruler who opposed Jesus Christ. This hatred never ended.

J. The Idumeans joined the Jews in their rebellion against Rome in 70 AD and were almost obliterated by Titus, the Roman general. Only a few Idumeans escaped and that people ceased to exist as a nation. Yet today there are still little pockets of people in the Middle East who claim to be descendants of Esau and Edom, and they still hate Jacob, Israel, Jesus Christ and Christians. Hatred runs so very, very deep. Only the grace of Christ in salvation can break this hatred cycle.

D. We have heard a message from the LORD; an envoy was sent to the nations to say, “Rise, and let us go against her for battle.” -- The prophet Obadiah and Israel were made aware of the fact that the Lord-God sent a messenger among the nations to stir them to war against Edom. Edom’s fate is sealed! God has spoken against them! Their end is near!

VI. CONCLUSION

A. What do we learn about God in verse one? He is the Sovereign Lord over nations and He does His will whenever and however He pleases. He is also a God who gives His word and keeps it.

B. What do we learn about man? Man is a sinner. He keeps grudges and does not know how to forgive. Man’s sin not only affects that generation but generations to come. Bias, hatred and prejudice in man is basically learned and clings to the sin nature. Man is full of pride because somewhere in his past he has been hurt and wants to show his superiority in order to make the point he is better than the one who hurt him.

C. How do we break prejudice, hatred, bias which so easily grip us? How do we free ourselves from the stranglehold of pride? Only Jesus Christ can free us. He said, ***“You will know the truth and the truth will set you free”*** (Jn. 8:31). Who is the truth? Jesus said, ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”*** (Jn. 14:6). Jesus again said, ***“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”*** (Jn. 8:36).