

God's Message to Us in Obadiah

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Introduction

Today in our sermon series in which we are looking at God's Message to us in Every Book of the Bible, we have come to the shortest book of the Old Testament: Obadiah.

- Obadiah is among the twelve books in the collection that is called the minor prophets.
 - They are called *minor*, not because they are inferior to other books in the Bible, but simply because they are shorter in length.
 - It is important that all Scripture is God-breathed, so anything written in a minor prophet has just as much authority as something written in a major prophet.

Obadiah is one of the books (like Joel) that does not give us any historical markers to enable us to know when it was written.

- By *historical markers*, I mean a marker such as we found in Amos where we were told that he prophesied when Uzziah and Jeroboam II were reigning.
- When we are not given such markers, it means that we do not need to know the date to understand the book,
 - however it is helpful to look at what was going on when the book was written.

In Obadiah, you have Edom (the descendants of Esau) charged and sentenced for joining in the attack of other nations against Jerusalem.

- As an inferior nation, they were taking advantage of Israel in Israel's time of weakness...rejoicing in the defeat of Israel and even going in to take what others had left behind of the spoils—adding to Israel's misery.
 - This was all more offensive because Israel was their brother—in the sense that both nations were descendants of Abraham—they were the twin brothers Jacob and Esau who were Abraham's grandsons.
- As to the date of Obadiah, many think that it was in relation to the Babylonian invasions that led to the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 BC... so perhaps around 600 BC.
 - But I am inclined to agree with those who think that Edom's attack was in relation to the invasion of the Arabs and the Philistines against Jerusalem in the days of King Jehoram spoken of in 2 Kings 8:20-22 and 2 Chron 21:8-17—around 848 BC.

But enough of that—what are we to learn from the book of Obadiah as God's people today?

- Essentially we learn what happens to those families in God's covenant who hate their brothers in the LORD—their Christian brothers as it were.

I. Understand that Edom is a covenant breaking family (or nation) that represents all covenant breaking families.

A. Esau, the progenitor of the nation of Edom, was the one who rejected Christ.

1. Do you remember the story in Genesis?

- Abraham's son Isaac and his wife Rebekah were unable to have children, but they prayed and the LORD gave them twin sons—Jacob and Esau.

- Although Esau was born first, the LORD told Rebekah that things would be reversed so that the older would serve the younger as the priest and head of the home.
 - That meant, among other things, that promised Son who would save Israel and the nations from sin would come through Jacob instead of Esau.
 - Isaac should have rejoiced, and taught his family to rejoice that Jacob had been chosen to be the progenitor of the promised Son, whom we know to be Jesus Christ.
 - He should have taught Esau what a blessing it was that Christ would come through his own brother, and taught him to look to God's promised salvation through Jacob.
 - But instead, he fought against the oracle of God and tried to make Esau the leader of the family instead.
 - The family was torn apart by this, and the end result was that Jacob and Esau hated each other...
 - And to make a long story short, Esau showed along the way that he did not care about the promised salvation—so long as he could get what he wanted in this world—which he did.
 - He ended up being content, in a bad way, with the world—meaning that he was happy to have riches and power and didn't really care about the special promise of God to his family.
- This, of course, was highly offensive to the LORD.
2. That was Esau rejecting—which is to hate—Christ!
 - He ended up being nice enough to Jacob once he got his treasure in this world...
 - But as far as Jacob as the progenitor of Christ—as far as Jacob as a Christian brother—he hated him.
 - He had no use for future salvation—for the city whose builder and maker is God eternal in the heavens.
 - Hebrews 12 describes Esau as a profane man—that is someone who does not care about holy things, such as God and His promises.
 - He only cares about this present world—and he may even pray to God for such things, but he sees no need to have a Saviour from sin who can give him eternal life.
 3. So Esau was a covenant breaker who brought forth a family of covenant breakers that grew into a whole nation of covenant breakers.
 - And the hatred comes out.
- B. Esau and Edom (the nation that comes from him) are used in scripture to represent all individuals and families who were born into God's covenant and rejected it.
1. For example, in Romans 9, the passage we read today, Esau is used as an example of a person born in the covenant who is not elect.

- In Rom 9:4-5, Paul speaks of those: **who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came;** yet, were not elect.
 - Though they have all the promises of the gospel, they do not believe them.
 - And Esau and the nation coming from him is the example he uses of such a one.
2. In Hebrews, a book which warns us about apostasy, Esau is again presented as one who rejected Christ... and given to us as a warning:
- Hebrews 12:14-17 says: **Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.**
 - What a terrible thing it is that though he grew up with all the promises, he had no regard for the kingdom of God.
 - He had no interest in the spiritual blessing of his family—
 - If he had, he would have remained in his home under Jacob his brother to whom the promise of the coming Son was given...looking for that saviour... but instead he went out and established a separate nation.
 - In other words, he detached himself from Christ and His people.
 - Do you understand what I mean?
 - It was to his own family that Christ was promised.
 - Esau was privileged to be in that family, but he was unwilling to submit to his twin brother whom God had chosen to be the priest of the home.
 - God's promises of salvation meant very little to him.
3. And the nation of Edom that came from him continued in the same trajectory.
- They had no use for what was promised to Jacob (or to Israel).
 - They remained a separate nation, and in time their hostility against Christ was seen in their hostility against their brother Jacob.
 - They were still circumcised, but they were not believers—they hated the ones who were heirs of salvation showing that they themselves were not heirs of salvation.

C. Do you see how this relates to the church today?

1. If a person hates the people who are in Christ, though that person is baptised, it shows that they hate Christ.
 - In his first epistle, John says, in 1 John 2:9-11: **He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**

- If we love Christ, we will have a love for those who believe in Him and for those that He has redeemed.
 - We will want to be among them as those with whom we have been forgiven and with whom we share the promise of life and pursue the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- 2. But you see, there are families, like Edom, that although they were (and often still are) baptised, do not believe in Christ.
 - They are not concerned about holiness and see no need of the salvation that Christ came to give us... even though they were born in a family... somewhere back in history... that did believe in Jesus Christ.
 - Understand... they may speak of Him in name, but when it gets down to it, the Christ they speak of is not the Christ who is revealed to us in the scriptures—in the gospel... but a Christ of their own devising.
 - For example, you have gay people who say that for them Christ is a symbol of someone who was rejected and ostracised like they are.
 - They do not see themselves as sinners who need to receive forgiveness of sin, but as victims who need to be understood.
 - And you have moralistic people of a more traditional kind...
 - They do not see themselves as sinners either.
 - They see themselves as the good people who are approved by God.
 - They see Jesus more as an example of being good than as someone they need as crucified to save them from their sins.
 - Esau can also be those who simply live in rebellion to God, shaking off the yoke of Christ, not wanting to be saved from sin—perhaps from punishment—but not from ungodliness...
 - Again, Esau or Edom represents those whose families were numbered with God's covenant people, but who turned away—in essence or in complete rejection of Christ.

II. In Obadiah 1:1-9, we see what happens to these Edomites—these who, like Esau, reject Christ and His people.

- A. Obadiah begins by declaring that as a prophet, he has heard a report from the LORD about how He is calling up an army against them.
 - **Obadiah 1:1: 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”)...**
 - In the case of Edom, this is not just to chastise them that they might repent—this is to finish them off as those who have rejected God's salvation by rejecting His people.
- B. Look at the terrible consequences.
 - 1. First, Obadiah shows that they will be brought down.
 - Those who are circumcised or baptised into God's promises and reject them are always a very high and lofty folk!
 - They suppose that they can get along fine without God's salvation!

- They resent being called to come under Christ and His authority, to submit to Him as a member of His church—they prefer to look after themselves.
 - Sure, they will ask God for things, but as far as any need for the true saviour who saves us from our sins—they are fine without that!
 - Esau lived in rocky cliffs and felt secure in his perch.
 - This is used to illustrate the attitude of covenant breakers who feel secure without Christ. Thus in Obadiah 1:2-4, the LORD says:
 - **“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?’ 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.
2. The LORD tells them how complete their destruction will be in verse 5-6:
- **5 “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? 6 Oh, how Esau shall be searched out! *How* his hidden treasures shall be sought after!”**
 - Do you get the picture here?
 - Their enemies won’t just attack them and take their spoils and leave—they will search out every last thing and take it all.
 - On the day of God’s judgment, covenant breakers will have nothing left them but a curse... all their treasures will be taken away.
3. Not only that, but there will be no one to help Edom... even their friends will turn on them the way they turned on their brothers in the church—even on Christ.
- Look at verse 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.***
 - Here is a taste of their own medicine.
4. And their leaders—the ones in whose wisdom and might they trusted instead of in the LORD—these godless leaders will be utterly helpless to rescue them.
- Obadiah 1:8-9 says: **“Will I not in that day,”** says the LORD, **“Even destroy the wise *men* from Edom, and understanding from the mountains of Esau? 9 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.”**
 - They will see clearly how mistaken they were to think that they could get on without God—what a grand delusion it was!
 - How can a sinner ever stand before a holy God?
 - Only if God Himself is his Saviour.
 - What arrogance to have the promise of salvation and to despise it—to be born in a covenant family with the rich promises of Christ and to reject Him.
 - How can anything but ruin come to such a one?

III. In Obadiah 1:10-16 the LORD describes their sin of rejecting Jacob—that is, Christ and the people who belong to Him for salvation.

- A. Look at how their behaviour toward their brother is described in verse 10-11:
1. Now remember, this is their brother to whom God had promised to give a Son who would save the world.
 - Esau should have been protecting Jacob and cherishing him as one rejoicing in the promise that God had made to Jacob... waiting eagerly for the promise to be fulfilled for him and his family...
 - That is what he would have done if he had loved God and had wanted to be reconciled to Him... but not Esau, not Edom!
 2. Verse 10-11 say: **For violence against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. ¹¹ In the day 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 of them.**
 - Instead acting like a brother in the covenant, the Edomites were on the side of the enemies of Christ. They actually joined them.
 3. The LORD goes on with His rebuke in verse 12-14: **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.**
 - Covenant rejecters find joy when Christ and His people are humbled—
 - They feel glee when a true Christian is humbled because it makes them feel less threatened...
 - It eases that haunting sense that they have been wrong to reject Christ because “Look, He is being destroyed.”
 - The LORD continues... verse 13: **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. ¹⁴ 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.”**
 - Talk about kicking your brother when he is down—here it is...
 - Instead of doing what they could to relieve them in their distress, they came and took whatever the conquerors had left behind...
 - They took the crumbs that remained—both the possessions and the people that remained.
 - They even captured those who were trying to escape along the road.
 - What a way to treat your brother!
 - This is behaviour that the LORD absolutely despises—for in His kingdom the strong look after the weak.
- B. Oh my baptised friends, be sure there is no hatred like Esau’s in you toward those who are in Christ.
- Your brothers and sisters in the LORD are not yet perfect—
 - But is there contempt for them? Is there disdain? Is there bitterness?
 - These are the people that Christ has called and is going to perfect.

- Whatever hatred you have for them, you have for Christ, who is with them.
 - Repent of this wickedness—it exposes a wicked heart of unbelief.
 - It shows that you have no regard for the Saviour who saves us from our sins.
 - Like Esau, you are so proud that you think you can get along fine without Him and you despise those who have Him as their Saviour and would just as soon see them disappear—either by denying the faith or by being taken out of the world.

C. The LORD declares that He will bring upon Edom just what they deserve.

1. What a terrifying thing it is to get what you deserve, especially when you are a covenant breaker who has rejected Christ like Esau did.
 - Look at verse 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. ¹⁶ For as you drank on my holy mountain, so shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been.**
2. God has another even greater day when all the nations will be gathered to Him and each person will be judged for what He has done.
 - What a thing it will be to have your reprisal return upon your own head—to get what you deserve.
 - The nations as nations shall be as though they had never been—wiped out—and the people of those nations will brought to judgment.
 - What a terrifying prospect, especially for a covenant breaker like Edom who not only sinned as other nations do, but also rejected the covenant into which Esau was born.

IV. But look—for God’s true sons and daughters, there will be great blessings!

- They will have deliverance—salvation—the greatest of all gifts.
 - Verse 17: **“But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance.”**
 - What a contrast—the other nations are being wiped out, but Mount Zion will be delivered by the mighty hand of God!
- And what will this deliverance entail?

A. First, **there shall be holiness**... also stated in verse 17.

- Something is holy when it belongs to the LORD...
 - When it stands in harmony with Him, as that which is free from defilement and sin—from wickedness and guilt.
- That is what we have to look forward to.
 - That is what we care about if we are truly the LORD’s elect people.
 - We want to be sanctified, or holy, we want to be like Christ—and we shall be if He is our Saviour—all that makes us ashamed shall be removed and we will be able to love Him as we ought and to love each other as we ought.

B. Next it says that the true church—**the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.**

- Here is another contrast to covenant breakers like Esau...

- Jacob will possess his possessions, but Esau, you remember, will be searched out so that even what he has hidden will be taken away.
 - My brothers and sisters, in Christ we shall inherit the whole earth.
 - We will lack nothing.
 - Let goods and kindred go now if necessary for Christ's sake—you get it all back and much more besides when He returns.
- C. In verse 18, it says that God's people will be like a fire to Esau...
- **v. 18: "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.**
 - The idea here is that we shall be the cause of their destruction...because they rejected us as God's people—they rejected Christ!
 - Christ is the one who is seen coming from Edom with a sword and garments covered in blood from visiting wrath upon His enemies who hate Him and His people.
 - They will not be able to continue their war against our LORD and against us.
 - The church, led by Christ, will be like a fire to them.
- D. Verse 19-20 explain that we will possess their lands...again, in Christ, the meek shall inherit the earth.
- **19 "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. 20 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.**
- E. But what shall the government of God's people be when this comes about?
- Look at the last verse! Obadiah 1:21.
1. **Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau...**
 - Their leaders are called *saviours*...what a contrast!
 - Remember how the LORD said that Esau's wise and mighty men would be completely dismayed and unable to help their people?
 - The leaders they trusted to deliver them would fail them.
 - Not so for God's people!
 - They will have saviours—redeemers—to govern them.
 - Leaders who will lead them in God's ways and not in folly.
 - Redeemers bring peace, not ruin and misery!
 2. But the very last thought is the best of all: **The kingdom shall be the LORD's.**
 - Everything will be under His rule—His dominion.
 - He is already sovereign over all and always has been... but this is something much better than that.
 - Even though He is sovereign, there are many who disobey Him.
 - That is going to change!

- Nations who never knew God will be cut off from the earth.
- Nations like Edom that knew Him but rejected Him will also be cut off from the earth, for they rejected the salvation given to their family and would not have the LORD to rule over them.
- But for the believer... Christ will take dominion of your life... blessed dominion.
 - All the rebellion in you will be removed.
 - He is a Saviour and He will remove it... when we see Him, we shall be like Him... the kingdom will be the LORD's...
 - There will be nothing but cheerful, joyful, complete obedience.
 - What beauty, what harmony, what peace, what glory!
 - Everything will be under Jesus' feet.

Conclusion: And you know, really, that is the great difference between Jacob and Esau—Jacob wants holiness, Esau wants independence from God.

- Both get what they want when Christ returns.
- What do you want?
 - Even so, come LORD Jesus!