

Obadiah: A Man of Vision

3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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This morning I have the privilege of making a declaration to you that you may have never heard in a context such as this. Please open your Bibles to the book of Obadiah. Now Obadiah may contain one or two pages in your Bible and don't apologize if you need to go to the Table of Contents to find out where he's hiding there in the Old Testament, but for those of you that are guests and visitors this morning, maybe you're wondering why a message on Obadiah? Probably one of the least frequented and read pages in your Bible? Because we as a family of faith are walking through the Scriptures, I jokingly say a chapter or two chapters a day. This was one of those weeks that if you wanted to, you could have read an entire book of the Bible several times because Obadiah is only 21 verses in length, but he finds himself tucked in the midst of a section of your Old Testament that we categorize as the minor prophets, and as you've heard me say week after week, not minor because of the quality of their message but simply, and what a fitting example today, of the lack of quantity of their message.

Today when we come to the book of Obadiah, we find a man much like the prophet Joel, one who we know so very little about. There are 12 Obadiyahs that are mentioned throughout the Scriptures and none of them are this one. We don't know much about his family tree. We don't know much about his heritage. We're gonna discuss in just a moment we don't even know if the Lord inspired him to write this in the 9th century or the 5th century BC. No other book of the Bible quotes him and yet nobody disputes his message.

If you'll allow me just for the sake of your ease of finding Obadiah, kind of a lengthy intro here, a couple things to know about Obadiah. The obvious is this, it's a very concise book of the Bible. It's the shortest book in your Old Testament, second shortest only to 3rd John in the New Testament, only 21 verses in length. But I want you to notice before we read Obadiah, I want you to notice the first two words, "The vision." Not only is this the only prophet, this is the only book of the Bible that begins with those words, "The vision." Now all throughout Scripture we see the Lord give individuals visions, the prophet Daniel, Isaiah, Micah. We understand the concept of a vision but what I want you to hear is when it says a vision, it's always inferring clarity. There's no muddy waters here when it comes to Obadiah. In other words, we don't have to read Obadiah and say, "I'm not quite sure what God was speaking of." It's always very clear.

Allow me to give you some New Testament examples. In Acts 9, the Apostle Paul, of course he was Saul at the time, he's on his way to Damascus for the purpose of persecuting and desiring to martyr those who believed in and followed Jesus Christ. He is met that day by Jesus himself. The heavens open up, the light shines, those around him see and hear but not what he heard. Three days later, Ananias came through, prayed for him, the scales were taken from his eyes. Saul the murderer became Paul the apostle. Later on in the book of Acts, he accounted to those that were high in authority about his testimony, his conversion, and he always referred to it that, "The Lord gave me a vision." There's nothing confusing about what Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. It was very clear. He and Jesus had an interpersonal conversation.

In the next chapter, Acts 10, there's a man by the name of Cornelius, a man of the Roman band, a military figure, who the Bible says prayed often and gave of his alms. He had a vision. He had a vision that Simon Peter would come and visit him and share with him the Gospel. At the same time, Simon Peter has a vision of that famous sheet that's tied in the four corners that comes down with the "unclean" Levitical animals and the Lord says, "Do not call unclean that which I have called clean." Not just literally Levitical dietary laws but the fact that the Gentiles now because the tomb was discovered to be empty, could be saved as well. Both Cornelius and Simon Peter referred to it as a vision.

Why is that important for the book of Obadiah? Because the audience to Obadiah is different than any other book in the Bible. Most of the prophets speak to Israel in the north or Judah in the south. Next week when we gather, that famous story of Jonah, he's gonna go preach to the Ninevites, but this is the only place where the entire contents are directed toward the Edomites. Now you may not believe or understand that that is significant but allow me to share with you why that is important. Edom contains the same three consonants in Hebrews as Adam, the red one, red dirt. Why is this important? Because the message to Obadiah isn't just to the northern kingdom, it's not just to the southern kingdom, we're about to discover in a moment it's not just to the Edomites, it's a message to all of humanity. The Lord's gonna take 21 very clear, concise verses and in a vision he's gonna share with us everything we need to know about our past and about our future.

So in the very unique event today, we're gonna read an entire book of the Bible in one sitting, 21 verses. It says,

1 The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. 2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. 3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4 Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. 5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the

grapegatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6 How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up! 7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. 8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. 10 For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. 12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. 13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; 14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. 15 For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. 17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. 18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. 19 And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. 21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.

Twenty-one very simple yet profound statements that reach beyond just the Edomites of locality but to the totality of humanity. What we know as the book of Obadiah can be divided into two sections: it's a vision of the past/present, I'll explain that in a moment; and it's a vision of the future.

As I mentioned, there's somewhat of a discrepancy of the actual dating of the book of Obadiah, either A, he's the very first prophet that God ever spoke through even before the Isaiahs and the Jeremiahs, or he is one of the exilic period after Nebuchadnezzar came into the southern kingdom and took them captive. Nonetheless, when the Lord speaks of the future, oftentimes he does so in the past tense as if it's already been accomplished, and so when we read these first half of what we know as Obadiah, it's a vision of their present state that may or may not have been spoken well of in advance but when you get to the second half of Obadiah, in the day of the Lord, everything that is spoken from that point forward is yet to occur is yet to have been revealed and/or observed.

So what about this vision of the past? What does God share with them? It's really summed up in verse 1, he says, "concerning Edom." It regards rebellion. See, the Edomites were the descendants of Esau and real briefly, understand that Abraham was the patriarch of which the Lord would bring ultimately the Messiah through. He would have a son of promise by the name of Isaac, and then Isaac would have Jacob. Jacob had a brother by the name of Esau. Esau was the ruddy man's man, Jacob somewhat the momma's boy, but nonetheless, Esau who was the chronological firstborn had been out hunting one day and he was famished to the point of death; he came and even though there was trickery by his brother and his mother, he was willing to sell his birthright. He was willing to forsake that which was rightfully his for the temporary pleasures of this world. Is that not humanity's story? We are willing each and every day to forsake our birthright to our Creator and our God for just a few moments and a bowl of porridge, and that's exactly what Esau did. He was so dismayed that Hebrews 12 says he sought repentance with tears and it was not granted.

The rebellion of the Edomites, the rebellion of Esau, if you'll notice down in verse 3 and 4, is actually parallel to the original rebellion in creation. Verses 3 and 4 sound very similar to Isaiah 14:12-14 where we hear of that one that we knew as Lucifer, now as Satan the devil. It was pride that swelled up in his heart where he said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will exalt my place above my Creator's place." Is that not what happens in our lives when we sin? We become our own god. We decide, "I want my seat, I want my opinion, I want my desires above that which God has for me."

How did this happen in Lucifer's life? How did it happen in Esau's life? How does it happen in your life? It's really pretty simple. The first thing that happens is we think we're invincible. Notice what it says that, "You have put your nest among the eagles. You put your rocks in the clefts." If you've ever seen the pictures of this part of the world, you think of the famous city Petra where dozens of feet in the air you have the dwelling places of people that they secured themselves from humanity but cannot run from the hand of God. They thought they were invincible and isn't that how we think as well, that, "I can do anything I want, any way I want, without the consequences thereof."

Not only were they invincible but they were ignorant. Notice it says there in verse 5 and 6 that, "you did not know when judgment would come upon you." It's amazing in our own lives and even in our culture, we willingly go contrary to the will, the way, and the word of God, and then we cry foul when the consequences come our way. We think we're

invincible and yet we're ignorant to believe that our decisions, our actions, our words and our thoughts will not have consequences. I've got new for you: the Bible says in Hebrews 4:13 that even if nobody else notices, we stand naked before God.

It's the story of Esau's rebellion, it's the story of humanity's rebellion, but notice back in verse 1 it says there's a rumor. It says, "I have heard a rumor from the Lord." You didn't believe Baptists were in the Bible, there we are right there. Some of y'all found the humor in that. You know how the speed of communication goes, right? It was the telegraph, then the telephone, but the fastest thing is tell a Baptist.

Alright, here we go, back to verse 1. It says, "I have heard a rumor." Now why is that important? I mentioned the dating of whether it be on the front side or the middle side or some of the chronology of the prophets, what that is saying is that whether it be Amos, or whether it be Jeremiah or some unnamed voice that was speaking the same message that the Lord was speaking through Obadiah, this is what's important: is the consequences of our rebellion, the consequences of our sin are not mentioned in an isolated manner in Scripture, in fact, the Bible talks about hell twice as much as it does heaven. Why? Because it is a rumor, it is confirmed, there are other voices all throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation we discover, that there are consequences in the temporal and most importantly in the eternal for our rebellion against a holy Creator God.

What's interesting is in the context of Obadiah's life, it comes to a realization and it says, "And there is an ambassador," verse 1, "that is sent among the heathen." In other words, what the Lord is saying is that when we go contrary to him, when we decide that we know better than he, he always sends a means, he always sends an avenue, he always has a way of communicating his truth in the midst of our error. If you noticed as you read throughout Obadiah, and we'll deal with this more in just a moment, it says that the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, they smiled, they gloated, they laughed, they celebrated when their distant relatives, the descendants of Jacob fell into calamity and distress. They thought, "Well, we live among the rocks. We are high and nested as the eagles. We're invincible." Yet they were ignorant.

What's interesting in 586 when that southern kingdom, when the descendants of Jacob went into captivity at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, according to Obadiah they celebrated, they gloated, they threw a party, they didn't know that about 100 years later the same destruction would come to them. It wouldn't be Nebuchadnezzar, it would be a conglomerate of forces. Yet the Israelites after 70 years according to the prophecies of God, they had come back. Remember the famous story where Nehemiah is rebuilding the wall and Ezra is reestablishing the temple, the city was being built, the temple was being reconstructed, the law had been discovered, and as the Israelites were returning from their bondage, the Edomites would go into bondage that has yet to be recovered. Don't believe me? Go Google any geographical site in the land of Edom today. It is desolate and destroyed.

You see, it's the picture of humanity, that when we return to the Lord, when we repent of our sins, he takes us back to our home place. He restores us in the right relationship that

we should be with him, but when we are determined to be contrary to him, it is an eternal place of death and destruction. You see, the message of Obadiah wasn't just to the descendants of Esau, it's actually to all of us as representatives of humanity. Those first seven verses are the past, but beginning in verse 8 of the book of Obadiah, we have a vision for the future, what will take place in the days ahead, and notice it says, "Shall I not in that day." That's that phrase that's been utilized so much particularly in the minor prophets representing that day when the Lord will bring a culmination to all things, what you and I in our context today would call the second coming.

When we look at the days that will one day befall each and every one of us, there are three important things that happen in Obadiah. The first one is this, in verse 8 we see that there is a rescuing that takes place. It says those that are the enemies of the people of God, those that are enemies of God, that the children of God, the sons, the daughters of God, shall be rescued. You do understand that this is the Lord's way of operating in our lives. When Adam and Eve found themselves in sin and ousted from the garden of Eden, the Lord rescued them by giving them coats of skin. When humanity was found in all of our wickedness in every thought, he rescued us through a boat that took 120 years to build and Noah as its architect. When humanity decided to shake its fist at God, we were rescued through the man of Abraham, a man who he and his wife were way past the child-bearing days and yet Jesus Christ would be the descendant thereof. It's the message of the Israelites eventually finally going into the Promised Land after 400 years of bondage and 40 years in the wilderness, led by a man whose name was Yeshua, Joshua, redeemer, rescuer. It's the same name in Hebrew as Jesus. Our faith is based on one who came and he rescued out of the grips of death. He rescued us out of the depths of destruction. What we see here in Obadiah is not just the southern kingdom being rescued from the peril of the Edomites but it's the story of humanity that all of us need to be rescued by God because all of us have gone the way of the Edomites.

But when you get to verse 10, the longest section of the book of Obadiah deals with revenge. Now for those of you that are not familiar, allow me to quote for you Romans 12:19, "Revenge is mine saith the Lord." Nowhere in Scripture is revenge yours. It is not your right to enact revenge on anybody for any reason, but you do have this mechanism known as prayer and I don't know if you've ever prayed this prayer, "God, did you see what they did to me? Get 'em!" He has the right to do it. Did we not just hear, "Thy will be done"? In the end, in that day the fulfillment of what even the martyrs in Revelation 6 who have been slain for their faith, they say, "O God, how long until you avenge our death?" Beginning in verse 10, it says that the Lord will avenge. He will go contrary to those who have been contrary to him.

Here's what's interesting in Obadiah, verses 10 through 14, he enacts revenge on those who were contrary to his people. Verse 15 and 16, those who were contrary to him personally. You get the idea that when you go contrary to the people of God, you go contrary to the Lord himself. With the Edomites who consistently fought the descendants of Jacob, they found themselves utterly destroyed and never to recover, but let's bring this into a modern 21st century context. Is it just me or does it seem en vogue today, is it in style, is it the fashion today to ridicule, make fun of, and dispose of biblical Christianity?

In fact, what's happened is if you stand and say, "Thus saith the Lord," if you say, "Well, the Bible says it, I believe it," all of a sudden you're a propagator of hate, all of a sudden you're archaic, out-of-date and uneducated, all of a sudden we find ourselves as Bible believing children of God on the outside of the culture, on the outside of that which is widely accepted. And this is a new phenomena in our culture but this has been a phenomena globally for a very very long time. Well, I've got news for each and every person who decides to bow their chest and to make fun of, to ridicule not only the message of the Bible but the God of the Bible, judgment is coming. You may not face it on this side, we may be the ones who are in jail, we may be the ones who are paying fines, we may be the ones who are paying court costs, but I've got news for you: the jails will go away and heaven never does. I've got news for you: those accusations will one day never be remembered again but heaven will never fade away. God's harshest judgment in the book of Obadiah for all of humanity is those who would dare speak contrary to his children, those who dare would speak contrary to his word.

You know, it brings up the old notion for a person who's a believer in Jesus Christ, this world is all the hell you'll ever know. But for someone who decides to be their own god, for someone who decides, "I know better than God," this world is all the heaven they'll ever know. There's nothing about this old world that I want to keep. There's nothing about this old world that I want to last forever. The older I get, the more I'm looking forward to a new body. The older I get, the more I'm looking forward to the former things being passed away which leads to the last aspect of Obadiah beginning in verse 17. There's my favorite word in the Bible, "But." In spite of all this, what is God going to do? For those who return unto him, for those who will not continually fight against him, it says that they shall be holiness to the Lord, they shall be delivered of the Lord, they shall be possessors of the things of the Lord.

Beginning in verse 17, the entire context when it says the kingdom has now become the Lord's is what you and I call the literal second coming, the battle of Armageddon, Jesus Christ splitting open the skies and descending to what we know as planet earth. What's important about that, what's important about the ending of the book of Obadiah is this, notice what it says in the very last verse, "saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S." On that day when Jesus Christ returns, those who oppose him, those who are contrary to him, those who are bent on fighting him, the Bible says their blood will rise to the bridle of a horse.

But the Lord doesn't come by himself. Notice what it says, "saviours," plural. The Bible says in that last day or on that day that the armies of heaven will be with him; that you and I as believers in Jesus Christ will follow him. Why are we his army? Why are we following? Because we have been bought by the blood of the Lamb. You see, on that day it boils down to blood. Either humanity, your particular blood being shed for your rebellion or allowing the shed blood of Jesus Christ to cover your rebellion when you repent of your sins.

You see, Obadiah is a little bitty book of the Bible, in my Bible it covers 1 ½ pages, interesting a small little message that covers the totality of time, and maybe today is one of those days where we finally heed its very concise clear message.

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe you're that individual, maybe you're that person today that for whatever reason and utilizing whatever excuse, you come to this point today having continually rejected and rebelled against the things and the person of God, but maybe today you say, "I'm done. I'm done fighting, God. I'm ready to repent. I'm ready to turn my life over to him." I've got great news, the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord should be saved. In other words, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will experience that last part of what we just read in the book of Obadiah, where one day not only have an eternal relationship with Jesus but come back with him. Maybe you're that person today that that's never been a reality. Can I encourage you just to have a conversation with the Lord? Just to cry out to him? It's not a conversation that has to be done out loud, it's not one that is necessary to repeat the same words or phrases I might use, but maybe it's a prayer, maybe it's a conversation that would sound a little something like this. "God, today I come and I just, I want to be honest about that which you already know about myself, I have rebelled against you. Lord, I've chosen my own path and I realize what it is, it's sin, and I understand the consequences of my sin. Your word says the result, the wages of my sin is death, but you also said that even though the results of my sin is death the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So God, today I want you to know I believe. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much, I believe he was willing to be born on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was living to live a sinless life on my behalf. I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much he was willing to pay the price for my sin on his cross and, God, I believe, I believe that three days later when they found the tomb empty, Jesus Christ made it possible for my sins to be forgiven and my soul to be saved. God, today I don't get it all, I don't understand it all but I do believe that Jesus Christ is the only answer to my sin problem so I'm asking you to forgive me, I'm asking you to save me. In the best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord. In just a moment I'm gonna pray over us, we're gonna stand and sing and we want to celebrate with you. We just want to encourage you just to step out and step forward so that we would have the privilege of praying with you and celebrating what the Lord has done in your life. Maybe you've already had that conversation with the Lord, maybe you need to follow in believer's baptism, maybe the Lord has said this is the family of faith that you're to become plugged into. Whatever it may be, we just want to celebrate what the Lord is doing in your life this day.

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, Lord, we recognize that you have edified us through the reading and the preaching of your word. You have communicated clearly to us we sit and stand today without excuse so, O God, may we respond to you appropriately. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

I'm gonna ask you to stand with me, as Jimmy leads us, whatever decision, I'll be right here at the front.