

Text: Obadiah 1-21 (Pew Bible pg.914)

Title: “My Kingdom or God’s Kingdom”

INTRODUCTION

Now open your Bibles to the prophetic book Obadiah. I’ll give you a moment because it’s a little difficult to find (Pew Bible pg.914). It’s a very short book, just one chapter with twenty-one verses, sandwiched between Amos and Jonah, so it’s easy to miss. Scholars are not certain where Obadiah fits in the timeline of OT history, but most likely he is a contemporary of Jeremiah, so he would be in that category of prophets through whom God spoke in the days of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the exile that followed. To get started, let’s just read v.1.

Obadiah 1 - The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom— 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”—

Now for you to understand the message of Obadiah you need to know what I will call the “tale of two sons.” It all has to do with a nation called Edom (the Edomites). God is announcing an attack will come on Edom because they are enemies of Israel. You need to know that there is a very important connection between these two groups of people. Remember the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? God made a covenant with Abraham that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The generations coming from Abraham would be the nation through whom God displayed His glory to the world. Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac who married a woman named Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons Jacob and Esau. You read in Genesis 25 that these two boys fought from the very beginning, even in their mother’s womb. When Rebekah prayed about this the Lord told her...

Genesis 25:23 - “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 day came for the boys to be born Esau was born first, then Jacob. And the Bible says that when Jacob was born he was literally holding on to Esau’s heel, like he didn’t want Esau to come out first. Jacob’s name literally means “heel-grabber,” or “deceiver.”

Normally the oldest son was the one who would carry on the family name and fortune by virtue of receiving the birthright. Well, Jacob (the younger) caught his older brother Esau in a weak moment and talked him into trading his birthright for a bowl of stew. So Jacob deceptively maneuvers to get the position of prominence in the family. But remember, God has already ordained this. The Lord told Rebekah, “one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

And that's exactly what happened. At the end of Isaac's life Jacob sealed the deal when he tricked his father into passing the blessing that belonged to the firstborn (Esau) to Jacob instead. As a result of this scheme Jacob would become the son through whom the future and fortune of his father would proceed.

Remember what the Lord told Rebekah about her sons ... two nations in her ... the older will serve the younger. Jacob's descendants were sovereignly chosen by God to be the people through whom He displayed His glory and His kingdom to all the inhabitants of the earth.

So these two sons became fathers to two nations. God gave Jacob a new name ... Israel, and his descendants became the nation of Israel. Esau's descendants became the nation of Edom, and we're back to Obadiah 1.

So throughout their histories there was great animosity between Israel and Edom. The Edomites settled in a region to the southeast of Israel, and there was constant war between the nations. The Book of Numbers tells us that when the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land they had to pass through Edom, but the king of Edom, still holding a grudge, refused to let them pass.

In the days of Obadiah when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar came to conquer Judah and Jerusalem, the Edomites said, "Yeh, let 'em have it." In the book of Psalms it even says that the Edomites cheered while the Babylonians were destroying Jerusalem. But remember, Israel is God's covenant people. Those who bless them are blessed. Those who curse them are cursed.

Hundreds of years after that, just after the birth of our Lord Jesus, a wild-eyed maniac by the name of Herod the Great heard that one would be born King of the Jews, Israel's Messiah. He was so insanely jealous that he massacred the babies of Bethlehem in the hopes that one of the ones killed would be Jesus. Herod the Great was an Idumean, a descendent of the Edomites.

So what we know is that the Edomites were constantly resisting and rebelling against the Kingdom of God. You see, what God was doing with the nation of Israel was all about His Kingdom. God's Kingdom will prevail in the end. And the last verse of Obadiah says this:

Obadiah 21 - Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD's.

Obadiah sees forward to the future when Jerusalem will once again be the center of the rule and the reign of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom will be the Lord's. That is where all of history is going ... up to this very day.

In OT times God's displayed His Kingdom through the nation of Israel. In the NT we see Jesus coming on the scene, and He announced that the Kingdom of God had come in a new and powerful way. People who embraced Him became people of the Kingdom of God. And today the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the window through which the world sees the invisible Kingdom

of God in action. We are people living under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. We are called to live in such a way that the world knows that God's Kingdom (His rule and reign) is real. But for now that Kingdom remains invisible. But the day will come when the Kingdom of God will be very visible when Christ returns and establishes His throne upon the earth.

Revelation 11:15 - "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

So this is where all of history is going. And you and I must decide whose kingdom will prevail in our lives ... my kingdom or His Kingdom. Are my energies focused on my kingdom or His Kingdom? Jesus calls us to pray for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus taught us to seek first God's Kingdom and God's righteousness, and all the other things will be added.

ILLUSTRATION - The Christian band "Mercy Me" has recorded a song entitled "'In the Blink of an Eye.'"

You put me here for a reason
You have a mission for me
You knew my name and You called it
Long before I learned to breathe

Sometimes I feel disappointed
By the way I spend my time
How can I further Your kingdom
When I'm so wrapped up in mine

Now back to the book of Obadiah. The nation of Edom throughout its history rejected and resisted the Kingdom of God as it was manifested through the nation of Israel. They were focused on their own kingdom rather than on the Kingdom of God. And we can see here in this short book of the Bible what it looks like to choose my kingdom over God's Kingdom. When I'm focused on my kingdom I will be...

1. SELF- CENTERED (vv.2-4)

Look at how the Lord describes their self-centeredness.

Obadiah 2 - "See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised."

Obadiah 3 - The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’

So Edom’s self-centeredness showed up in their pride. One thing they were proud of was the fact they were seemingly untouchable. One of the cities of the Edomites was a famous city known as Petra. In the tours I’ve led to the Holy Land we often go over to visit Petra. It’s an amazing place. It’s like some people built a city into a scaled down version of the Grand Canyon. Way up on the tops of the cliffs were these great buildings.

ILLUSTRATION – In the Indiana Jones movie “The Last Crusade” there’s a scene filmed in Petra where Indiana Jones is riding through this narrow canyon that opens up to this spectacular building carved into the side of the canyon. That’s Petra ... that’s the ancient home of the Edomites, though the city was built by the Nabateans.

But their pride would be their ruin because it would deceive them into thinking that no one could conquer her.

Obadiah 4 - Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD.

Now our attitude as citizens of the Kingdom of God is that God is sovereign over all. The appropriate response to Him is humility in every way.

James 4:6 - But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

“How can I further your Kingdom when I’m so wrapped up in mine?” It can cause us to be self-centered. It also causes us to be...

2. SELF-SUFFICIENT (vv.5-9)

When I live for my kingdom I’m saying “I can do this by myself. I don’t need God.”

Note: Scholars tell us that in Edom they find no record of any kind of dependence or allegiance to *any* gods, not just the Lord God. In most of these ancient cultures archeologists found evidence of some sort of idolatry or the worship pagan gods. Apparently, they were an entirely atheistic society. They were so self-sufficient they didn’t feel the need to call upon any god. “I can do it myself.”

The Edomites were self-sufficient trusting in their ...

WEALTH (vv.5-6)

Obadiah 6 - But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged!

Esau is another name for Edom. And their high cliff-dwellings provided all kinds of places to hide their treasures. But they could not hide their treasures from God.

And we must learn from Edom that no investment is safe that is not an eternal investment. The Bible says we are to lay up treasures in heaven where they cannot be destroyed. How do we do that? By investing in eternal things ... in the Kingdom of God. Are we depending upon our wealth rather than trusting in the Lord? If so, we'll spend all our money on our kingdom rather than God's Kingdom. "How can I further your kingdom when I'm so wrapped up in mine?"

There's more. The Edomites trusted in their...

FRIENDS (v.7)

They thought they had many friends and allies when the Babylonians came after them, but ...

Obadiah 7 - All your allies will force you to the border; your friends will deceive and overpower you; those who eat your bread will set a trap for you, but you will not detect it.

All their former alliances would become your enemies. Their protectors would become their predators. Remember, when the Edomites are messing with Israel they are messing with the Kingdom of God.

We can do the same. We can think that as long as we have friends and family around us we don't need to put our trust in God. There's more. The Edomites trusted in their...

INTELLIGENCE (v.8)

They were intelligent. They thought they knew everything ... certainly that they knew better than God.

Obadiah 8 - "In that day," declares the LORD, "will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, men of understanding in the mountains of Esau?"

They thought they were smart, but their pride deceived them (v.2). Their wise leaders would be unable to rescue them.

And we can do the same. We can lean on our own understanding and not trust in the Lord with our whole heart. That's what happens when we are self-sufficient.

But there's more. The Edomites were self-sufficient in their...

STRENGTH (v.9)

They thought they had the sheer strength to defend themselves against any enemy.

Obadiah 9 - Your warriors, O Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.

They thought they were strong enough to defend themselves, but their mighty fighting men would be terrified by what was about to come upon them.

So where is your security ... your sufficiency? Is it in your own kingdom ... your finances, your friends, your intelligence, your strength? Is that what you're trusting in for your life and your future? Let me ask you this: What if none of those things last as long as you do? What if your money, your family, your house, your health, your lifestyle doesn't last as long as you do? Your sufficiency better be found in something, better yet, Someone who will outlast you.

"How can I further Your Kingdom when I'm so wrapped up in mine?" When we're focused on our kingdom rather than God's Kingdom we will be self-centered, self-sufficient, and we will be ...

3. SELF-SERVING – greedy (v.11-14)

The next few verses show how self-serving the Edomites were. What did they do when they saw the Israelites, their brothers, being attacked by the Babylonians? Did they go to help? No, because they were self-serving, always resisting the Kingdom of God. Instead of helping...

Obadiah 11 - On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

When we're self-serving our only concern is what we want and what we need. At the bottom line we don't really care how it goes for others so long as it goes well for us ... self-serving. It's all about me ... it's all for me.

ILLUSTRATION – Over the past couple of years I have read and reread John Piper’s book “Don’t Waste Your Life.” It has become one of my all-time favorites. In fact, starting next Sunday evening Ray Raley and I will lead a summer Sunday night study through this book. Let me just read you a couple of paragraphs off of the back cover:

And it’s easy for us to go through life this way ... thinking only about what’s good for me. That’s what it means to be self-seeking. But our King Jesus set the example for us:

Matthew 20:28 - The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

CONCLUSION

Now for the Edomites a day of reckoning was coming.

Obadiah 15 - “The day of the LORD is near for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.

If you travel today to where the Edomites lived in the days of Obadiah, you will find one of the most barren places on the face of the earth. There is no indication that a civilization ever existed there. Edom was destroyed.

But Israel will be restored. God’s kingdom will prevail.

Obadiah 21 - Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD’s.

The message of Obadiah is this: God’s Kingdom is the only Kingdom that will remain. Every nation, every family, every person must decide whose kingdom will reign ... my kingdom or His Kingdom.

ILLUSTRATION – Last week I went to vote in early voting. As I got into the voting booth I noticed there were so many positions up for election. I began to think about the responsibility we have to choose the ones we think will best lead us. It occurred to me later that there is an election going on every day in the polling booth of my heart. In fact, it goes on several times throughout each day. And the big difference is that there are only two names on the ballot ... my name and the name of my Lord Jesus. And several times throughout each day there’s an election held in my heart. Will I live for my kingdom or His Kingdom? Will it be my way or His way? Will it be my agenda or His agenda? We must make the choice of putting our trust in Christ as the Savior and Lord of our lives from now on. Some of you are at that point today. But even after the make that choice, I have a daily, even hourly, choice. “How can I further His Kingdom when I’m so wrapped up in mine?”