

## INTRODUCTION

- Sometimes I've given up on a TV series because I get so frustrated I lose hope that the writers are going to give me a satisfying conclusion. They take too long to resolve the problems of the story and I lose faith.
- Sometimes we find ourselves in struggles that have gone on so long that it's hard to believe they can be resolved. For people of faith, **sometimes it's hard to believe in God.**
- Obadiah was written (i.e. spoken) at a time when the people of faith were having a hard time believing in God. Entering their story and hearing the message of this book can help us understand why it's sometimes hard to believe in God, and it gives us something to believe in.

## BACKDROP

Obadiah's prophecy announces the climax in the story of twin brothers that figure prominently into the overall story of the Bible. We first meet these two brothers before they were even born because they started fighting in their mother's womb. I've seen what one kid can do in the womb, and I imagine two is a lot more. Sounds like this mom was experiencing something extraordinary.

- **Jacob and Esau were twins who wrestled in the womb (Gen 25:22)**
  - o Their mother, Rebekah, cried out to God, "what's happening inside me?" God said, "two nations are at war."
- **Esau, the elder, sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew**
  - o This was no small transaction. Their father Isaac was the son of Abraham. It was through Abraham God had promised to bless all nations by making his descendants his people, giving them a home in his place, and governing them with his good favor (Genesis 17:3-8).
  - o They were to be God's people in God's place under God's rule. And this promise was the birthright of Abraham's line. As the older son, Esau held the birthright but gave it away.
  - o From the moment Abraham's blessing went to Jacob, Esau vowed to kill him, and so the war of nations began. Jacob's line became the nation of Israel. Esau the nation of Edom.
- **The Bible is the story of God's offer of salvation which came through Israel, but for most of the OT, Edom was not far away, always in conflict with Israel.**
  - o Edom's history is significant in Israel's—they are a minor ANE nation, but relatives of Israel, and they epitomize the antagonism of the nations toward God's people.
  - o The climactic offense of Edom against Israel is the subject of the book of Obadiah.
    - Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem and scattered the Israelites, and Edom came in to further loot and destroy Israel in the wake of Babylon.
    - Rather than rallying to their brothers' side, despite their rivalry, when a greater enemy arrived, the Edomites kicked their brother while he was down.
    - This was the straw that broke the camel's back.

## HOW TO READ OBADIAH

- The Speaker: Obadiah means servant of YHWH; likely from among the lower classes, those who remained after Nebuchadnezzar deported the upper classes in 598
- The Audience: 1-15 "to" Edom addressed to Israel (dual aud); 16-21 to Israel
  - e.g. presidential speech "addressing" other nations but seeking to influence the immediate audience. State of the Union.
  - Situation/condition of audience:

- Spiritually jaded—promises of YHWH (Genesis 17:3-8) had evidently failed. Block: “Jerusalem fell, the Davidic house was cut off, the temple was razed, and the major portion of the population was exiled from the land. For the survivors the spiritual fallout was more difficult to deal with than the physical distress.” They were questioning God—divine impotence, betrayal and abandonment. They said YHWH doesn’t see us; he’s abandoned the land (Ez 8:12; 9:9).
  - 586 disaster caused a theological crisis: i.e. my view of God doesn’t work anymore! Can’t reconcile what I see with what I have believed. Do I still believe?
- Words you might not know: Teman, Holy Hill, Mount Zion, Negev.

READ OBADIAH

TWO TRUTHS ABOUT GOD’S CHARACTER AND WAYS.

### 1. God humbles the proud (2).

- **Proverbs 3:34.** He mocks **proud** mockers but shows favor to the **humble** and oppressed.
- **James 4:6.** God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble.
- **Ezekiel 17:24** (contemporary of Obadiah). All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. ‘I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.’”
- **Two truths about pride:**
- **Proud attitudes are deceptive (3a).**
  - Edom’s pride
    - They lived in rock strongholds high in the mountains and were deceived into thinking no one could overtake them and bring them down (3).
    - They had hidden treasures (6)
    - They had allies (Babylon, Assyria) who would protect them.
  - God’s humbling
    - God says even if you were flying in the air or living among the stars, I’d still bring you down (4).
    - Thieves and pickers would take some and leave some, but God will ransack everything (6).
    - Edom’s so called allies will set a trap for them, deceive them and destroy them (7).
    - God will destroy the wise men, the warriors and everyone else (8-9).
    - God will bring them to shame and permanently destroy their nation (10b).
  - Israel’s pride
    - This whole situation was a result of Israel’s pride in their security as God’s people. They took for granted their land, God’s covenant of blessing, their capital city (MZ/J) and a king from David’s line.
  - Our proud attitudes:
    - Strongholds: we live in safe places—neighborhoods, door locks, alarms ...
    - Hidden treasures: bank accounts, investments ...
    - Allies: friends, colleagues, strategic partnerships ...
    - Other things: education, reputation ...
      - **What is the thing you tend to rely on more than God?**

- 2 THINGS I'M LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE:
  1. The more we rely on things we can see, the harder it is to believe in things we can't see.
    - Faith is the evidence of things unseen, and without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 4).
  2. Proud attitudes tend to take root when things are going well, and we don't notice our hearts drifting from trust in God. Then we things take a turn for the worse, rather than turning to God, we get jaded because we've equated God's blessing with our strongholds, treasures, allies.
- RECENT REVELATION. Three weeks ago at The Fraternity, Romans 1:18—suppressing the truth about God through unrighteousness.

- **Proud actions are destructive**

- Edom's violence against Israel (10)
  - Edom stood by while "strangers" and "foreigners" (Babylon) invaded and looted Jerusalem. Rather than behaving like a brother, they behaved like an enemy (11).
    - Upper classes were deported
    - Jerusalem was invaded
    - Casting lots likely meant dividing spoils and also population (who was deported, who was left, etc)
  - Edom looked down on Israel, rejoiced and even boasted in their day of trouble (12).
  - Edom invaded Jerusalem alongside/after Babylon, looked down on them and stole property (13).
  - Edom stalked and attacked those who escaped and handed them over to their enemies (14).
    - Babylonian invasion was God's judgment on Israel, not Edom's opportunity to pounce. **In what ways do we play God?**
- God's humbling:
  - The DOL is near = judgment for those who reject God, blessing for those who receive him (15a).
  - God will turn the actions of Edom and all nations against themselves (15bc).
    - Edom represents the Nations. Isaiah 34:1-10—judgement on all nations typified by Edom's destruction
  - Just as Israel drank God's cup of wrath (16a), Edom and the nations will drink exponentially more (16b).

**2. God lifts up the humble (17-21)**

- Having humbled Israel for their wickedness, he restores them, keeping his promise of the inheritance of people, place and rule.
- God will use Israel to wipe out Edom
- God will give the nations' land to Israel.
- In the end, the kingdom (dominion) will be the Lord's.

## TWO REASONS TO HUMBLY BELIEVE WHEN IT'S HARD.

- **The Dominion belongs to God**
  - He will fulfill his promises and restore his people to his place under his rule. The fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy came quickly on the heels of its pronouncement. In 538, Persian King Cyrus allowed Israel to return to Jerusalem.
  - He will bring down the high and lift up the low. He will humble the proud and exalt the humble.
  
- **Christ the King is our way to the Kingdom of God**
  - 1 Timothy 6:14-15 "King of Kings and Lord of Lords"
    - In Christ, we take part in God's promises of people, place & rule
    - In Christ, the proud are humbled and the humble are exalted.
    - In Christ, our spiritual enemy is conquered.
    - In Christ, those who deserve punishment (like Israel) for their rebellion are forgiven and reconciled to God.