

# Fairview Memorial Missionary Baptist Church

## Winter Bible Study

Theme: The Minor Prophets, The Man and His Work.

### “OBADIAH”

Lesson

BY

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The difference between the so-called “Minor” and “Major” prophets has to do with the length of their writings, and nothing to do with the idea that one may be more important than the other. If we subscribe to 2 Timothy 3:16, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God,...”*, and I do, then we must acknowledge that the shorter books of the Bible are the inspired Word of God and have equal value, so far as the message is concerned.

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest of the prophetic books; it contains only 21 verses, but we must remember: “Little is much, when God is in it”. Some times a short sermon is more effective and more appropriate than a long one. And too, the Lord may have inspired Obadiah to “speak” a lot more than he inspired him to “write”; but as far as we know, these 21 verses are all he was inspired to write.

I don't remember ever preaching from the book of Obadiah; nor do I recall hearing anyone else preach from it. But some very important principles are here-in set forth.

THE MAN - The name Obadiah means, “A Worshipper of God” or “A Servant of God”. Obadiah is one of four prophets of which we know nothing, so far as family history is concerned. Obadiah was a common name, and there are a number of men mentioned in the Bible who were called Obadiah. We don't even know the exact time period in which he lived. The date suggested, in the margin of my Bible, is 587 B.C. with a question mark. (Which means, the date is not certain) However, I lean toward that date because of Verse 11, which says, *“In the day that thou (Edom) stoodest on the other side, (with Babylonian, and not with Jerusalem) in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou (Edom) wast one of them.”* It seems to me, this would place the prophecy after the Babylonian captivity and about the time of the prophet Jeremiah.

OBADIAH'S WORK - Verse 1. gives the title of the book, “The Vision of Obadiah”. The prophecy was concerning “Edom”, and was a message of doom upon the Edomites for their pride and the wrong they had committed against Israel. Verses 3 and 10.

BACKGROUND- The Bible records the birth of twin boys. The Father of the twins was Isaac, the son of Abraham; the mother was Rebekah. During the pregnancy the children struggled within their mother, and Rebekah inquired of the Lord, why?

The Lord gave her this answer: *“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”* (Ge. 26:23)

**AT THEIR BIRTH** - *“... the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel; and his name was called Jacob.”* (Ge. 26:25-26)

These two boys had different personalities, and different interest; Yea, different natures. Yet each one became the head of a nation. Esau became the head of the nation Edom, and his descendants were known as Edomites. (Ge. 36:1; 8-9) Esau’s son’s became high ranking Noblemen, and were known as **“The Dukes of Esau”**. (Ge. 36:40-43)

In preparation for this lesson, my research led me to a statement made by Dr. Griffith Thomas, who was born in England, of Welch descent, and lived from 1861-1924. He along with Dr. Lewis Chaffin were the co-founders of the Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Chaffin taught the first class of 13 students. Dr Thomas was the first Theology professor.

A student approached Dr. Thomas and said, “I am having a problem understanding why God said, ...”***I loved Jacob... and I hated Esau...***” (Mal. 1:1-3) Dr. Thomas replied, “Young man, I am having a problem with those verses also, but my problem is different to yours. I can understand why God hated Esau, but I cannot understand why he loved Jacob.” **The Prophecy of Obadiah gives us some insight as to Why God, hated Esau!**

**THE LAND OF EDOM** was located south of the Dead Sea, and consisted of about 100 Sq. Miles, including the 5000 Foot ridge of Mt Seir, and, “The Red Rose City of Petra”, which was built by the Edomites. (Harpers Bible Dictionary)

This land of their dwelling is referred to in Obadiah’s prophecy, *“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? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence (from there) will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.”* (verses 3-4) It is interesting that the name Esau means red; Edom means red, and the mountains where they carved out the city of Petra, is red.

Esau had no interest in spiritual things. Hebrews 12:16-17 declares that he was a **“profane person”** (irreverent, showing disrespect for God) who for one morsel of meat (food) sold his birthright. *“And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother.”* (Ge.27:41)

Esau, for spite, married a Canaanite, a daughter of Ishmael, and contrary to the wishes of Isaac and Rebekah. (Ge. 28:6-10)

Jacob and Esau became reconciled to each other, (Ge. Chapters 32 and 33), and later, came together and buried their father. (Ge. 35:29) However, that root of bitterness, which was in Esau, continued in his descendants. Esau is no longer one person, but has become a nation, some think, perhaps of 250 thousand "Little Esaus". The Edomites being full of bitterness and pride became ruthless, and the grudge against Israel continued.

This "Old Feud" between Jacob and Esau erupted many times over the years. The Edomites refused to let the Israelites pass through their land, after they came out of Egypt. (Judges 11:16-17) The Psalmist remembers Edom being on the side of the Babylonians when Jerusalem fell. (Ps. 137:7) Obadiah's prophecy mentions the violence of Edom against Israel, "*in the day when thou stoodst on the other side.*" (V. 10-11)

Other prophets pronounced doom on Edom also! "... *and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.*" (Joel 3:19) See also (Eze.25:12-14); Eze. 35:1-15, especially verse 5, "*Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end.*" And, "*Concerning Edom, Thus saith the Lord of host: Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished? ..... For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I visit him.*" (Jer. 49:7-8)

**JACOB** - God changed Jacob's name! "*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed*". (Ge. 32:28 and Ge. 35:9-12) ) Jacob fathered twelve sons, who became the heads of 12 tribes of people, and they became known as the 12 tribes of the children of Israel. Later God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel and they became God's chosen people (nation) to represent God, among the nations of the earth. (See Exodus 19:5-6.)

To my knowledge, God never said, by any writer, that he loved Jacob and hated Esau, until he came to the last Book of the Old Testament. Both men became nations, "Edom" and "Israel". God used Israel in a mighty way through the centuries. But the nation, that came from Esau, became a godless nation, who allied themselves with Israel's enemies.

The Edomites were a very proud people, and they felt very secure in their fortified mountain city. They farmed the fertile valleys, and they placed heavy tolls on the North-South, East-West roads which crossed through their country, especially on "The King's Highway". There is a record when the King of Edom refused Moses' request for Israel to pass through his country, Edom. (See Numbers 20:14-2)

Edom was guilty of the sin most hated by God; the sin of Pride. (Obadiah 3-4) (my opinion) Of the seven things which are listed as things the Lord hates, "a proud Look" is mentioned first on the list. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

Through the prophet, the Lord said to Edom, *"The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.... that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?' Thought thou exault thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence (from there) I will bring thee down, saith the Lord."* (Obadiah 3-4)

**IN CONCLUSION** - I suppose all of you do basically as I, when preparing a to write or teach a lesson. Study the text, and research from other sources, such as Bible Dictionaries and Commentaries, to help us obtain a better understanding of the subject. Sometimes you find helpful information, sometimes you don't. I researched many such resources.

B. H. Carroll pointed out some important lessons in this book for us: The points I have borrowed, but not his comments.

1. The devastating results of family feuds. Families should love each other. Parents should be careful to love their children without showing an unfair preference for one child over another. Isaac and Rebekah may have been partially responsible for the feud and the way their family turned out. Also, Esau's anger and hostility was passed on to his descendants, not unlike the hatred that existed with the famous Hatfields and McCoys.
2. There is a huge lesson on the dangers of pride and arrogance. *"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Proverbs 16:18) *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."* (James 4:6)
3. This "little" Book of Prophecy provides a great lesson on false confidence. The Edomites felt safe and secure in their Mountain fortress. *"Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are strong; but look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord."* (Is. 31:1) No nation, no government, no person can avoid God's judgment. *"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* Romans 12:19)
4. Another lesson from Edom's experience is, *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what so ever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* (Galatians 6:7) The Lord said to Edom, *".... as though hast done, it shall be done unto thee."* (Obadiah V. 15)
5. The last and perhaps the most important lesson we can learn is that God's word is true. *"There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken unto the house of Israel, all came to Pass."* (Joshua 21:45) God's people will triumph over all enemies.  
  
*"But upon Mt. Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. 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 and remaining of the house of Esau; dor the Lord hath spoken it."* (Obadiah verses 17-18)