

Pride and Prejudice

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[0 : 00] It was well done. It was great. I will please turn in your Bibles back to Obadiah. You'll need to follow along and I've put the verses on the screen for those online.

I will need to take a little bit longer this morning because my guess is we're not very familiar with this book. I wonder how many, don't put up your hand if you've ever read it before.

But let me start by saying that my wife loves reading. And one of her favourite authors to read is Jane Austen, who wrote that famous book called Pride and Prejudice.

Anyone have to read that for school? I had to read that for school. I must confess, I only made it through the first chapter and then decided to watch the BBC version of it. Which could explain why I didn't do so well in my VCE English exam, but anyway.

But my wife recently watched that BBC version of Pride and Prejudice with our daughter to indoctrinate her, I mean to educate her about Jane Austen and that world back then.

[1 : 05] And how pride made some people think they were better than others. And how prejudice, that is bias, unfair bias, unfairly judged others.

Well today we come to the book of Obadiah, which thankfully is much shorter than Jane Austen's book. In fact, it's the shortest book in the whole Old Testament, 21 verses.

But it takes place in history before Haggai last week. So we're a bit out of chronological order. In Haggai last week, Judah had just returned from exile in Babylon and was supposed to rebuild the temple, if you might remember.

But in Obadiah this week, they've just been taken into exile. So it's 70 odd years earlier than last week. And as they were taken into exile, their neighbouring country of Edom, so Judah is in the kind of brownie grey there and Edom is the reddish colour in the south.

Their neighbouring country displayed such pride and prejudice, it led to Edom's judgement. Which is in part what Obadiah is about.

[2 : 17] So we're at point 1 and verse 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, let us go against her, that is Edom, for battle.

Here, Obadiah hears God's message about Edom. But notice, it says, we have heard. So it's not just Obadiah who hears this message, it's also those in Judah who hear this message, which as we'll see later, is an encouragement for God's people.

But the message they heard begins with an envoy being sent to the nations, telling them to rise and get ready for battle against Edom. In other words, God is going to use the other nations to judge Edom.

That's what it's talking about. Why? Well, firstly, because of their pride. Verse 2 and 3. God says, See, I will make you, Edom, small among the nations. You'll be utterly despised, because 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, or literally in your heart, Who can bring me down to the ground? Edom will be judged or made small because of their pride.

[3 : 38] Edom was known for their wise men, as we heard in the reading before, and their high cities in the clefts of the rocks. Verse 3.

You can see it in some places like this. So there's a cave entrance down to the right, but you can see in the middle of the screen, I hope, some structures that were built into the side of the mountains.

Perhaps their most famous city is Petra, whose narrow entrance, you've got to walk through this narrow entrance to the city, which is quite good. It means if an army has to attack, there's a natural

bottleneck, where you can just kind of fire the arrows at them kind of thing.

And this particular narrow way works to the most famous of Petra's sites, which is called the treasury. Not that it was a treasury. It was used for other things, and it probably wasn't this ornate in Edom's time.

The Nabataeans who conquered Edom were the ones responsible for this ornate work, and they made it as a tomb for their king. But the point is, their wise men and high cities led to an arrogant pride, which made them think they were better than others.

[4 : 52] They were invincible against others, and even God. Remember the start of verse 3? They have pride in their hearts, so that by the end of verse 3, they say in their hearts, who can bring us down?

Well, you know that saying, don't you? Pride comes before a... So, verse 4. Though you soar like the eagle, says God, and make your nests among the stars, that is, your high cities in the clefts of the rocks, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

You see, their pride will lead to their downfall. God will bring them down in judgment. Now, to be clear, this is not talking about pride in others, where you delight in what they have done, you know, like a parent or a grandparent or a godparent, saying, I'm proud of you.

Nor is it talking about the pride we even have in ourselves, when we've done something to help others, or to please God, which makes us feel proud.

That pride often comes with a gratitude that acknowledges it's all God's work through us anyway. All that kind of pride is really about others, you know, helping them, pleasing them, or because of them.

[6 : 12] But Edom's pride is a selfish, arrogant pride, and that's the one that God is against, that made them think they were better than others. Who can bring us down? We're better than everyone else.

It's a pride that elevated themselves over others, and even over God. But it's a pride that all humanity suffers from. As C.S. Lewis once said, the Christians are right.

It is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. Everyone has this selfish pride, which leads to misery.

I mean, think about it. It was pride in the Garden of Eden, wasn't it? That made them think, we know better than God, and so they chose to disobey God. It's a non-Christians pride that says they don't need God, or refuses to even consider the evidence for God.

We know better. There's no God. But it's a pride that we too can sometimes have. We can sometimes think that our religious actions can get us to heaven. You know, I've been to church 50 times out of the 52 weeks of the year, and those other two weeks I was sick.

[7 : 20] Or arrogant pride that thinks we're not as sinful as others and therefore, you know, better than others. Or arrogant pride that makes us think that we know better than parts of God's word that we find difficult to understand.

I like that topic, you know, that dreaded topic in Christian circles, predestination. I've had people say to me they don't believe in it when it's in black and white. In fact, that was our second reading last week.

We read it. Or today's controversial topics of marriage, or sexuality, or gender, or whatever. But to say, you know, that we know better than this part of God's word, it's arrogant pride, isn't it?

And we're talking about us versus God. When God's word is actually for our good, and so we're to humbly accept God's word. We're to follow Christ's example, who himself humbly obeyed God, even to death on a cross, didn't he?

And so here's the first warning for us this morning. Don't do an Edom and have arrogant pride. Rather repent and show humility. For Eden was judged firstly for their pride and secondly for their prejudice.

[8 : 32] Point 2, verse 5. Here it begins talking about their total destruction. God says, If thieves came to you, if robbers in the night, oh, what a disaster awaits you, would they not steal only as much as they wanted?

If grape pickers came to you, would they not leave a few grapes? But how Esau will be ransacked, his hidden treasures pillaged? God is saying, Edom's judgment will be total.

Even thieves leave some things in your house, don't they? You never come home to find a thief has taken everything in your house, including the kitchen sink and the dog.

Actually, they can take our dog. That's okay. Don't tell my daughter. And it says, Harvesters leave some grapes on the vine, but God, by contrast, will not leave anyone in Eden behind. Instead, he will use their allies to turn against them and to judge them completely. Verse 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.

[9 : 40] In that day of Eden's judgment, he calls the Lord. Will I not destroy the wise men of Eden, those of understanding, in the mountains of Esau? You warriors of Timon, the city of Edom, will be terrified and everyone in Esau's mountains, everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.

God's judgment will be total and it will be through their so-called allies, the nations that God said in back in verse 1, rise, let us go to war against them.

Why this time? Well, not just because of their pride, but also their prejudice, which led to violence. Verse 10. Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame. You will be destroyed forever. Notice, total destruction forever. But also notice their violence is not just against any old nation, it's against their brother, Jacob.

You see, the nations of Judah and Edom came from two brothers, Jacob and Esau. So, from Jacob came the nation of Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah, if you remember the map, and from Esau came the nation of Edom.

[10 : 55] It sounds similar, doesn't it? It helps you to remember it that way. Now, both brothers were pretty rotten people, but in Genesis 25, which is what this picture is alluding to, Esau was a real buff head.

He saw some stew that Jacob was cooking one day, and he sold his birthright as the eldest son, which came with all his father's inheritance.

He sold that valuable birthright for a bowl of stew and bread. What a buffet. Of course, Jacob was no better. He later deceived his father into receiving all the blessings too, if you remember.

Now, while these brothers eventually reconciled, it seems that Edomites from Esau conveniently forgot Esau's buff-headedness and only remembered Jacob's deceptiveness.

And so they showed prejudice and unfair bias against Jacob's descendants of Judah, which led to violence and hostility towards them.

[12 : 00] Hostility even when they left Egypt in the Exodus. And so you might remember, Moses is leading the Israelites out of Egypt and on their way to the promised land, and they come to Edom, which was at the bottom near Egypt.

He sent messages to Kadesh, the king of Edom saying, you know, we've had a hard time. Please, verse 17, let us pass through your country. We won't go into any field. We won't even drink water from your well.

And Edom answered, verse 18, you may not pass through here. And for good measure, if you even try, you put a pinky toe in our land and we will march out and attack you with the sword.

How's that for a relative's response? Or here in Obadiah, when Babylon attacked Judah, in verse 11, Edom stood back aloof and watched.

As Babylon carried off Judah's wealth and entered its gates. And in fact, as we'll see, Edom acted just like one of the Babylonians.

[13 : 07] But first, in verse 12, they not only watched, they gloated and rejoiced and boasted in Judah's disaster. That's not very loving, is it?

They should have lamented that Judah's sin led to such a disaster. But not only did they cheer at Judah's destruction, they were like the Babylonians who also then marched through Judah's gates of Jerusalem and started to take over Judah's land once Babylon left.

And they seized whatever wealth was left over after Babylon left. They were like the Babylonians. But worse than that, in verse 14, they also waited at the crossroads at the south.

And so those from Judah who fled south, well, they caught them. And they either cut them down with the sword or handed them over as prisoners to Babylon, their own relatives.

Now, we may have some relatives we'd like to hand over to other people, but we'd never do it, would we? But Edom did. And in these ways, they showed violence to Judah, which they will be judged for it.

[14 : 15] As God says elsewhere, because you, Edom, harbored an ancient hostility, that prejudice, and delivered the Israelites over to the sword, I will give you over to bloodshed.

And it wasn't long before the Nabateans did conquer them, and the nation of Edom is no more to this day. Those Edomites who did survive, they were assimilated into what became Idumea, and so they're now Idumeans.

So here's the second warning for us this morning. Don't do an Edom and harbor hostility towards anyone, but especially our own family.

And in the New Testament, the family that it emphasizes is this family. But we are brothers and sisters in Christ, aren't we? And so, we are to get rid of all hostility, all bitterness, prejudice, rage, and anger, and instead, we're to be kind and compassionate to one another.

We're to forgive one another rather than hold grudges against each other. Is there anyone at church whom you might harbor some bit of hostility towards, some bit of bitterness against, some kind of prejudice, whether they're in this congregation or another congregation?

[15:39] Well, if you do, here's the second warning. Don't do an Edom and show prejudice, but repent and show forgiveness. But what about when people outside the church show us prejudice?

So, so far, the warnings are about us not being proud or showing prejudice, but what happens if people outside the church show prejudice to us? You know, when a non-Christian family continue to think we're silly for believing in Jesus, even though there's good reasons, which they won't entertain, of course, or our kids or grandkids or nieces or nephews are showing prejudice for being Christian at school or uni or work, you know, unfairly treated because they're believers.

I still remember when my son was in primary school, his friends saw him pray before an exam, which in primary school was a spelling test, but because they saw it and found out what he was doing, they bullied him because of it.

I think the teacher even thought it was funny. And so is it worth following Christ and even sharing Christ with people when they show prejudice towards us?

Well, yes. For the judgment day for Edom is actually a pointer to the judgment day for all nations and the restoration for God's people.

[16:59] Point three, verse 15. He says, he kind of switches gears here and says, 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. God moves from Edom to all nations. God will judge all nations for their own pride towards God and their prejudice towards God's people for all their deeds, actually.

I don't know what you like to drink. Last year, I had my first ever bubble tea. It was pretty nice. I still think I prefer coffee, but I can guarantee you none of us want to drink God's judgment, which is what, though, the nations will.

Verse 16. Just as you, the you here is plural, yous, which is referring to Judah, just like back in verse 1, we have heard the message from God. Just as you, Judah, drank on my holy hill of Jerusalem, so all the nations will drink continually.

They will drink and drink and be as if they have never been. Just as Judah drank not tea or coffee, but God's judgment on his holy hill of Jerusalem the day Babylon attacked, so all the nations will drink the cup of God's judgment on the day the Lord Jesus returns.

[18:23] And like Edom, on that day, they will be no more. It says they will be as if they have never been. Of course, there are still nations today, aren't there? Yes, there are.

So this is talking about the last day, the day of judgment, as I said, the day Jesus returns to judge the living and the dead. The one we heard about in our second reading, the one where he will hold all nations accountable and put this world right.

And on that day, there will be no more nations, only God's nation. And no more kingdoms, only God's kingdom. Like in that hymn we sung before, the world will be his empire in the fullness of the days.

I've got to keep singing it with that tune now, Ian. But the good news is there is a way to escape judgment on that day, verse 17. But on Mount Zion will be deliverance, it says.

It will be holy and Jacob will possess his inheritance. And Mount Zion against Jerusalem where the temple and God dwelt. And so it's saying for those who repent and come to God, trust in God, there will be deliverance.

[19:32] For us, of course, it's Jesus who replaced the temple. For it's Jesus who took the judgment for all our pride and prejudice so that we can be saved from it if we believe in him.

And so do you? Do you trust in Jesus whether you're in the room or online? Don't let pride like Eden be your downfall. Don't think that you know better than to believe in God or that you're good enough to enter heaven.

Instead, consider humbly the evidence for God that you might see the Christian faith is a reasonable faith. And humbly consider your own life that you might see your need for forgiveness and acceptance for real worth and purpose, all of which Christ gives us.

Humbly come to Jesus, believe in him, and you'll be guaranteed deliverance on the day of the Lord. Indeed, you'll be part of God's people now who have the same hope of restoration that we have. For the day of the Lord doesn't just mean judgment for all nations, it means restoration for God's people where we'll no longer be shown prejudice. In fact, we'll firstly judge those who are shown prejudice to us, verse 18.

[20 : 43] Jacob will be fire and Joseph a flame. Esau will be the stubble and they will set him on fire and destroy him. There will be no survivors from Esau, for the Lord has spoken.

Judah and Joseph is a way of representing all of Israel, all of God's people. And the fact that they are fire and Esau who showed them prejudice is the stubble is a picture of judgment, judging them who showed prejudice.

It's like what we read in the New Testament where Paul says, do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? Did you know that? Now, this may not mean much to us in this country, but I'll tell you what, it means a whole lot to those who are persecuted in other countries.

Like the Christians in the Congo who are facing increasing persecution. On the 15th of this month, less than two weeks ago, there was another attack in the Congo and 53 Christians were killed in a day.

That's 128 since Christmas. Christmas wasn't that long ago, was it? And they get away with it. For Christians in the Congo, knowing the tables will one day turn and they will justly judge their persecutors would give them hope, wouldn't it?

[21 : 54] And what's more, we'll also receive our inheritance of the world to come. At the end of verse 16, it talks about Jacob's inheritance, which refers to the land God promised Jacob's descendants that they would inherit.

And so verse 19 is talking about the people who are living there in the land, that is God's people, they will occupy all these other parts like the mountains of Esau, the land of the Philistines, Ephraim and Samaria and Gilead.

And verse 20 says the same thing. Those Israelite exiles who are still left over, who come back to the land, well, they're going to actually end up possessing the land as far as Zarephath in the north and also the towns in the Negev.

Now I realise these names don't mean much to you, but it's the four corners of the promised land that was under David and Solomon, the biggest extent. I don't know if you can see those red dots on the screen, but Edom is in the south, they're going to occupy the mountains of Edom, and then in the west on the left-hand side is the land of the Philistines, and then up north is Zarephath, far north, and then in the east on the right is Gilead.

It's like the four corners, if you like, the four compass points. In other words, they'll reclaim the whole inheritance. Now I need to say in light of current events that this is not a mandate for the nation of Israel today to kick out the Palestines and try and reclaim all that land, although people still read it like that.

[23 : 28] But it can't be, actually, because we have the New Testament, and today's Israel were part of the old covenant which they broke. I mean, it's why they went into exile. And so God made a new covenant through Jesus.

And so the way to be part of true Israel, to be part of God's people, is only through Jesus, isn't it? Otherwise, what's the point of him dying? If you can be part of God's people simply by being born in Israel, then Jesus died for nothing.

But the way to be part of God's true Israel, part of God's people, is through Jesus. Whether you're a Jew in Israel today, or whether you're another nationality in Melbourne here today, it's through Jesus.

And so it's not talking about that biological nation of Israel there, unless they believe in Jesus. What's more, with the new covenant comes similar categories, which is why they're still talking about those towns like in the old covenant, but it changes.

You know, the old covenant had sacrifice, priest, inheritance, but those things have changed. The new covenant, haven't they? The sacrifice in the old were animals, the sacrifice in the new is Jesus. [24 : 40] Thank you. Yeah. The priests were the Levites in the old covenant, the priests in the new are all of us, high priest Jesus, all of us, as we minister to each other.

And the inheritance in the old covenant was those specific places in the Middle East, but the inheritance in the new covenant is actually the new creation. That's why Jesus said, blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the Middle East, no, no, the earth.

Or in our reading, but in keeping with his promise, this is our promised land, we are looking forward to a new heaven, skies, and a new earth where righteousness dwells.

Here's our promised land, here's our inheritance. And notice he adds where righteousness dwells, so righteousness will dwell throughout the new heavens and earth, for God's kingdom will be the only kingdom left on earth.

And so here is when the nations will be no more, will be as though they never existed. It will only be God's world kingdom of paradise. And on that day of the Lord, we'll not just claim this world inheritance, but with Christ we'll govern or rule over it.

[25 : 53] Verse 21, deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau, that is everywhere, even those who once showed prejudice to us.

And the kingdom of the world will be the Lord's. Can you imagine the encouragement that would bring all those Christians in the Congo who've had their homes burnt by Islamic extremists, knowing that on that day of the Lord, they will inherit not just their villages back, but the whole earth.

That God's kingdom will take over those hostile and secular kingdoms and they will rule in it, under him. I still love this kid, I think I might have shown you this before, whose teacher asked him to write down the top three things he wants to do in the future, and this is what he wrote.

Number one, get a girlfriend. Number two, kiss her. And number three, rule the world. Now, I don't know about the first two, but I tell you what, if he's a Christian, he will actually do the third one on the day of the Lord, ruling God's world kingdom.

Although, do notice that those who rule are called deliverers, plural, literally saviors, plural. So, it's not talking about God or Jesus, it's talking about us.

[27 : 16] But we are only little S saviors as we proclaim the gospel of the big S saviour, Jesus.

For by doing so, God will work through us to save others. And so, here's the encouragement to keep trusting in Jesus and even to keep sharing Jesus despite people showing prejudice towards us.

For on that day, we will judge, inherit, and rule God's world kingdom of paradise. The BBC series was a five-hour version of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

Well, here's the 32nd version of *Edom's Pride and Prejudice* by Obadiah. Don't do an Edom and practice pride towards God nor prejudice towards people, especially our family.

But do be encouraged to keep trusting and sharing Jesus despite people showing prejudice to us.

For on that day, we will judge, inherit, and rule the world of God's kingdom of paradise.

[28 : 27] Let's pray. Gracious Father, we do thank you for this little book of the Old Testament which packs quite a punch. We thank you for these warnings as well as this encouragement.

Help us to live in light of all of it. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.