

Pride and Prejudice

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[0 : 00] Well, please turn in your Bibles back to Obadiah, and there should be an outline in your pew sheets as well that you'll find helpful, page 923. Just as you turn there, I'm not sure how many people read the book of Obadiah before it was read today.

There's some tricky bits, and because we're unlikely to come back to it, we'll be needing to spend a little bit more time on it today. But before we start, I'm going to pray. Michael and Sonny Lay have had their fourth child last week, a little girl called Abigail, and so they joined the elite group of parents with four kids.

We stopped at three. Yes, there's a couple here. Madness. No, I'm going to joke. Let's joke. But let's pray for Michael and Sonny and for ourselves, and then we'll get into it.

Let's pray. Father, we do give you thanks for the gift of new life, and so we give you thanks for the birth of Abigail. We do pray that you would help Michael and Sonny to adjust to four children.

We pray that Abigail would sleep well so mum and dad can sleep well. But we do pray that you would give them time to enjoy the excitement and joy of having another daughter and for the kids of having another little sister.

[1 : 18] Please bless them. Please grow Abigail most of all to know and love Jesus. And for us here this morning, please help us to understand your word, this book that we've perhaps never read before, and to live in light of it.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, my wife loves reading, and one of her favourite writers is Jane Austen, and one of her big books is Pride and Prejudice.

Did anyone have to read Pride and Prejudice for school? Just a couple people. Oh, okay. We were the lucky ones, clearly. I must confess, I ended up not reading through the whole book and watching the BBC series instead, which could explain why I didn't do so well on my VCE English exam.

But anyway, my wife recently watched this with our daughter to indoctrinate her, I mean to educate her, about Jane Austen and that period, about pride that made some people think they were better than others, and about prejudice, which just means an unfair bias towards others that unfairly judges them.

Well, today we come to the book of Obadiah, which is thankfully a lot shorter than Jane Austen's book. In fact, as Ricky mentioned already, it's the shortest book in the Old Testament. But it takes place in history before the book of Haggai, which we looked at last week, if you were here last week.

[2 : 44] Haggai last week is about when the Jews or Judah returns, they've just returned from exile in Babylon, and they had to start rebuilding the temple and so on.

Well, Obadiah this week is when they have just gone into exile in Babylon. And as they are taken into exile, their neighbouring country of Edom, so here's a map, Judah's the brown bit, Edom's the kind of pinkish red bit below.

As they were taken into exile, Edom in the south displayed pride and prejudice, which led to Edom's own judgment. Point 1, verse 1.

I'll put the verses on the screen as well, just so you can follow along. 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. Obadiah hears a message about Edom. It's not just Obadiah. It says, We have heard a message from the Lord.

[3 : 50] That is, Obadiah and the rest of Judah have heard this message. And it begins with an envoy being sent to the nations to call them against Edom, to judge them.

Why? Well, firstly, because of their pride. Verse 2 and 3. See, I'll make you, Edom, small among the nations. You'll be utterly despised, judged. 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 could bring me down to the ground? You see, Edom will be judged or made small because of their pride.

You see, Edom was known for their wise men. It says that later in the passage. And their high cities in the clefts of the mountainside. You can see some of it today.

So you might be able to just make out some of the entrances to some city or houses and so on in the side of the cliffs there. And perhaps their most famous city is Petra.

[4 : 54] It has a narrow entrance, which would have been really good for a defence. You know, if the enemies are coming to attack, they'd have to, it's a natural bottleneck, right? You just shoot arrows and win the day. This particular narrow entrance opens up into perhaps the most famous bit of Petra.

What's called the treasury, even though it wasn't really a treasury. This is what appeared in an Indiana Jones movie. That's probably where you've seen it before, right? You can still visit it today.

It's called the Kasnet. And it's probably unlikely that it was this fancy during Edom's time. It was probably made this fancy or ornate by the Nabataeans who made it a tomb for their king.

The point is, though, their wise men and high cities in the mountainside led them to arrogant pride, which made them think they were better than others, that no one could bring them down, that they were invincible against others, even God.

You see the start of verse three? They have pride in their hearts. So by the end of verse three, they literally say in their hearts or to themselves, who can bring me down to the ground?

[6 : 08] Their pride made them think they're invincible, better than everyone else. But as the saying goes, pride comes before a fall. Verse four.

Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, that is, though you live up in the clefts, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

You see, their pride will lead to their downfall. But God will bring them down in judgment. Now, to be clear, this is not talking about all types of pride. You know, sometimes we have pride in others, where you delight in what they do, you know, as a parent or a grandparent or God parent.

You know, you say, I'm proud of you, well done. Or even pride in ourselves, because we've done something to help others or to please God. And so, you know, it makes us feel proud of that.

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

- [7 : 19] It's not the kind of pride here. This kind of pride that God judges is arrogant pride that made them think they were better than others.
- You know, who can bring us down? It's a pride that elevated themselves over others and even over God. A pride that actually all of humanity suffers from.
- As C.S. Lewis once wrote, the Christians are right. It is pride that which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.
- Pride is everywhere and it leads to misery. I mean, just think about it for a moment. It was pride in the Garden of Eden, wasn't it? It was pride that caused Adam and Eve to say, I know better than God and so disobeyed God.
- It's actually a non-Christians pride that says, I don't need God or there can't possibly be evidence for God and so it doesn't even bother to look. I mean, that's pride, isn't it?
- [8 : 21] But we can sometimes have this arrogant pride to ourselves. We can think our religious actions can get us to heaven. Oh, I've been to church 50 times out of the 52 times in a year.
- And those two other times, I was out of the country, so I could come. Or, you know, pride that thinks that we're not as sinful as that person or that person. You know, we're better than them.
- Or even pride that thinks we're better than God when it comes to parts of God's word. I like that topic of predestination that, you know, Christians don't like talking about because it is tricky.
- But I've had people say to me that they simply don't believe it, even though it's in black and white in the Bible. We read it in our second reading last week, actually. Or today's controversial topics of marriage and sexuality and gender or whatever.
- But to say that we know better than bits of God's word is arrogant pride. I mean, we're human and he's God, isn't he? And so to say we know better than him and his word?
- [9 : 23] No, no, we're to humbly accept God's word, which is actually for our good anyway. We're to follow Jesus, who himself humbly obeyed his father even to death on a cross.
- So here's the first warning for us. Don't do an Edom and have arrogant pride. And if we do, then repent and show humility instead.
- But Eden was judged firstly for their pride and secondly for their prejudice. I point to verse five. Here he begins with their total destruction. He says, In other words, Eden's judgment will be total.
- Even thieves leave some things in your house, don't they? I mean, you never come home and find a thief has taken absolutely everything. You know, the kitchen sink and the dog. Actually, they can take our dog.
- Don't tell my daughter. And it says harvesters leave some grapes on the vine, but God will not leave anyone in Eden behind.
- [10 : 47] Instead, he will use their allies to turn against them and judge them completely. Verse seven. 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. In that day, the day of Edom's judgment, declares the Lord, will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau?
- Your warriors, Temen, which is the city of Edom, will be terrified and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. Eden's judgment will be total through their so-called allies.

Why? Well, not just because of their pride, but also their prejudice towards Judah, which caused them to commit violence. Verse 10. It says this is happening because of the violence against your brother Jacob.

You will be covered with shame. You will be destroyed forever. There's that total destruction again, forever. But also notice their violence is not just against any old nation, but it's against their brother Jacob.

[12 : 01] You see, the nations of Judah and Edom, they came from two brothers, remember? Jacob and Esau. From Jacob came the nation of Israel, including the southern kingdom of Judah.

And then from Esau came the nation of Edom below. So there they are again on the map, Judah and Edom, Jacob and Esau. And now both brothers, though, were pretty rotten people.

But in Genesis chapter 25, which is what this picture is alluding to, Esau was a bit of a buffhead. He saw some stew Jacob was cooking one day and sold his birthright as the eldest son, which came with all the father's inheritance.

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

So they're as bad as each other. But these brothers eventually reconciled. Yet it seems that the Edomites conveniently forgot Esau's buffheadedness and only remembered Jacob's deceptiveness.

[13 : 21] And so they showed prejudice, an unfair bias against Jacob's descendants of Judah, a harbored hostility towards them, which led to committing violence against them.

We see this in their history. Like, for example, when Israel comes out of Egypt, the Exodus, they're on their way to the promised land. Moses sends messengers to Kadesh, the king of Edom, saying, look, you know, we've had a terrible time in Egypt.

We were slaves building pyramids and so on. Verse 17, please let us pass through your country. We won't even take any food from a field. We won't drink any water from a well. But verse 18, Edom answered, you may not pass through here.

And if you try, if you put one toe in our land, we will march out and attack you with the sword. I mean, how's that for response from your relative? Or here, when Babylon attacked Judah, in verse 11, on that day, Edom stood aloof.

They stood back and watched strangers, that is, the Babylonians, carry off Judah's wealth. Foreigners enter their gates and cast lots for Jerusalem. And in fact, Edom was like one of those Babylonians, which we'll see in a moment.

[14 : 41] They firstly, though, verse 12, gloated over their misfortune, rejoiced in their destruction, boasted, cheered in the day of their trouble.

I mean, that's not particularly loving for anyone, the lone your relative, is it? They should have lamented Judah's sin that led to their destruction, perhaps even provided a place of refuge for the survivors.

But instead, they were like Babylon, verse 13. They too marched through the gates after Babylon left and seized whatever leftover wealth there was, just like Babylon did.

And worse than that, verse 14, they waited at the crossroads in the south. And so as those fleeing Babylon in the north from Judah, going south, what did Edom do?

Ah, well, they cut down the fugitives. And if they didn't kill them with the sword, they captured them and handed them over to Babylon to be taken into exile, their own relatives.

[15 : 43] We may have some relatives that we'd like to hand over, you know, but we wouldn't, would we? Edom did. In all these ways, they showed a kind of violence to Judah and so they will be judged for it.

As God says elsewhere, because you, Edom, harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword, I will give you over the bloodshed.

And it wasn't long before the Nabataeans did conquer them. And the nation of Edom is no more to this day. No Edomites left. Those Edomites who did survive, and there were survivors, but they were assimilated and became Edomians.

They went to the place that's now known as Edomia. And so here's the second warning for us. Don't do an Edom and harbor hostility towards our own family.

And especially, as the New Testament points out, our Christian family. For we are brothers and sisters in Christ. And so we're to get rid of hostility and prejudice, you know, bitterness, rage, anger, all those things, and instead be kind and compassionate to one another.

[16 : 58] Instead of holding on to grudges, forgiving one another. And ask, is there anyone at church whom you harbor some hostility towards?

You know, some bitterness against? Some prejudice too. Whether they're from our own congregation here or another one.

If so, here's the second warning for us. Don't do an Edom and show prejudice against them. But repent and show forgiveness. But that's warnings for us not to show pride towards God or prejudice towards others.

But what about when people outside the church show prejudice to us for being Christian? You know, when non-Christian family continue to think we're silly for believing in Jesus, even though there's good reasons to believe, they just kind of judge us as being stupid on the outset.

Or our kids or grandkids or ourselves are shown prejudice at work or uni or school because we're known as a Christian. I still remember when my son was in primary school, so this was a while ago now, his friend saw him pray before an exam and he was bullied because of it.

[18 : 15] I mean, the exam, it was a spelling test, you know, primary school. But he prayed and he got bullied because of it, severely. The teacher, I think, from memory, thought it was a bit funny. Is it worth following Christ and even sharing Christ with them when they show such prejudice towards us?

The answer is yes. For the day of Edom's judgment is a pointer to the day of judgment, the day of the Lord, where all nations will be judged for any prejudice shown towards us, but we as Christians will be restored.

And so firstly, this day of the Lord means judgment for all nations, verse 15. The day of the Lord is near for, notice, not just Edom, but all nations.

As you have done, it will be done to you. Your deeds will return on your own head. God will judge all the nations for their own pride towards God and their own prejudice towards his people, for all their deeds, in fact.

I don't know what you like to drink, but last year I had my first ever bubble tea. It was pretty nice, actually. I think I still prefer coffee, but I can guarantee that none of you would prefer God's judgment, but verse 16 says that's what the nations will drink.

[19 : 35] The pronouns or the yous have kind of changed. It's a bit tricky here, but at this point it's now talking about Judah, plural. Just as yous, Judah, drank on my holy hill of Jerusalem. Remember, they were just taken to exile.

They've just been judged by God. So all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and drink and be as if they have never been. So just as Judah drank not tea or coffee, but God's judgment on the holy hill of Jerusalem the day Babylon attacked, so all nations will drink the cup of God's judgment on the day of the Lord.

And like Edom, on that day there will be no more. It says there will be as if they've never been, never existed. Of course, nations still exist today, don't they? And so this must be talking about the last day, as I mentioned, judgment day.

The day the Lord Jesus will return, as we said in the Creed a little while ago, to judge the living and the dead, to hold all nations accountable, to put this world right.

On that day, there will be no more nations, but only God's nation. No more kingdoms, only God's kingdom. But the good news is there's a way to escape God's judgment on that day, verse 17.

[20 : 54] But on Mount Zion will be deliverance. It will be holy and Jacob will possess his inheritance. For those on Mount Zion, that is, in Jerusalem, there is deliverance, made holy in God's sight.

And so the way to be there is to come to God and trust in him to be made part of his people, to be part of that new Jerusalem, that heavenly Jerusalem that Revelation talks about.

For us, this means trusting in Jesus. For Christ at the cross paid for all of our pride and prejudice, didn't he?

So that we can be saved from it. And so can I ask, do you believe in Jesus? Because if you do, you will know deliverance.

You're part of God's people. You can be guaranteed of being saved on that day of the Lord. If you don't yet believe in Jesus, don't let, you know, don't be in Edom and let your pride be your downfall.

[22 : 01] Don't think you know better than to believe in God or that there's no good evidence for God. Consider the evidence and know that the Christian faith is a believable faith.

Humbly consider your own life and see that you actually need forgiveness. No one is good enough to enter heaven. See that Jesus offers us forgiveness and acceptance, worth and purpose for us in him.

And for us who do, then remember that we have this hope not just of deliverance on that day of the law but of restoration. It goes on to say that Jacob will possess his inheritance.

And we'll come to that in a moment because verse 18, on that day we will even judge those who have shown prejudice to us. Verse 18, Jacob will be afire and Joseph aflame.

Esau will be stubble and they will set him on fire and destroy him. There will be no survivors from Esau. The Lord has spoken. Judah and Joseph are a way of saying all of God's people, all of Israel, they are afire and who's the stubble?

[23 : 08] Edom. It's a picture of judgment towards those who show prejudice against them. 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? With Christ we will judge the world. The point is the tables will be turned and with Christ we will judge those who have shown prejudice to us.

This may not mean much in our country but I tell you what, it means a whole lot to those who are persecuted in other countries. I like those Christians in the Congo who are facing increasing persecution on the 15th of January so less than two weeks ago.

There were more than 50, 53 to be precise, Christians killed in a single day by Islamic extremists. And according to Barnabas A, that's 128 Christians since Christmas Day.

And the killers just get away. For the Christians in the Congo, knowing the tables will one day turn and that they will justly judge their persecutors would give them hope, wouldn't it?

[24 : 14] But what's more, we'll receive our inheritance of the world to come. Verse 16, the end, it talked about Jacob's inheritance which refers to the land God promised Jacob's descendants that they would inherit.

And so in verse 19 it talks about people from Israel or Judah, that's the Negev, will occupy the mountains of Esau. People from the foothills will go and occupy the land of the Philistines, occupy Ephraim and Samaria and Gilead.

The company of Israelite exiles who were in Cana will possess the land as far as Zarephath up in the north. They're exiles from Jerusalem to all these other places. I know they don't mean much to us, but what it's saying is they will reclaim the whole promised land.

This map came out a bit small, I'm sorry, but if you look at the bottom, right down the south, so it's thinking compass point, south is Edom, they'll possess there. Then go up west on the left to the country of the Philistines, they'll possess there.

Up to the north, right at the far, that's Zarephath up there. And then on the east side is Gilead. See what it's saying? It's going to possess that whole country, the whole promised land as they did under David and Solomon.

[25 : 31] God's people will reclaim their whole inheritance. Now I need to say given current events, this is not a mandate for the nation of Israel today to kick out the Palestinians and to try and reclaim all that land, though people still read it like that.

But it can't be because today's Israel were part of the old covenant which Israel broke. It's why they went into exile. And so God made a new covenant through Jesus.

And so now to be part of the true Israel, to be part of God's people, it's not about being born into a particular nation. It's about believing in Jesus Christ, isn't it?

I mean, if those in Israel today who don't believe, if they're part of God's people simply by being born as an Israelite, I mean, Jesus died for nothing. They've sidestepped the cross.

No, no, that's not what the Bible says. We are all made God's people whether we are a Jew or a non-Jew, the same way, by believing in Jesus. And so this passage where it speaks to God's people, it can't be talking to those in Israel today unless they believe in Jesus.

[26 : 45] That's the first thing. And the second thing is, while the new covenant uses similar categories to the old, like sacrifice and priest and inheritance, there is a change.

For example, the sacrifice in the old covenant were animals. The sacrifice in the new covenant is who? Jesus, yeah. The priests in the old covenant were the Levites, but in the new covenant the high priest is Jesus and we are priests as we minister and serve one another.

The inheritance in the old covenant were those specific places in the Middle East, but in the new covenant it's the new heavens and earth. Remember what Jesus said? Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the Middle East.

No, the earth. He is our inheritance. Or from our reading, but in keeping with his promises, we are looking forward to a new heaven, skies and a new earth.

He is our promised land. 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.

[27 : 57] Here's when that nations will be no more, be as if they've never been. It will only be God's world kingdom of paradise. And on that day we'll not just claim this world inheritance, but with Christ we'll govern or rule over it.

Which brings us to the last verse, verse 21. Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern even the mountains of Esau and the kingdom, the only kingdom left will be the Lord's.

So can you imagine the encouragement that would bring all those Christians in the Congo who have had their homes burnt by Islamic extremists, knowing that on that day they will inherit not just their villages, but the whole earth.

That God's kingdom will take over those hostile and secular kingdoms, even our hostile secular kingdoms in the West. And Christians will rule the world in God's kingdom of paradise.

I mean that is a great source of hope, isn't it? I still love this kid, I think I might have shown you this before, who was asked by his teacher to write down the top three things he wants to do in the future.

[29 : 07] Number one, he wrote, get a girlfriend. Number two, kiss her. And number three, rule the world. That's pretty ambitious for a primary age kid.

I don't know about the first two, but I can tell you what, if he's a Christian, he'll actually do the third one on the day of the Lord. He will rule in God's world kingdom under God, just like Adam and Eve were created to.

Though do notice those who do this in verse 21 are still called deliverers or literally saviors, plural. So it's not talking about God or Christ, it's actually talking about us.

But we are only little S saviors as we proclaim the good news about the big S saviour, Jesus. For as we do, God works through us to save others.

And so here's the encouragement to keep trusting in Jesus and even sharing the good news of Jesus, despite people showing prejudice to us.

[30 : 17] For on that day we will judge, inherit, and rule the world, the world of God's kingdom of paradise. The BBC series was a five-hour version of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice.

Here's the 32nd version of Obadiah's version of Edom's Pride and Prejudice. Firstly, don't do an Edom and show pride towards God. Don't do an Edom and show prejudice towards people, especially family, but do be encouraged to trust Jesus and even share Jesus, despite people showing prejudice to us.

Let's pray. We would do all three. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we thank you for this little letter of the Old Testament, which perhaps none of us have read before.

And although it's the smallest in the Old Testament, it still packs a punch. And so help us, we pray, to heed the warnings not to show pride towards you, an arrogant pride, nor to show prejudice towards others, especially family.

But thank you for the encouragement to still trust in Jesus and to still share Jesus, even with those who show prejudice towards us. For we have this great hope of the day of the Lord, the day that we belong to.

[31 : 45] And so help us in these things, we pray, for Jesus' sake. Amen.