

There is a God in Heaven!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 August 2012

Preacher: Billy Graham

[0 : 00] Before we turn to God's word let us pray. Gracious and everlasting Lord, we have read solemn words in the Bible this evening and we pray that the heart of each of us will be solemnized before you at this time. But we have also sang songs of praise and of assurance and so as we come in Christ may we recognize that in Him we have every reason to praise you and to be assured because He has promised that each one who is in Him will live forever. He has given us the hope of glory in which we rejoice. We pray dear Lord that you would not just bless ourselves this evening, we do pray for that, but that you would bless every service that is going on in the name of

Christ throughout our church and throughout all branches of your kingdom on earth in this land and abroad. We thank you that your kingdom stretches throughout the whole earth and we rejoice that there are still people going into often dangerous lonely out of the way places to take the Word of God to people perhaps who have never yet heard about Jesus and day by day that Word is being declared and spread. We pray for our own country at this time Lord, a country that has had the Bible for so long, a country that has so many churches in it and yet with the people who in large measure are ignorant of the things of grace, not knowing even who Jesus is except His name to be used as a swear word. It makes us sad, oh Lord, and we pray that you would help your people in this land to shine out for Jesus and to be unashamed in telling others what the Savior means to them and how they must deal with Jesus here or meet Him in the hereafter. We pray Lord that you would be with us now and that you would give to us a real sense of hearing, a sense of listening to what God the Lord would say to us and we ask all of this in Jesus' name and for His sake. Amen. I'd like us now to turn to look at the book of Obadiah, not a book that perhaps people are very used to looking at but it's one that I believe is not only worth looking at but has a real message for each of us. I guess that we've all heard about neighbors from hell. We read about them in the media but we wouldn't like to be living next door to them. When families fall out we know what hatreds can be engendered. We know too when Christians fall out, sadly the same thing can occur. Paul in writing to the Corinthians tells us that they were disagreements in that congregation in Corinth and some of these came to be very serious indeed and some of these animosities in families can travel down through the years wreaking havoc all the while and we see a number of illustrations of this very thing in the Bible itself perhaps most notably in the family of Abraham where even to this very day Isaac and Ishmael are at war Jew and Arab and then the estrangement between Jacob and Esau of which references made in this little book a few that lasted for centuries and in spite of God's injunction to Israel as we read it in the book of John Deuteronomy in chapter 23 and at verse 7 that they were not to be hostile in any way towards Esau. That hatred remained. The little book of Obadiah comes to us into speaking into that situation at a very tense time between Edom which was the country of Esau's descendants and Judah. There are various dates given for when this book was written. It is hard to know exactly when it was written because there are no precise historical events pictured when we could put a date except there is reference in verses 10 and 11 to the time when Jerusalem was sacked by the Babylonians that was in the year 587 and then the people of Judah were carried away into captivity in Babylon and it's for that reason that many date the book from the captivity of the Jews in Babylon and that it was written in Babylon just like the prophecy of Ezekiel was written in Babylon.

[7 : 54] It was written by a prophet of whom we know nothing except his name Obadiah which means one who serves or one who worships the Lord. What then is the book saying to us? On the surface it may appear to be a rather bloodthirsty outburst against those who helped to bring about Judah's demise. A bitter and an angry cry from an anguished soul in exile far away from his homeland for which he was pining as if he's saying God will catch up with you someday. But there's

much more than that in this book. It is as all of scripture is divine revelation part of what God wants us to hear and to know and here is the prophet's vision from God.

It's speaking to us from the past but speaking to us in our situation today.

It's got a message I believe for every age it's got a message for every nation and every individual. The fact is stressed that there is a God in heaven with whom we have to do and if we don't reckon with God in this life then the book assures us that we will have to reckon with God in the life to come and that what is called in this book and in the other prophets on that great day of the Lord the climax of the ages. I find it particularly striking if we take it that the book was written in Babylon. It reminds us that God is not restricted to any one country. It was a belief among the peoples round about Israel who had many gods that their many gods had particular tasks to do in particular areas and beyond their own area. They seemed to have no power they didn't figure at all but just in this book as in the prophecy of Ezekiel when God's people were in a foreign land the country of other gods the Lord was speaking to them there. He was not restricted in any way he was the Lord God. God overall as the New Testament calls him and blessed forever the one universal God and we read that this God is covenanted. The name Lord is written through this book, capital letters, the covenant name of God. He is covenanted with his special people even so they're under his rod of judgment at the time.

He has not forsaken them even though for a time they had forsaken him. So here it is God who is giving this vision to the prophet and through the events of history alluded to in the book he's showing us the stark difference between the destiny of those who defy God and the destiny of those who are in God's eternal covenant of grace. Overall we see the sovereign Lord God who is the one whose will is stamped over history and it will be his will that will come out at the climax of all things. What is called here and by the other prophets as I've mentioned that great day of the Lord. The message then passed on by Obadiah from the Lord God Adonai Yahweh or Jehovah the God who rules over all even in Babylon the nations and each person then come under his scrutiny and of course that means you and me. So Obadiah has a word for all of us. So notice with me first of all the what I've called the downfall of pride and worldly wisdom. We've read through the whole book and the first nine verses speak to us about this the the downfall of Edom's pride and then from verse 10 to the first part of verse 15 he speaks about the day of the Lord's reckoning and then finally from the second part of verse 15 to the end of the book he speaks to us about the end of all things. So let's see first of all the downfall of pride and of worldly wisdom. Edom was not a big country but it was a very important country. It was rich some parts of it were extremely fertile. It was on an ancient and very lucrative trade route. You may have seen the television program that was put out quite some time ago now maybe called the frankincense road and Edom was on the frankincense road. The frankincense trade which was a very lucrative trade passed through the country of Edom and they made a lot of money out of it through the tolls that merchants paid passing through. It sustained a large population for its size because of its fertility and riches and it was renowned for its wise men and it felt itself secure and with good reason if you've seen pictures of Petra for example the rose red city half as old as time as the

[16 : 31] Reverend John Bergen once penned. Edom Petra rather was a very secure place built among the cliffs. It was seemingly impregnable and yet the Lord brought down that place and in these opening verses of the Prophet's book he tells us this picture it's there's a lot of irony in the picture Petra from the ground level looked absolutely secure but it's as if God is looking over the top of the cliffs down below to see what was going on there and what he saw there was a very strange picture the people were boasting in their safety the people were boasting of their wisdom and their riches they seemed absolutely content in themselves but their pride had blinded them to the reality of their real situation. All their wanted security was to come crashing about their ears and the wisdom of the wise men was to come to nothing they had put their trust in the wrong place. The Bible tells us that it is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom in the case of Edom any reference to God is missing worldliness secularism materialism as we read later a rejection of the moral obligations that should have been laid upon them these were all the vogue in

Edom and where there is a failure like that then destruction is inevitable the Bible says woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and that same teaching runs through the New Testament we read in First Corinthians for example about the the people who were boasting in their own wisdom and Paul was saying to them that the world through its wisdom does not know God it was Satan's lie at the beginning to say that man could find out the knowledge of God by himself many people think the

cross remains foolishness many people think that the Bible is foolish many people live without the moral restraints that the Bible tells us God expects of people and it is something that we are reminded of here will come under the judgment of God there's a world of difference between what comes from the mind of God and the mind of men look what Obadiah says here 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 me bring me down to the ground so you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars from there I will bring you down says the Lord so we are asked to consider which values are uppermost in our lives and what are the thoughts and intents of our hearts there is a very striking little incident in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 8 of that book and if we read there from verse 8 as far as verse 12 Ezekiel chapter 8 at verse 8 he said to me this is God speaking to the prophet he said to me son of man now dig into the wall that's into the wall of the temple so I dug into the wall and saw a doorway there and he said to me go in and see the wicked and detestable things that are doing there that they are doing there so I went in and looked and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel the crawling detestable things were images of pagan gods in front of them stood 70 elders of the house of Israel and Jason I a son of Shaffon who was standing among them each had a censor in his hand and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising he said to me son of man have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness each at the shrine of his own idol they say the Lord does not see us the Lord has forsaken the land again he said you will see them doing things that are even more detestable they were doing them in the darkness thinking God doesn't see us friends God does see us he sees into your heart and into mine that picture in Ezekiel is an amazing picture as God was showing the irony of people trying to live on the outside one kind of life but on the inside a life that was completely different don't you be deceived to live that way that was the kind of pride that brought Edom down so they didn't reckon that there was a God in heaven and then as we move on we see the day of the Lord's reckoning that's in the second part of the book and as I mentioned already the concept of the day of the Lord was a very great importance to the Old Testament prophets there is through the Bible a gradual development regarding this day it began as a symbol of the time when God would put Israel at the head of the nations it progressed to show that Israel too would come under the searing judgment of the [25 : 33] God of heaven the book of Amos shows us that in very graphic detail and in the New Testament the day is the time when all the nations will be brought before the judgment seat of God the throne of Christ's exaltation to give an account to him and here in Obadiah the day is indeed a day of reckoning a day of reckoning for Edom as God reminds Edom of all it should have done its failure to honor family obligations when their brothers in Judah were suffering the destruction of Jerusalem and so on Edom stood on the other side and took advantage and even was savagery pillaged their brother's city so they reminded that the day of the Lord is near I think we live in a very reckless day I doubt if there's been a day for centuries when people have so openly blasphemed against Christ and the revealed moral code of God as we see so much of it in our own city and possibly particularly at this time of the year and the idea of a day of reckoning for such things is laughed out of court and for most people really God is dead but this little book of Obadiah tells us very bluntly there is a day of reckoning and it tells us this in two main ways as we've read we reap what we sow as it has been done as you have done to them so it will be done to you and in the second way we read very solemnly that we will drink of the cup of the wrath of the Lord now the New Testament reminds us that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God the epistle to the

Hebrews tells us this when God's fiery judgment his indignation is poured out in judgment and we may for a time mock God that we will reap what we sow because there is a God in heaven and we're all destined to stand before him and finally and briefly I want us to think of this when he speaks to us about the end of all things towards the end of the book from verse the second part of verse 15 to the end of the book he deals with this idea of reckoning yes but what will the end be Obadiah paints the picture for us I think it's a time of distraction for God's enemies and it is a time of blessing and rejoicing for God's own people and the last words of the book remind us whose the victory will be and the kingdom will be the Lord's the last verse of the book really speaks of those who have been saved or delivered they will join their deliverer their savior in his kingdom and it's the same great scene that this brought before us in the 11th chapter of the book of Revelation and at

verse 15 where we read that the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ and he will reign forever and ever so we ask where then will the mockers be the blasphemers the unbelievers that day will be a most terrible day for all such people they shall not enter the kingdom for it is a place where nothing unclean and holy will be found they're excluded to go to their own place under the judgment of

Almighty God there are only two places in the hereafter heaven and hell and there pulls apart forever and there's no connecting passage between them so where are we heading for I ask you to take that question seriously just as Obadiah wanted his hearers to one of our ministers from former years when taking leave of young people at a youth conference as he shook hands with them he said will I see you in heaven can I ask that question of each one of you this evening will I see you in heaven the ending of this book shows that there is in the midst of all the judgment there is grace gospel grace there is a deliverer there is a savior who was mentioned at the end of the book the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sarfarad will possess the towns of the negative the negative he says deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau the great deliverer Christ himself will be among his people and we know that everyone who trusts in him will be saved amen let us pray dear Lord sometimes you give us solemn words to think about underlining the stark reality of judgment both in this life and in the life to come and while our natures shrink away from such things we know that you deal with eternal realities things that are so desperately important for us that we don't honestly recognize the importance of them and too often we don't give any thought to them at all but we know that you care for us in such a way that you speak to us with honesty about judgment but we thank you that you also speak to us about grace about the wonderful redeemer whom you have sent into the world to seek and to save sinners who are lost for it is not your will that any should perish but that all should come to you and live so may that be true of each of us this evening that we will come to you if we have not already done so and if we have already done so Lord may we thank you indeed for the grace that has saved us and brought us to Jesus be with us now we pray as we sing our parting sound and bless us for Jesus's sake Amen.