

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

ARE YOU COVERED?

In recent months, several natural and unnatural calamities have struck our country and community. Terrorists destroy buildings and lives; planes fall from the sky; evil people have given "hate mail" a new meaning. Periodically, hurricanes "huff, and puff, and blow our East Coast houses down," and earthquakes "shake, rattle, and role" our West Coast structures. A little closer to homes, fires often destroy neighborhood houses, storms "leave us in the dark," and auto accidents injure those we know.

Usually, upon finding out that no one was injured, we immediately ask, "Were they covered?" We are interested in whether victims had insurance and sympathize the more with those who did not. It multiplies the sorrow of misfortune if there is no "starting over" check.

Insurance companies provide a valuable service and most of us have been wisely counseled by informed agents. They always advise people to "take out some coverage—you never know when you might need it." Though we do not like to pay the premiums, most of us realize that the potential benefits are worth the price to be "covered." We often advise our children to take out a policy "Just in case."

There is a spiritual angle to the "insurance business."

God is in the Insurance Business

There is a sense in which God is in the insurance business. He promised Moses that He would "cover" him as He passed by (Exodus 33:22), and Moses promised the tribe of Benjamin, "...the Lord shall *cover* him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12). In a beautiful word picture, the Psalmist describes God's protection: "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. *He shall cover thee* with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psalm 91:3-4).

From His vantage point, God can see an impending disaster worse than any hurricane or earthquake. It will not destroy just one house, or even town—but the whole earth (II Peter 3:10). It will not involve only a few hundred or thousand people, but all the people of the whole earth (II Corinthians 5:10). God is providing coverage for those will to "pay the premiums." Jesus put it this way:

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is ye a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:28-33).

Christians are Insurance Agents

If God is in the insurance business, then we are His agents. We seek to "cover" our friends, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, fellow citizens, and, actually, all our "brothers come down from Adam." Love motivates us. Gratitude sends us. When Noah was uncovered in his tent, Shem and Japheth took a garment and went backwards

ABIDE AMID ARISING

Text: _____

I. The Promise of _____

Notes:

II. The Prayer for _____

Notes:

III. The Peace of _____

Notes:

THE HIGH PRICE OF A BOWL OF SOUP

Text: _____

I. The _____ of Obadiah

Notes:

II. The _____ of Edom

Notes:

III. The _____ in Zion

Notes:

A grandmother was surprised by her 7-year-old grandson one morning. He had made her coffee. She drank what was the worst cup of coffee in her life. When she got to the bottom, there were three of those little green Army men in the cup. She said, "Honey, what are these army men doing in my coffee?" Her grandson said, "Grandma, it says on TV, 'The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup!'"

to cover their father's shame (Genesis 9:23). They did what love always does—cover the shame of sinners. The Bible teaches us to do just that:

- "Hatred stirreth up strifes; but love covereth all sins" (Proverbs 10:12).
- "A fool's wrath is presently known; but a prudent man covered shame" (Proverbs 12:16).
- "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends" (Proverbs 17:9).
- "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8).

Love does not "sweep sin under the rug." In younger days, our older brothers or buddies from school occasionally pressed us to "cover for them" to keep them from the wrath of parents or teachers. It never worked. The truth came out and then we looked as bad as they did. Sin is like a rubber tire—it won't stay buried (Numbers 32:23; I Timothy 5:24-25). So, then, what does the Bible mean when it says that "love covereth all sins?" We cover sins by assisting sinners in getting rid of them. James wrote: "Let him know, that he which *converteth the sinner from the error of his way* shall save a soul from death, and *shall hide a multitude of sins*" (5:20).

Are you Covered?

It does no good to cover one's sins so that others to not know of them. Children may hide things from their parents, husbands and wives may hide things from each other, and workers may hide things from their employers, but no one hides anything from God (Hebrews 4:13). "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

The only way to cover one's sins is to have them erased from the mind of God (Hebrews 8:12). For sinners this is done through faith in His Son (John 3:16), repentance (turning from sinful behavior) (Luke 13:3), confession of faith (Romans 10:9-10), and immersion in water to have sins blotted out (Acts 2:38). For erring Christians, sins are covered by repentance, confession, and prayer (Acts 8:22).

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1).

-Allen Webster

THE BOOK OF EDOM'S FALL

The book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament and is one of only seven Old Testament books to not be quoted in the New. Obadiah himself is a man of mystery, with nothing being revealed of him in the scriptures, even within his own prophetic book. The subject of Obadiah is one of which little else can be found throughout the other prophets. All of this being said proves the book of Obadiah to be a grossly ignored and understudied book. It seemingly is hidden among the great and living messages of the at large minor prophets, but contains some of the greatest lessons to be applied to modern Christianity anywhere in the Bible.

Edom, as a nation, had a very troubled history. Her root was entrenched all the way back in Genesis 25 when her father, Esau, set himself at odds with Jacob by despising his birthright for a mere bowl of red pottage. Then the axe was laid to the root even more when Jacob deceitfully stole his elder brother's blessing from their father Isaac with nothing left for Esau but the promise that, *"...by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck"* (Genesis 27:40). From that point on, the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) were continually a thorn in the side of Israel (Jacob's descendants) and would be for centuries to come.

As Esau departed company from his family, only reuniting with Jacob once more in his life (Genesis 33) he settled in Seir, in the southeast corner of the Palestinian valley. It is there that years later Israel, upon seeking to cross over into Canaan, met refusal from their brethren, the Edomites, to cross through their land, instead having to take a much longer journey around them (Numbers 20). Needless to say, the relationship between these very distant cousins was strained, resulting in conflicts throughout their histories. Ezekiel included Edom (referred to as mount Seir) in his judgments against foreign nations, and stated regarding their conflict with Israel, *"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..."* (Ezekiel 35:5). Also Amos made mention of the manifold harm Edom committed toward Israel by saying, *"Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever..."* (Amos 1:11). Because of this vicious and unjust treatment of Israel over the years, God targeted Edom with His wrath and vowed vengeance upon them on His people's behalf.

Not only did Ezekiel and Amos prophesy of Edom's coming destruction, but Isaiah and Jeremiah set their prophetic sights on them as well. God promised, similarly as through Ezekiel and Amos, *"For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea (Edom—AJB), and upon the people of my curse, to judgment"* (Isaiah 34:5) and *"Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof"* (Jeremiah 49:7). Thus because Edom is so predominantly mentioned in prophecy, more so than any other foreign nation, it appears that their actions were the most troubling to God and counterproductive to His plan.

Obadiah's book of prophecy is the last and most concentrated effort to warn the Edomites of their bleak future as result of their sins. Obadiah wrote and worked shortly after the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, of which Edom was a part. They cheered Nebuchadnezzar for his actions against the Jews and in the end cried out regarding what would come of the city, *"Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof"* (Psalm 137:7). It was but four years later, in 582 B.C. that Obadiah's words would be proven true. He warned them that they would be cut off forever and be as though they had never been (Obadiah 18). Dunn said of what came

"...Edom was rased and desolated by the Babylonians, the same nation that had taken Judah captive.

A few Edomites were left in South Judea, where for four centuries they continued as enemies of the Jews. In 126 B.C., they were subdued by the Maccabean rulers and absorbed by the Jewish state.

When the Romans conquered Palestine (63 B.C.), they placed the Herods, an Edomite (Idumean) family, over Judah. With the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), the Edomites disappeared from history."

It is Edom's result that pictures Christ as the Judge of the nations (vs. 15-16), the Savior of Israel (vs. 17-20), and the Possessor of the kingdom (vs. 21). In the end, the kingdom would be the Lord's (Obadiah 21). This has and always will be true. The true kingdom is still the Lord's regardless of what man may attempt to do to it. Edom paid dearly for not respecting that. How long will it take modern man to learn the same?