

A Rumbling Conflict that has a Resounding Conclusion

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[0 : 01] But we're going to turn to our Bibles now and read this morning and it's to be found in the Old Testament in the book of Obadiah. Now I don't know if I've got the page number.

Yes, I've got the page number for the church Bibles, page 772. And if you're in your own Bible, you'll have to look around. It's one of those devilishly difficult little books to find, but it comes just after Amos and before Jonah and takes up just a page and a half of our Bibles.

And Josh is going to be leading us through the message of this prophet this morning. So we're going to read the whole of the book. It's just one chapter, page 772 in the church Bibles.

And it begins, verse 1, with the vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom. We have heard a report from the Lord and a messenger has been sent among the nations.

Rise up. Let us rise against her for battle. Behold, I will make you small among the nations. You shall be utterly despised.

[1 : 14] The pride of your heart has deceived you. You who live in the clefts of the rock in your lofty dwelling. Who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground?

Though you soar aloft like the eagle. Though your nest is set among the stars. From there I will bring you down, declares the Lord.

If thieves come to you, if plunderers come by night. How, you've been destroyed. Would they not steal only enough for themselves? If great gatherers come to you, would they not leave gleanings? How Esau has been pillaged. His treasures sought out. All your allies have driven you to your border. Those at peace with you have deceived you.

They have prevailed against you. Those who eat your bread have set a trap beneath you. You have no understanding. Will I not on that day, declares the Lord, destroy the wise men out of Edom?

[2 : 17] And understanding out of Mount Esau? And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O T-man. So that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter.

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob. Shame shall cover you. And you shall be cut off forever.

On the day that you stood aloof. On the day that strangers carried off his wealth. And foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem. You were like one of them. But do not gloat over the day of your brother.

In the day of his misfortune. Do not rejoice over the people of Judah. In the day of their ruin. And do not boast in the day of distress. Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity. Do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity. Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives.

[3 : 19] Do not hand over his survivors in the day of his distress. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done.

It shall be done to you. Your deeds shall return on your own head. For as you have drunk on my holy mountain. So all the nations shall drink continually.

They shall drink and swallow. They shall be as though they had never been. But in Mount Zion. There shall be those who escape.

And it shall be holy. And the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire. And the house of Joseph a flame. And the house of Esau.

Stubble. They shall burn them. And consume them. And there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau. For the Lord has spoken.

[4 : 20] Those of the Negev shall possess Mount Esau. And those of Shephelah shall possess the land of the Philistines. They shall possess the land of Ephraim. And the land of Samaria.

And Benjamin shall possess Gilead. The exiles of this host of the people of Israel. Shall possess the land of the Canaanites. As far as Zarephath.

And the exiles of Jerusalem. Who are in Sepharad. Shall possess the cities of the Negev. Saviours shall go up to Mount Zion. To rule Mount Esau.

And the kingdom shall be the Lord's. Amen. May God bless us. This is his word.

Good morning. Please do open your Bibles again to Obadiah. I think we might need the page number again. I think it's 772. If you're using one of the church Bibles.

[5 : 16] Or just after Amos. And just before Jonah. A new year beckons. And in all likelihood.

The next year is going to be similar to this past year. Every year comes some sort of political uncertainty. This year's happens to be a particularly big one.

Every year brings a mixture of joy and celebration. With sadness and loss. And another year we pray. Will bring another number of people to new life in Christ.

But another year will no doubt. Also see yet more opposition to the gospel of our Lord Jesus. What will be the next agenda to be pushed through. That further desecrates God's good creation.

In what areas will we come face to face with our enemy. Who longs to trample gospel work. Who will it be this year who opposes God. His people. And the advance of his kingdom.

[6 : 15] The reality is that we live in the midst of a cosmic conflict. That's been rumbling on ever since the garden. And at Christmas we celebrate the arrival of the one.

Who came to destroy the works of the devil. The one who would land the crushing blue on the head of Satan. And Jesus' arrival signaled the coming of God's kingdom.

And his arrival was truly the revelation of joy to the world. Through the coming of the king. But now as Jesus sits on his throne in heaven. He's still advancing his kingdom.

As his church cries out his will on earth. But at the same time. Even though Satan has been dealt the crushing blue. That will ultimately defeat him. He is still trying to do all that he can.

To corrupt and destroy the growth of the gospel in the world. And that's why so many of us know what it is. To be opposed because we're Christians. Many of us know the outright contempt that there is.

[7 : 16] In this world for Jesus and his people. And that ranges from the obvious and violent persecution that threatens our mission partners around the world. In places like India.

To the ridicule that some of our students face at university. For daring to say in a seminar that they believe the Bible to be true. The message that percolates down through society is that it's okay to believe in Jesus.

As long as it doesn't get in the way of anyone else's life or feelings. It's fine as long as it stays locked up in church. And it's not let out. Many here in our church know what it feels like to be made to think that there isn't a place for us in certain companies.

Where the policy is total inclusivity. Unless of course you're a Christian. It wasn't long ago that the Asher's Bakery ruling was overturned. And someone on TV debating the outcome.

Said that Christians shouldn't own businesses. Or when it comes to the classroom. How much longer will teachers be permitted to believe the Bible.

[8 : 22] And still be able to teach young impressionable children. We've witnessed in recent years too. Haven't we? How anyone who's a Christian and has any prominence in government. Gets hounded out for their Christian beliefs.

They're faced with a hatchet interview. Designed to improve their political careers. Well, Obadiah is a very little book that is perhaps little known. But it packs a big punch.

It was written to encourage the Lord's people who are in the midst of heated opposition. It was to encourage them that God is in control. And that those who oppose God and his people.

Will ultimately receive the justice that they deserve. Obadiah was written for the people of Judah. But its focus is on the coming judgment that Edom would receive.

Within the rumbling conflict that began in the garden. There is another conflict. That started in the womb of Rebekah. Isaac's wife. You can read about that from Genesis chapter 25 onwards.

[9 : 28] But Rebekah was told that two nations are in your womb. And two peoples from within you shall be divided. The one shall be stronger than the other. For the older shall serve the younger.

And from then on Jacob and Esau were in conflict with one another. Esau, the older brother, bypassed. So that the birthright and the blessing went to Jacob. The younger. And through Jacob a nation was established that would be God's own people. So just as Rebekah was told. Both brothers did give birth to nations. Esau was the father of the Edomites. And from Jacob's line came Israel. Obadiah uses these names interchangeably. Edom and Esau. He sees as one and the same. Just as Jacob and Judah are one and the same. Edom. And so this conflict has raged on throughout Israel's history. Israel, the nation that inherited the promises and blessings of God. Recipients of grace.

[10:29] Seen through the fact that God choose the younger from his free grace. Over the older. And then Edom. The nation that came from Esau. The one who is happy to settle for temporal things. To settle for this world over the world to come. To settle even for a bowl of food over the eternal blessing of God. And so Edom lived in rivalry with God's people. Jealous of them and seeking their downfall. And we see that throughout the Old Testament. Israel and Edom at war under Saul's reign. Under David's reign. Rebellions that rise again and again. Until we come to Obadiah. And his vision in verse 1. And in it we see. Firstly in verses 1 to 14. That pride comes with a fall.

Pride comes with a fall. Anyone who sets themselves up against God and his people. Will experience a great fall. Edom would face the consequences for their pride. [11:33] They would face the consequences for persecuting God's people. And anyone now who thinks that they can take the place of God. And dictate how this world is to be.

Or anyone who causes trouble for Christians. Will find that there are serious consequences for it. For they are waging war against God himself. Edom opposed God. And in pride this caused them to oppress God's chosen people. Look at verse 3. The pride of your heart has deceived you.

You who live in the clefts of the rock. In your lofty dwelling. Who say in your heart. Who will bring me to the ground? Isn't that the anthem of our age? Pop stars, rock stars sing of how unstoppable they are. How untouchable they are. How they can do whatever they want. Society is rife with talk of progressing.

[12:34] Social media activists proclaim that progress cannot be stopped. We must move forward. Politicians make speeches about how they want to lead the world. By embracing the latest cultural shibboleth.

When all they are doing throughout all this. Is undermining God's pattern. For how creation is meant to be. And how it was designed to flourish. Or I read just this week.

About someone who's reached proper enlightenment. With regards to Christianity. And the Bible. And they were urging others to join them. In this new state of enlightenment. Leaving behind what they once foolishly believed.

Because what she says. When it comes to the plain message of the Bible. Is that the only fruit from it. That she could see was suicide. Broken families. People kicked out of churches.

Homeless teenagers. Self-hatred. Depression. And crushing loneliness. So what she's saying. Is to believe what the Bible says.

[13:36] Is to encourage people in these tragedies. Leave that foolishness behind. Come to my enlightenment. Or the famous atheist slogan. There's probably no God.

So stop worrying. And enjoy your life. There's no one to answer to. No one will pull you down. Do what you want. And that's the kind of pride that has existed.

Ever since man tried to usurp God in the garden. To become like him. We see it in the hubris of the Tower of Babel. Building up to heaven. Making a nest in the stars. But look at what Obadiah says. Your pride deceives you. Those who put themselves at odds with God are fools. Verse 4. Though your nest is set among the stars.

I will bring you down to the ground. Any person. Any group. Any nation that set themselves up. As the highest authority.

[14:38] As the pinnacle of wisdom. As self-sufficient. Are setting themselves up against God. Edom may have great riches and treasures.

Verse 6. But God is the one who can leave him with nothing. Verse 5. If thieves come to steal. Or grape gatherers come to gather. Even they would leave something behind.

But God is the one who can take the pride. And pillage them completely. Verse 8. Edom may have their wise men.

But even they can't stand up to God. No guru. No prophet of the world. Is a match for God. As Paul tells us. The foolishness of God is wiser.

Than man's wisdom. And so Obadiah tells us. The two great sins of Edom. Their pride. Got the better of them. They thought that they could stand up to the one true God.

[15:37] That sounds familiar. And this led to their second great sin. Which was to oppose God's people. It follows, doesn't it? That those who hate God.

Will hate his people. And Edom were spectacular. When it came to opposing God's people. Verse 10. Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob.

Shame shall cover ye. They have a long history of violence towards Judah. We see that through the fact that it's very hard to date. The prophecy of Obadiah.

The events described in this book. Between Edom and Judah. Have various possibilities. It's likely that Obadiah was ministering. In the aftermath of the collapse of Jerusalem.

At the hands of the Babylonians. And they were of course assisted by the Edomites. Although it's also possible. That Obadiah was ministering earlier. And he's describing events happening under Jehoram's reign.

[16:34] Or Ahaz's reign. But the fact that there are so many possibilities. Only serves to show how strong the animosity was from Edom. Towards God's people. But it wasn't just in violence that Edom sinned.

If this is after all. After the fall of Jerusalem. Then in the midst of great pain for God's people. What do their brothers in Edom do? Verse 11. They stand aloof.

They stand and watch. They let it happen. No intervention. When Judah was being plundered. When invaders were breaking through its gates.

They did nothing. Silence. No help. No intervention. No support. So God says of Edom.

The end of verse 11. You were like one of them. Their silence wasn't just deafening. It was as destructive as those who were invading.

[17:38] Watching on as the invaders cast lots to see who would get Jerusalem. And isn't that the case? When a church is under fire in the news.

Or when a faithful leader is getting criticized for Orthodox Christian faith. And all the other churches are silent. Isn't that as painful as the attacks?

Isn't that as painful as the attacks? No help. No support. Left to be ravaged. Well that wasn't enough for Edom.

For they don't just stand idly by and let it happen. Look at verses 12 to 14. These are carefully crafted to highlight just how severe the treachery of Edom was toward their brother.

Verse 12. At Judah's misfortune they gloat. At Judah's ruin they rejoice. At Judah's distress they boast. Verse 13.

[18:34] At Judah's calamity as Jerusalem is taken. Then they follow the invaders through the gates gloating and looting. But worst of all verse 14.

As God's people fled to escape. Edom cut them off. They handed the escapees over to the invaders. Those with the same ancestry as Israel are pleased to see them not just suffer.

But be mocked, crippled, tortured, betrayed, dragged off, imprisoned. Edom are, verse 10, violent themselves towards Judah. Verse 11.

They're pleased to stand by and watch them be destroyed. But finally here. They're pleased to join in. And take a swipe themselves. And do the dirty work of the enemy.

Well if the silence of other churches hurts when Christians are up against it. Nothing quite hurts like other so-called churches joining in. Nothing hurts quite like the malicious gossip and rumors and jealousy from others who are meant to be brothers.

[19:42] Another church and its members or ministers saying in the heat of opposition. Well your church is getting what they deserve. You might be right. But you didn't go about things in the right way.

So we can't support you. Or when you muster the courage to stand up to the bullying lecturer or teacher. Who makes you out to be stupid.

It's made worse only by the other Christian in your class laughing along with them. Or in the office when you're striving to be a witness to Jesus. Only to be undermined by the latest sound bites that

a minister or bishop or moderator has said on TV.

That undermines the real gospel. Well Ubadiah is telling us that God will not be mocked. And those who would mock him or his people will face up to the consequences of that.

And that's what Ubadiah goes on to say secondly. Verses 15 to 16. But throughout the whole chapter really. He says justice will be done.

[20 : 49] Justice will be done. The pride that leads people or nations to oppose God and his people will be overthrown. God will not be mocked.

Outright opposition to God and his people and his purposes will not carry on unabated forever. Verse 15.

For the day of the Lord is near upon all nations. The day of the Lord is coming. Judgment day will come. It's coming for all nations who oppose God's people.

But he's still focusing on Eden here. God's judgment will come. It will sweep across all who stand opposed to him. And look at what will happen. Verse 15. As you have done.

So shall it be done to you. An eye for an eye. Violence for violence. No one to intervene for you as destruction comes.

[21 : 50] No escape when trying to flee. What you have done shall be done to you. God is saying that all those who have allowed or watched or partaken in opposing God's kingdom will have their deeds returned on their own heads.

What is the future of those who set nations against God and who attack his people? Verse 2. They will be made small and despised.

What's the future of those who in pride think that they can ascend to the heavens and place of God? What's the future of those who claim that they can overrule his words? Verse 4.

He will bring them down. Verse 5 and 6. They'll be pillaged left with nothing. What's the future of those who join forces to oppose God's people?

Verse 7. All these former allies will turn against each other and destroy each other. Verse 10.

[22 : 54] Shame awaits them. And just as they participated in the destruction of Jerusalem. Verse 16. They shall be wiped out as if they've never been here.

For all the declarations of great progress, of society moving on, leaving behind the influence of Christianity, for any grand proposal of moving towards true progress that sidelines God and his word, that isn't achieving greatness.

It's setting a course for complete obscurity. John tells us that the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

And that crippling blue has been dealt. That future is fixed. All the grief that is experienced by Christians will be righted. God will not be mocked.

Those who side with Satan will share his fate. Verse 18. There'll be no exceptions. There'll be no survivors in the house of Esau.

[24 : 00] Maybe we can think this judgment is a bit heavy-handed. But this opposition to God and his people wasn't a one-off. This cosmic conflict rumbles on.

Verse 11. The same contentment to stand and watch as Jerusalem was handed over to the chance of drawing lots is witnessed centuries later as our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

He was hated. He was handed over as a criminal without committing a crime. And as everyone watched it happen, there they were drawing lots for his chinook. And there was gloating over his destruction.

And the history of the church is a history steeped in the blood and persecution of God's people. This is a conflict that rumbles on.

And so isn't it easy for us to look around and to think that we're so weak, that we're ambling towards defeat. One of our students in a seminar at university was completely sneered at for suggesting that the Bible has a place in the world.

[25 : 08] And the rest of the people in their class wouldn't talk to them anymore. Everywhere we listen and look, we're faced with opposition that wants us to think that God isn't real, that he isn't coming back, that there's no hope for the future, and that listening to him is folly.

Well, after the fall of Jerusalem in 586, that would have been the state that Judah was in. What about the promises of God? They don't look like they're coming to fruition.

It doesn't look like there's any hope. Those who prosper are those who set themselves up against God. But Ubadiah's message to God's people then was that hope wasn't lost.

His message was that those who perpetrated the suffering on God's people would be dealt with. Justice would be done. God cares for his people when they suffer, and he will not let it go. And that message stands for us today. God keeps his promises. He's faithful to his covenant. His words to Abraham that he would bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you stands. [26 : 20] That's what we're seeing here in Obadiah. And so as Obadiah assures us that these words of the covenant stand, then he assures us too that the heart of a covenant promise stands too.

God is at work to establish his people and his kingdom throughout this world. He will do it. And we can be sure of that because finally, verses 17 to 21, judgment will bring deliverance. Judgment will bring deliverance. Rescue, redemption, salvation for God's people means judgment for God's enemies. These things go together.

And so the promise of judgment to come for those who oppose God is also the promise of victory to those who trust God. There are two sides to the great conflict that rumbles on.

There are only two sides. And whilst Obadiah's words are a precious reassurance to God's people, they also spell out the perilous reality that will face those who are not on God's side.

[27 : 28] In verse 16, God is saying that whilst Judah has experienced God's wrath at the hands of the Edomites and others, that Judah's experience of judgment for breaking the covenant is temporary.

But Edom's won't be. For he says they will drink continually. They'll be drinking and swallowing until it is as if they have never existed.

That is Edom's future. But, verse 17, for God's people there is the hope of restoration. And if you recognize that you're on the wrong side of the conflict, then that hope can be yours too.

For whilst God's people were experiencing a judgment of their own by being taken into exile at the hands of enemies, there would be restoration. For Judah, there would be some escape from this, where for Edom there wouldn't be.

God's people could look forward to this partially under Ezra and Nehemiah, but later God's people could look forward to a day when Jesus would drink the cup of wrath as the representative of his people.

[28 : 41] So yes, their present experience was one of defeat. But Obadiah is drawing their gaze, and with it, our gaze, beyond the present strife to the day when Mount Zion shall be holy.

Obadiah is pointing us to Jerusalem, not just restored, but made new. Obadiah is pointing us forward through the promise of return from exile to the promise of the new Jerusalem, and the glorious future that awaits for God's people.

A new Jerusalem is coming. Victory is coming. Rescue is coming. And when it comes there, in the heavenly Jerusalem, there will be none of God's enemies.

There will be no more opposition. There, it will be as if they have never existed. For God is at work to achieve his purposes, even when it looks unlikely, even when all that his people can see is defeat.

Obadiah is telling us that God will end the suffering, that he'll turn it upon his enemies. And as he stands victorious through Jesus, we will share in that victory.

[30 : 03] It will be ours too. For verse 18, when Esau is made stubble, it will be through Jacob. God's people will share in God's victory.

They'll be there taking part, enjoying it, alongside Jesus. We see that too in verse 21. God will have the victory, the deliverance will extend even to the mount of Esau, and the kingdom will be his.

For Judah, they could look forward to the day when they would take possession of all that their enemies possessed. Verse 17, and that all builds to its climax when Obadiah proclaims that Israel will once again claim the land that was theirs at their peak under David and Solomon.

Look at verse 19 and 20. These verses lay out the boundaries of the land and as Obadiah harks back to the days of Israel's kingdom at its greatest, he's pointing us forward to our future.

Our future will be even better than Israel under Solomon. God's kingdom will come in all of its greatness. It shall be his.

[31 : 24] There'll be no enemies that can stand. There'll be no part of this earth untouched by the victory that is to come. God's kingdom will extend to the whole earth. So yes, in this age, Satan will never stop attacking Christians.

But, neither will God give up on his people. God will finally judge his enemies and that will be good news for us.

It can be easy for us to be uncomfortable with how that sounds, but that is to forget that we're in the midst of a cosmic struggle. Because when you know of someone who's given up on the gospel and they've wandered away from Jesus because they've had to live a life of constant opposition for following him, where they've been ridiculed, singled out, belittled and bullied to the point that they can't do it anymore, then Obadiah's message of judgment and victory does comfort.

That won't go on forever. The person who took our Christmas cards into work to invite their colleagues to the carol services so they could think about Jesus, only to be greeted with vitriol and curt remarks about Jesus being fiction, then Obadiah encourages us that this won't last forever. When we have mission partners who face the threat of their churches being burnt down or their leaders being arrested, Obadiah brings comfort. That won't go on forever.

[33 : 05] Or when we hear of so-called churches embracing ideologies that harm children by encouraging them in confusion about who they are or what they are, then judgment seems apt for that cruelty.

We live in the midst of a rumbling conflict, oppressed and attacked from all angles from people who hate God. But Obadiah is assuring us that in the midst of this rumbling conflict, there is a resounding conclusion because our future is fixed because the Lord Jesus appeared and he will appear again.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that we can trust that you are a God of justice, that you do not let these things go and that our future is secure with you.

So as another year approaches, help us to face it head on, trusting in your fatherly care for us. Help us to be courageous in holding out your word of life to the world around and give us all that we need to stand firm for we pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. God bless you God bless you and God bless you outcastgi■■■■ Give us