

Christ in Obadiah

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

In 2010, I went on what really, I think, was the trip of a lifetime. A travel agent came to our church and said, I'd like you to go to the Holy Land, and I'll pay for you to have a private guided tour.

But you just have to do your best to run a trip for about 30 people from your church or around. So I'll pay for you to do it. And so I went with one of my colleagues at the church, and we had a all-expenses-paid trip to the Holy Land.

So we went to Egypt and saw a whole lot of different things there, came up through the Sinai Peninsula, which you can't really do anymore because it's not safe.

But we went to Mount Sinai, came up, went across Elat over into Jordan, went up the King's Highway and amazing stuff. Came to Mount Nebo, then it crossed into Israel, travelled around Israel, flew on a plane to Turkey, and then went to Greece.

And so for a Bible teacher, excuse me, for a Bible teacher, you know, it was just an amazing thing to do. One thing that stood out to me was when we arrived in Jordan.

So we were in Egypt and we went across Israel quickly, got to Jordan, we had this very interesting private guide who was surprisingly proud of the fact that Edom and Edomites were their heritage.

And he just kept on going on about Edom and Edom and the Edomites and the greatness of the Edomites. And so that was really news to me. But I say that because apparently it would seem that Edomites carried a lot of pride in history.

And there is still a sense of pride in Jordan today among some people.

So this is the shortest book of the Old Testament, Obadiah. We're in the Christ in Scripture project. We've shuffled it a little bit.

I hope you've noticed. We feel like there are more things that God wants to do in a church service from the pulpit than just, mainly working through the 66 books. So we're tightening it up a little bit.

And so we've preached and we will preach different sermons from the books, Morning and Night, as the Lord provides the opportunity. So last week, Hosea was at night. So if you wanted to catch up on that, please do so.

Of course, you've got your book there to give you devotions and a study on every book of the Bible. So we are in Obadiah. It's a strange book.

That's why you haven't heard it preached. It's a strange book about God's judgment on Edom. Edom.

Edom aren't specifically called the people of God, but God calls them family. And so we need to go back to Genesis 25 to see where this all came from. So let me read from verse 19, Genesis 25.

This is the account of the family line of Abraham, of his son, Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, and Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebecca, daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean, from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife, Rebecca, became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her.

And she said, why is this happening to me? So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated.

One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment.

So they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out with his hand grasping Esau's heel, so he was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when Rebecca gave birth to them.

So Edom goes back to Esau, and there are a few other passages that shed light on these two nations. From The Wilderness Wanderings, we read in Deuteronomy 2, give the people these orders.

You are about to pass through the territory of your relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful.

Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own.

And then Deuteronomy 23, do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. So the Edomites are relatives of Israel, and their behaviour is brought under scrutiny in the Book of Obadiah.

It's brought under scrutiny because it's thought about in the context of what is expected of the people of God in the Kingdom of God. Obadiah, the book finishes with the line, and the kingdom will be the Lord's.

So I want to suggest that it's about the Kingdom of God, this book. In Obadiah, we see the importance of the kingdom allegiance, of kingdom consequence, and of kingdom deliverance.

The Kingdom of God has been defined as the range of God's effective will. The Kingdom of God. The range of God's effective will.

In other words, where what God wants done is done. Obadiah speaks to a brother nation of Israel and lets them know that the kingdom, that is, the effective will of God, demands allegiance, results in consequence, and provides ultimately deliverance.

And since Edom are the descendants of Esau, they are legitimately part of God's kingdom and therefore accountable.

So we don't know exactly the date of when Obadiah was doing his thing, but it's certainly written to Judah in the South rather than Israel in the North. Is that making sense now?

Judah in the South, Israel in the North, we've been covering this ground a lot lately. Let me read from verse 1. The vision of Obadiah.

This is what the Sovereign Lord says about Edom. We've heard a message from the Lord. An envoy was sent to the nations to say, rise, let us go against her for battle.

See, I will make you small among the nations. You will be utterly despised. 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 yourselves, who can bring me down to the ground?

Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord. 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?

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, declares the Lord, will I not destroy the wise men of Edom?

Those of understanding in the mountains of Esau. Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified and everyone in Esau's mountains will be cut down in the slaughter.

Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame, you will be destroyed forever.

It's strange, isn't it, that we would spend too much time hanging out in this text. As you read it, it's like, okay, what is this about? Well, kingdom allegiance.

They are proud. Do you know this picture? Indiana Jones.

Anyone know where that is from actually? Petra. Petra, if you go through Petra, which we did, they'll talk about the Edomites.

And the Edomites lived in places like this and did a lot of really incredible artwork and stone masonry work. It's just a phenomenal city. And so it's a reminder of where this sort of pride, excuse me, came from for the Edomites.

Yahweh is disappointed with Edom. And his disappointment is most clearly articulated in verses 11 to 14.

On the day you stood aloof, while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them.

You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble.

You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster.

You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down the fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble. Certainly, there has been a devastating blow dealt to Jerusalem.

We don't know for sure that it's 586 BC, but it probably is when the great destruction happened of the temple in Jerusalem, the city, by Babylon. What God has said and He's concerned about is, Edom stood aloof. Edom stood aloof.

To know God and follow Him is to call Him Lord. Amen. To know God and to follow Him in His Kingdom is to give Him our allegiance.

We give Him our allegiance in the Kingdom. Can I ask you, who is an avid sports fan? Anyone out there that's like a proper...

This is a problem in Hornsby. I've not preached this message before, but anywhere else in Sydney, you could ask that question and someone would say something. I'm going to ask you again, is anyone like a little bit, a little bit, keen?

Who are you a supporter of, Ash? West Ham, in the Premier League. In the Premier League, West Ham.

How long have you been supporting West Ham? Nine or ten years. Could I ask you to support a different team?

Would you do it? No. What about the support team?

No, like, what I'm trying to say is, so you're West Ham's supporter, but most people that are keen supporters would not go, yeah, look, I support Easts. I'm just going to leave it and support Parramatta tomorrow. You, Trottie.

You support Parramatta, don't you? Who do you support? Who do you support?

The Dragons. So tomorrow, could I get you to support Parramatta? I'm going to get you some blue and yellow gear, a scarf, a beanie, a jersey.

I want you to put it on tomorrow morning. I would never. I would never.

Yes? I support the Springboks, but to my benefit, I went and watched the Wolves and supported them against the Old Blacks. Okay.

So, allegiance, we're starting to get there. I find it strange that, like, for Trotting or any of us who are avid fans of a team, we give them our allegiance, don't we? That team.

And on Monday morning, there's no way a Dragon's fan is going to put on paramedic supporters' gear. But as Christians, we can wake up on Monday morning and put on the gear of the evil one. Can't we?

We just act in a way that shows our allegiance is not to the king and the king of kings and his kingdom. It's to a different kingdom. Amen?

Allegiance is such an important word. And so Obadiah is saying, you stood aloof, like the kingdom of God is about allegiance. It's about everything.

It's about commitment. I was going to say the joke and then I rubbed it out, but I will say it again, because you're going with me. You know, remember the chicken and the pig are walking past the farmer's window.

And the chicken looks in and says, isn't it wonderful that we can support the farmer and give him a fantastic breakfast of bacon and eggs? And the pig looks at the chicken and says, well, you've made a contribution. For us, it's commitment.

But I say that because it's just unpacking this idea of allegiance. The kingdom allegiance is what we sign up for as followers of the Lord Jesus, the King of the Cosmos. And it's the same in the Old Testament.

I think this is why Yahweh is pretty upset with someone who's really part of the kingdom. He stood aloof, Edom. You stood aloof when your brother was being beaten up, and it's not good enough.

It's not good enough. John 13 55 says, A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples. If you love one another, you have allegiance for the team. Your committed allegiance to Jesus demands that we stand with our brothers and sisters and that we are not aloof to them.

Does anyone feel the weight of that word, aloof? I feel very convicted about it, to be honest. It's probably one of the great problems in the church in the West, that we are aloof to the suffering of the church in the whole world.

So, Edom have a problem. They have been aloof. They are not recognizing the allegiance that's required in the kingdom.

And the second point I think we see here is, there are consequences in the kingdom. Verse 15, 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. Just as you drank on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually. They will drink and drink and be as if they had never been.

The day of the Lord is this great and terrifying judgment day that is talked about amongst the prophets throughout the Old Testament. God says through Obadiah, as Edom has done, so will be done to them.

Their deeds, they stood aloof when they could have helped, but there's going to be suffering that's going to come on them.

And there's strong historical evidence to suggest that what actually happened to Edom is ironically something of a mirror of what happened to Judah. In 586, Babylon destroys Jerusalem.

553 to 551, Babylon's king, Nabonidus, campaigned against Edom, and Edom lost its independence as a kingdom.

So it would seem that what happened to Judah in Jerusalem actually happened ironically to Edom, just as God had said, as you have done, it will be done to you.

In the kingdom of God, the range of God's effective rule, allegiance is required in the kingdom, and consequences can be expected. We've spent a bit of time in recent months talking about roads to ruin, pathways to pain.

There are ways that we can choose to live and pathways we can choose to walk down that will lead us to consequences that are unhelpful.

Kingdom consequence is, I think, a powerful reminder that God holds us accountable, not only for the evil we commit, the sin we commit, but also for the good we neglect. Amen. As you have done, it will be done to you.

Your deeds will return upon your own head. Edom thinks that their neutral position is fine, but God sees it differently. Imagine someone in your life hub is going through a terrible loss.

It's really hard what they're experiencing, and you know they're struggling, and you hear about it, you feel sorry for them, but you don't call, you don't visit, you don't offer practical help, you assume someone else will do that.

And then eventually the crisis passes. James 4, and as I read this, I feel the challenge myself. James 4, 17 says, If anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

Jesus takes it further, doesn't he, in Matthew 25, where the king judges people in relations to how they treated those who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, sick or in prison. He says, I was hungry, I was thirsty, and you did nothing. You failed.

We have all stood aloof, haven't we? We've stood aloof. We've failed to love as we should.

Edom discovered something, I think, that every person here needs to understand. Our lives have consequences before God, and not just for the things that we have done, but the things we refuse to do. Amen?

The phone call we never made, the person we chose to ignore, the injustice we witnessed, but couldn't be bothered confronting. The neighbour whose suffering we knew about, but decided was someone else's problem. Allegiance, consequences.

When God looks at my life, where have I been standing aloof? Well, since we are looking for Christ in scripture, thank God that Jesus didn't stand aloof from us. Amen?

Where is Christ in Obadiah? Well, Christ came near, hallelujah. He paid for our sin.

He dealt with the consequences of our sin. And now he calls us to live differently. In the kingdom of God, doing nothing is not always doing nothing wrong.

Finally, Obadiah moves to kingdom deliverance. Edom needs to know kingdom allegiance, kingdom consequence. But there is this wonderful hope that is embedded in Obadiah about a promise of deliverance, verse 17.

But on Mount Zion will be deliverance. It will be holy and Jacob will possess his inheritance. Jacob will be a fire and Joseph a flame.

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.

People from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau and people from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines. They will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead.

This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan will possess the land as far as Zarephath. The exiles from Jerusalem who are in Seferad will possess the towns of the Negev.

Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom will be the lords. I just want to say it's not easy. It's not easy stuff reading Obadiah.

His final words say, and the kingdom will be the lords. God promises a place of deliverance. I find when you just think about this pointing to the cross, it's a beautiful little line, verse 17.

But on Mount Zion, which is Jerusalem, there will be deliverance. It will be holy, and Jacob will possess his inheritance. So there's a promise of deliverance, holiness, and inheritance.

Think about that with the cross. The place of deliverance.

In some point into the future, God is saying, with all the mess that you're in now, all the history that needs to be unfolded, I will provide a deliverer, and he will be holy, and he will provide an inheritance for the lost.

Edom apparently trusted in its security because of its mountain home, and the power that it had in that location. Israel's hope clearly was in the god of Mount Zion. Edom put their trust in themselves, in their pride and self-sufficiency.

Mount Zion represented God's promise and saving presence. Obviously, the question is, where do we find our deliverance? Is it in our own strength like the Edomites, or in our god, and in his grace?

God promises the defeat of evil, verse 18 to 20. Jacob and Joseph become a fire, while Esau becomes stubble. Strong judgment imagery here.

But God is promising he will restore his people, reverse their humiliation and overcome their enemies. The kingdom of God is a kingdom that delivers its people from evil. Amen.

That's what Christ has done. And finally, God promises the reign of the king, verse 21.

Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom will be the Lord's. This is the ultimate destination of this obscure little prophecy. Edom thought its kingdom was secure.

Judah thought its kingdom had been lost. But Obadiah announces that the final word in history belongs to either, neither Edom nor Judah. The final word belongs to God.

Kingdom allegiance reminds us that we are responsible for loving our brothers and sisters. Can I leave that with you? We have a greater allegiance than Ash to West Ham and Trotty to Manly.

Sorry, mate, no. Trotty did a little vomit in his mouth then. Trotty to St.

George. In our kingdom allegiance, may we have ears to hear and eyes to see what needs to be done, that we might not stand aloof. Kingdom consequence reminds us that we are accountable to God for how we live.

We're accountable. It's simple. And kingdom deliverance reminds us that we are dependent upon the saving grace of our Lord Jesus.

Whether it's in an ancient setting, in an obscure book telling a story of the people of God, or it's us in the 21st century. We praise God that we have a King who does not stand aloof from the suffering of his people.

Please say hallelujah if you want to agree. We have a King who entered our world, shared our humanity, carried our sorrows, and bore our sins. We have a King who faced the consequences of sin so that sinners could receive the gift of salvation.

And we have a King who rose from the dead and will one day return to make all things new. Lord God, we thank you for your grace. Lord, as I'm struggling through preaching a message on Obadiah, I'm reminded of so much of life is a mess.

So much of life is mundane. So much of the kingdom is lived out in the ordinary.

I wonder if we could be encouraged by your spirit to remember the ordinary when we reflect on Obadiah, that in the ordinary we still have a calling to not be aloof to the good that can be done around us.

I pray for a outpouring of your spirit, Lord God. Lord Holy Spirit, may you empower us tomorrow morning to not be people who are aloof. But that we might be a people who are engaged, led by yourself, the Holy Spirit.

Lord, give us a fear of the Lord, that we would live with a holy appreciation of the judgment of God. That our sin matters, that our choices matter.

That there are consequences if we are aloof, but there are consequences also if we step in and do the good that you've prepared for us to do in advance.

And we give you all the praise now as we sing, as we stand together that Lord Jesus, you have delivered us from all the problems of humanity, all the failures, all the shame, all the guilt, all the despair, all the confusion.

You bring it together when you died and rose again. Send it to heaven and send your spirit to fill your church. Help us Lord to live in the power of the kingdom this week and in the months ahead in Jesus' name.