

# Obadiah 15-21

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Amen.

Words are like cassette tapes. Children, you might not have a clue what I'm talking about when I say cassette tapes. Now, that's what I used to listen to music on when I was little.

They're little plastic things and they have a bit of tape in it and you put it in a machine and they will turn the tape and the machine will be able to read music or any sound on the tape.

But the more you play a cassette tape it begins to lose its content. They fade what was a dark brown tape eventually, if you play it too much, will become a really clear tape and won't make any noise at all. And words are like cassette tapes.

If you take any words, don't do it now, but when you go home, just pick any random word and just repeat it to yourself over and over again. Eventually, it will lose all meaning. You'll think, it'll be as if you'd never heard the word before and you've never thought of what it means.

[ 1 : 40 ] It's this load of nonsense. And that can be true for some Bible words that we use as well.

Bible words can be like cassette tapes and start to lose their meaning the more we use them.

Same enough times, if you're not careful, you'll start to strip away the meaning of these Bible words. And I think one word that we've been stripping away the meaning from a lot, probably over the last century in the church, especially in the West, a key word that we have lost the meaning of is the word saved or salvation.

We've been thinning down the meaning of what it is to be saved. More and more, we think just being saved, just me being saved, me and Jesus, me being safe.

And then anything else we want to add on to that, we'll call it religion, or we'll call it something extra. So maybe going to church will be an extra to the idea of being saved.

But in truth, the idea of being saved, the idea of salvation, which is a key Bible idea, it is a really thick idea. It's an idea so thick, it takes a book this thick to explain it to you.

[ 2 : 59 ] And it's one of the key things that the minor prophets, these 12 prophets, they're not minor because they're unimportant, but just because they're short, and this is the shortest of all of them, Obadiah. What they want to do, one of the things they do, is they help us meditate on our salvation.

And the way they do that is by talking to us about something called the day of the Lord. You'll see we have that at the beginning of our passage tonight. The day of the Lord. It's a common phrase in prophets. You might have the day of the Lord, that day, on the day, the last days, the last day.

But it's an important phrase that they use to help us meditate on our salvation. You look on verse 21 at the end, it's talking about saviors. the day of the Lord is a day that results in salvation.

It results in God's people being saved. And so, when we hear prophets talk about the day of the Lord, that day, then they are giving us predictions, but they're not just giving us future predictions. Weather forecasts give us future predictions, as long as they're accurate. But this is more than just a forecast. they are expanding for us what it means for us to be saved, as well as predicting what God will be doing.

[ 4 : 22 ] And each statement they give us can be like a collection of ideas, or a collection of events. You may have heard this illustration before, talking about prophets.

But what prophets will often describe as a single mountain, when you actually get to it, it's actually a series of mountains, one behind the other. But it looks to the prophet as though it's one mountain.

And so he'll describe a day, and it's describing a series of days, or a series of events, or a cluster of things. And it's not because the prophet was seeing it wrong, but the prophet is deliberately packing together these ideas, which then the New Testament will then unpack for us.

And that is what Obadiah is doing for us here. So four things we're going to see tonight that Obadiah tells us about our salvation, to really thicken up our theology, to really help us to

understand these words more deeply.

The first thing we learn about our salvation is that it involves retribution. Salvation involves retribution in verses 15 and 16.

[ 5 : 27 ] You might not think that's where you'd expect to begin, think about salvation, think about retribution and punishment, but it's where we've been for the past two weeks, isn't it, looking at Obadiah. God is talking about his anger and his punishment of his enemies.

The day of the Lord, in verse 15, is going to be a day of retribution, and there is no salvation without it. The second half of verse 15, as you have done, it shall be done to you.

That old idea called the lex talionis, that the law were tooth for tooth, eye for eye. Here is God visiting Edom in wrath.

He's been prophesying against Edom, and although Edom should have behaved like brothers, because they acted like all the other nations, acted as enemies of God's people, God is promising now he will treat them as enemies, treat them as all the other nations.

So if the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations, you can be pretty sure it's near upon Edom, just like all of them. As you have done, it shall be done to you.

[ 6 : 33 ] Your deeds shall return on your own head. The decision they've taken to treat Israel as an enemy is responded to by God saying, on your own head be it.

And then in verse 16, we see, as you have drunk on my holy mountain, so all the nations shall drink continually. You will have come onto my holy mountain and gloat and celebrate over the destruction of Israel.

I will give you something to drink, is what the Lord is saying. He's coming back to what we saw the first time we came to this. What do we do with God's anger? Here God is promising to give them the cup of his wrath, the cup of his fury to drink.

And what we do with God's anger is we look to it for help. We look to God to punish our enemies. For as we salvation, God must conquer and restrain his and our enemies.

And so if they want something to drink, they will have something to drink. They will have the cup of God's wrath and they will drink and swallow, they'll gulp it down and it shall be, and they shall be as though they had never been.

[ 7 : 46 ] They will drink to their own destruction. And so when we look at the retribution, we learn about God's passion. That's the key lesson to get from seeing the retribution.

It's God's passion to save. Saving his people is not something God does reluctantly. He does it passionately out of his love for his people, out of his deep and great mercy.

And of course, as we ponder on this idea of retribution, we would be dishonest, wouldn't we, not to acknowledge that this is something that we deserve ourselves.

We are worthy of drinking this cup of wrath. And so together with considering this retribution, we need to come now to behold a great mystery.

Because the good news of salvation is that God has sent somebody to drink the cup of wrath for us. He came not to defeat us, but to bring us over onto his side from being his enemies.

[ 8 : 55 ] Because we were his enemies, he brought us over and then destroyed our enemy death as the Son of God came to drink that cup for us. And if the cup remains, the cup is still there for anyone who has not turned to Christ, there is a promise of his cup of wrath that we'll be drunk by those who reject Christ.

there is a final day where if you have not turned to Christ, you will have to drink this cup of wrath yourself. And so you need to consider first, will the retribution that comes on the day of the Lord be for you or against you?

Will the retribution be something that happens in the past on the cross for you? Or in the future against you? Now that's the first thing we need to consider here as we look at God's salvation.

We need to figure out where we stand in relation to it, in relation to God's retribution. And the second thing we see about God's salvation is that it involves restoration in verses 17 to 19.

So it involves restoration from verse 17 to 19. If you look at verse 17, what has been taken by the enemies will be restored and the house of Jacob shall possess their own possessions.

[ 10 : 17 ] Or it might be better word, they will dispossess their dispossesses. They will take back what was taken. There will be restoration and the restoration is a God-centered restoration.

They are restored to God. It shall be holy. To be holy is to belong to God. And where the land had been taken back by nations, Israel will take it back from them and more.

So in verse 19 we've got this long description of a bit of a geography lesson haven't we? And it's quite hard to understand what's going on if you're not familiar with geography of the region. I wasn't so I had to look it up. But fortunately for you I did look it up so I can explain it. So what's going on here is God is going all around the compass to show that they will completely get their land back.

There will be total restoration. And so you've got those in the Negev, that's in the south, they will possess Mount Esau, they will take back the land of Edom.

[11:19] So they will reach down to the south and take back land from Edom. Those of the Shephelah, that's the lowlands who can go up the west coast and what's actually on the west coast is Philistia.

So those close to the west, they will take Philistia. And they will also go up to the land of Ephraim and the land of Samaria. So these people in the lowlands, they'll take Philistia to the west and Ephraim and Samaria to the north.

And then Benjamin, that's coming in the north, will take Gilead to the east. And so God is walking them all around to see that this land will completely expand.

Anything that was taken away will be regained. But it's more than that. It's not just total restoration. You look at commentators and they're trying to debate, I can't quite understand how this describes the way Israel was before.

There are parts here that weren't part of Israel before. And I think that's precisely the point. This is restoration with knobs on. This is reunited. Israel is talking about Israel and the time when they were divided into two nations.

[12:32] nations and it describes them as if they are one nation. So in verse 18, the house of Jacob, either thinking of the whole country or the southern kingdom shall be a fire and the house of Joseph representing the northern kingdom a flame.

And they together will burn up the house of Esau and consume them. And there shall be no survivor for the house of Esau for the Lord has spoken.

This is restoration with knobs on and it's describing something that was fulfilled but only fulfilled in parts. It is an over-the-top description of restoration.

And what Obadiah wants us to think about here as we consider the restoration involved in salvation is he wants to point us to God's power. The power seen ultimately in the restoration of Christ back to life.

the true restoration with knobs on. A life that is beyond our wildest dreams and a life in which we share by the power of the Spirit.

[13:41] And just as by faith we share in that supernatural life and have as us as the source of our spiritual life that man in heaven so also the source of our spiritual food and nourishment and encouragement is bread and wine if you have faith to believe that.

And so we've seen restoration as a key part of God's salvation. So we've seen retribution, restoration and our rescue in verse 20.

Verse 20 we see rescue and here we've got yet more geography to deal with and there'll be yet more discussion in the commentaries from all the scholars and that's sort of what their job is isn't it? But what's happening is God is bringing back exiles, people who have left the land either being forced to leave or have chosen to leave and we've got all the exiles of this host of the people of Israel shall possess the land of Canaanites as far as Zarah's back.

This is probably the exiles from Assyria or from Babylon. So from the north they will come down and possess the land in the northern part. And then people aren't really sure what Sefarad is.

[14:55] They'll debate it. Some people think it's somewhere in Spain. I think it's probably somewhere in Libya but somewhere north Africa, so south from where we are here in Israel.

So we've got exiles coming from the north, exiles coming from the south into this part in the Megeu in the south of Israel. We've got people coming from north and south being brought back to this holy land of God.

So there's rescue. People being brought back to the land. God isn't just restoring Zion for his own sake. He's bringing his people back and putting them in there. Just as he's expanding this land and growing it, he's bringing people in from afar.

He's blessing them as he brings them back in. And so Obadiah here is teaching us about, as we think about his rescue, we learn here about our hope.

hope. Because not only did Jews from all over the place come back to Jerusalem one day, but then later on Jews from all over the world who had spread for all kinds of reasons came back to Jerusalem one day.

[16:04] And Jews from all over heard good news about a man called Jesus Christ. Christ. And they came to life as they heard this good news. And that news didn't just stay there, but the good news for us is that it spread from there to Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

And here we are, hearing this good news, believing it, being rescued from our enemies. The enemy for us was not just, it wasn't Babylon, it wasn't Assyria, it wasn't Edom.

The enemy was death, the enemy was the world, the flesh, and the devil. All who think, who can take me down? The ones whom God has said at the beginning of this book, I will take you down. Temptors, death, sickness, all of that ultimately will be brought down and we are rescued. That is the great hope of salvation. And then finally, rule.

We've seen retribution, we've seen restoration, seen rescue, and then finally rule in verse 21. If you've ever been to a performance of Handel's Messiah, or at least a performance in the UK, you will know that there is a tradition to observe when you go and watch it.

[17:21] And the best place to watch people observing this tradition is from the choir. What you have to do when you go to performance is, when the hallelujah chorus begins, everyone must stand.

And the great thing, if you're in the choir, you can see people racing to stand up as quickly as they can, just to demonstrate, I know to stand up, I'm not just following the crowd. And it's great to just watch everyone stand up, everyone looking around, and it's brilliant to see people trying to show off that I know the tradition.

But that is what you have to do. When the hallelujah chorus comes on, you must stand. And the reason you must stand is when it was performed with George II, King George II in the audience, he stood.

Now if he stands, everyone stands. And to this day, we all stand when the hallelujah chorus is sung. Now I don't know why he did it. I would assume he just liked the music.

But he acted better than he knew. Because what is the hallelujah chorus all about? What's the most important part of it actually? What is all the hallelujah-ing about?

[18:27] It's about that little choir section in the middle, then explodes at the end. The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ.

And he shall reign forever and ever from Revelation 19. That's what all the hallelujah-ing is all about. People using the hallelujah chorus, all kinds of things in advertising and everything, don't you?

What they're celebrating is actually the kingdom of this world becoming the kingdom of our God and of his Christ. And whether or not George II knew what he was doing, he was absolutely right to stand, to acknowledge the truth of that and to submit to it that ultimately the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

What I was telling us about a time when saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau. The reference to saviors is probably thinking about that restoration from the exile from Babylon. Nehemiah 9 talks about saviors coming to restore the city and rebuild it. But of course he is thinking ultimately of that one saviour who came up to Mount Zion to restore all things and for the kingdom to be the Lord's ultimately.

[19:42] So as we think of this rule, we think of our duty to obey Christ and this great news that we have a king. That's what it means to be saved.

It's not just me and Jesus feeling safe, but I have a king. And the whole world has a king. And as long as I'm united to him, as long as not just knowing that he has done this restoration, but I have been rescued and put in this new land to Mount Zion, not literally a place in the Middle East, but the great heavenly Mount Zion where God is building his people.

This is the key thing, and to be saved is to come to Mount Zion. It's to be part of God's people. It is to be brought not just me and Jesus, but us and Jesus, saved on Mount Zion by the saviour who has come to rule over all the enemies, to crush them under his feet, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

That is our great privilege as we come to worship him. Calvin, when I was looking up, where does he quote Obadiah? Where does he think of Obadiah? He comes to see this Mount Zion and shows

us that salvation isn't just an individual thing.

Salvation is a rich, robust thing where it's for the whole of God's people as a whole, together, as the church. So we need to thicken our theology as we understand what salvation means.

[ 21 : 09 ] It's God restoring this people. It's bringing retribution on his enemies. It's restoring the lands, not just to the life that we knew before, not to the life that we have now, not even the life that Adam knew before the fall, but to life with Nobzon, a life full of glory, a life full of Holy Spirit power, and rescuing us as he brings us into Christ together as a whole, and ruling over us as our king.

And one way he rules over us is by his word, as we listen to it, as we submit to it, as we thought so help me this morning. It's not just hearing the word, but doing it, putting it into practice as we obey this king, but also he calls us to his banqueting table to feast with him.

That is what we do here. We come to Mount Zion as the temple, the great palace of the king, and here we have his banqueting table as we taste of what we will taste forever in his palace.

Saviour shall go up to Mount Zion. Just as that Saviour did go up to Mount Zion, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Amen. Let's pray.