

OBADIAH 1:15-18 - THE DAY OF THE LORD UPON ALL NATIONS

© 2009 [Tony Garland](#)¹

I. Introduction

- A. Journeying through the book of the minor prophet Obadiah.
- B. Background – Biblical and historical development of twin brothers: Jacob (who is Israel) and Esau (who is Edom).
- C. Israel, the offspring of Jacob, who stood in the line of God’s blessing, was opposed by the offspring of Jacob’s brother Esau—the Edomites.
- D. The interrelationship between Esau and Jacob, that is, between *Edom* and *Israel*, serves as an illustration on at least two levels.
 1. First: the persecution and hatred of the descendents of Jacob by the descendants of Esau resulting in the downfall of Edom in history past.
 2. Second: the persecution and hatred of Israel by the Gentile nations of the world in their ongoing opposition to God’s will resulting in the judgment of the Gentile nations at the time of the end.

¹

In the interest of size, sermon illustrations may be omitted.

- E. In our previous time in Obadiah, we examined verses 10-14 which describe Edom's opposition to Israel at the time of her downfall. We saw that the motivation behind Edom's opposition of Israel was rooted in the jealousy of one brother in rejecting the blessings God had bestowed upon his twin brother. The Edomites rejected the election of Israel by God.
- F. In a similar way, the passage before us today, found in verses 15-18, touches upon a theme found in numerous places in Scripture: the coming judgment of the nations of the world in relation to their rejection of God in general and their treatment of God's chosen nation Israel in particular.
- G. The mistake which Edom made in refusing to acknowledge God's choosing of Israel is to be repeated on the stage of world history, but ultimately by the Gentile nations of the end time.
- H. As we continue to move forward in history toward the Second Coming of Christ, it is critical for Christians to understand this issue concerning the treatment of the nation of Israel in God's eyes.
- I. The key question before us is this: *Is the Jewish nation still of special significance in the plan of God?* Or . . . has "national Israel" ceased to exist in God's eyes such that OT passages concerning "Israel," such as the one before us in Obadiah, are now to be understood as finding fulfillment in believers among all nations—the largely Gentile Church?
 - 1. Are we to no longer expect the fulfillment of OT passages in their plain sense, but instead endorse the notion, as one interpreter puts it, that the "New Testament transmutes the territorial into the celestial, the material into the supernatural" [Allen, 172] such that "Israel" should always be read as "the people of God" – the faithful among both Jew and Gentile?

II. Scripture Passage

A. Obadiah 1:15-18

"For the day of the LORD upon all the nations *is* near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head. For as you drank on my holy mountain, *so* shall all the nations drink continually; yes, they shall drink, and swallow, and they shall be as though they had never been. But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau *shall be* stubble; they shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

III. Three Parties

- A. Edom – both in the time of Obadiah and in the future Day of the Lord.
- B. All the Nations – in the future Day of the Lord.
- C. House of Jacob, house of Joseph = the descendents of the man Jacob, Israel, the Jewish nation.
 - 1. House of Jacob – referring to the southern kingdom (Judah and Benjamin).
 - 2. House of Joseph – referring to the northern kingdom (primarily the other 10 tribes).

- D. Obadiah compares Edom's interaction with Israel with the interaction of the Gentile nations in their treatment of Israel prior to the Day of the Lord.

IV. Three Outcomes

A. Edom - judged

1. Oba. 1:15

- a) "As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head"

(1) Edom's opposition to Israel aiding in her downfall will "boomerang" upon Edom bringing about her own demise.

- b) "And no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau"

(1) When we read about the last great confederacy of nations against Israel in chapters 12 through 14 of Zechariah, we see that some nations, such as Egypt, are restored and brought into millennial blessing. But Edom, representative of the flesh and the carnal mind with its enmity to God and His Law, will be irrevocably cut off [Feinberg, 128].

B. The Gentile Nations - judged

1. Oba. 1:16

For as you [Edom] drank on my holy mountain, so shall the nations [of the world] drink continually . . . they shall be as though they had never been.

- a) As Edom drank (wine) in idolatrous revelry in Jerusalem [the Lord's "holy mountain"] at the overthrow of Israel by Babylon, so shall the nations drink wine—the wine of God's wrath.

- b) The nations will drink the cup of God's wrath, a cup of stumbling and drunkenness.

(1) **Psalms 75:8** For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain *and* drink down.

(2) **Jeremiah 25:15-16** For thus says the LORD God of Israel to me: "Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. and they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them."

(a) Jeremiah then enumerates the kingdoms which include those judged for their part in opposing Israel at the time of her Babylonian captivity. Yet the language seems to go beyond that near-history fulfillment to take in the time of the end. Indeed, we see this theme repeated in the Book of Revelation.

(3) **Zechariah 12:2-3** "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all

peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."

(4) **Revelation 14:9-10** Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

(5) In the day of the Lord, this "cup of wine" containing God's wrath will also be served up to Babylon, as Revelation 16:17-21 reveals.

c) The cup which God serves up to judge the nations is not just the result godless actions and attitudes—as bad as they might be. The judgment is also the result of their active rejection of God's will in history as manifested by their ongoing opposition to Israel.

(1) **Joel 3:1-2** "For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land."

d) Although Israel, in her own sin against God, was to drink from this cup, ultimately she would be restored and the cup would pass to her oppressors:

(1) **Isaiah 51:22-23** Thus says your Lord, The LORD and your God, *Who* pleads the cause of His people: "See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury; you shall no longer drink it. But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, who have said to you, 'Lie down, that we may walk over you.' And you have laid your body like the ground, and as the street, for those who walk over."

(2) Even when used to judge Israel, the Gentile nations will still be the ultimate recipients of His wrath for how they treated "His people."

2. Obadiah reveals that whereas Edom drank on one occasion, God will see to it that the Gentile nations drink continually—until every last drop of the cup's contents have their predicted effect.

3. Not only will they drink, but they will fully swallow the contents so that their intoxicating effects are assured.

C. Israel - vindicated

1. **Obadiah 1:17-18** "But on Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, And there shall be holiness; The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, And the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau *shall be* stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, And no survivor shall *remain* of the house of Esau," For the LORD has spoken.

- a) There shall be holiness
 - (1) This is the result of the ultimate deliverance of Israel from the persecution of the Gentile nations which culminates at the Second Coming of Christ with the establishment of the millennial kingdom. You can read about it in chapters 12-14 of Zechariah which also mentions this time of holiness which shall come upon the earth (Zec. 14:20).
- b) They shall possess their possessions
 - That is, Israel shall possess that which has been their promise, but unavailable due to the combination of their national sin and opposition by the Gentiles – the Promised Land.
 - (1) In the interest of time, I'm not going to discuss the numerous passages concerning the land promised to Israel.
 - (2) I would refer those who are interested in this aspect to my series of presentations on the covenants in March of last year. One of the presentations deal explicitly with the land covenant—the Promised Land which many Christians consider irrelevant to the events of today.

V. The Day of the Lord

- A. Obadiah mentions that the "Day of the Lord" shall be upon "all nations." Just what is meant by this phrase, "the Day of the Lord"?
- B. Sometimes the phrase refers to situations in the past where God intervened in history in a significant way to judge a nation.
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's overthrow of Egypt at the battle of Carchemish in 605 BC and the subsequent invasion of Egypt by Babylon in approximately 570 BC is a "Day of the Lord" (Jer. 46:10).
 - 2. Ezekiel also refers to Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Egypt as a "Day of the Lord" (Eze. 30:3).
 - 3. Sometimes the "Day of the Lord" describes the judgment of Israel itself by God through another nation such as Babylon (Eze. 13:5; Zep. 1:7).
- C. Upon all nations.
 - 1. Yet these historic situations also prefigure an ultimate Day of the Lord associated with the second coming of Christ when the godless nations of the world will be overthrown, as is described in other OT passages within Isaiah (Isa. 2:10-22), Joel (Joel 1:15; 2:1,11,31; 3:14), Amos (Amos 5:18-20), Zephaniah (Zep. 1:7,14), Zechariah (Zec. 14:1), Malachi (Mal. 4:5), and here in Obadiah (Oba. 1:15).
 - 2. This ultimate day of judgment was yet future when Paul wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians (1Th. 5:2).
 - 3. Peter tells us that it will come as a thief in the night and will ultimately result in the complete destruction of the present heavens and earth (2Pe. 3:10).

4. This "Day of the Lord" forms the backdrop for the sobering events detailed in the Book of Revelation—events which have not yet transpired.

VI. Continuing Significance of Israel

- A. If Obadiah sees Edom as typifying the Gentile nations of the time of the end, we must ask the question in what way does Edom typify the Gentile nations?
 1. Does Obadiah condemn Edom merely for general ungodly behavior? No. As we have seen, Obadiah's prophecy of judgment upon Edom is closely connected with her refusal to recognize God's choice of Israel and failure to treat the chosen nation accordingly. The evidence before us suggests that Edom's condemnation is not primarily for general godlessness—as if she had behaved like Sodom or Gomorrah. No, her condemnation is fueled by her rejection of Israel—her behavior toward the descendents of Jacob.
 2. This, in combination with other passages in Scripture, force us to conclude that the Gentile nations will be condemned not only because of their godlessness, but also for their mistreatment and opposition of the chosen nation—their refusal to accept what God has said concerning Israel (Joel 3:1-2; Mtt. 25:31-46).
- B. NT Revelation
 1. In the time which remains, I would like to look at a few key NT passages which illustrate that national Israel (the only "Israel" known to Scripture) is still of significance to God's plan in history.
 2. Given the storehouse of OT passages which describe this truth, why focus on the NT?
 - a) Because many believers are unfamiliar with the OT and its prophetic passages concerning this issue.
 - b) Because other believers, even when faced with such passages, tend to "spiritualize" their interpretation such that they essentially become void of any physical reality.
 - c) Because some believers read the Bible in such a way as if a teaching, promise, or prediction in the OT is no longer operational unless it happens to be explicitly repeated or endorsed within the NT.
 3. Three Critical Untils
 - a) "Until" is a very important word within Scripture. It marks a point in time when conditions change—where whatever held before the "until" no longer holds afterwards.
 - b) The following three "untils," when carefully considered, indicate that there is still a significant aspect of ethnicity (the Jew/Gentile distinction) at work in the plan of God.
 - c) Each of the three "untils" sets a time limit on the period during which present conditions will continue. They mark a time in the future when significant alterations will come about. Each of these alterations involves unbelieving Jews within the nation of Israel.
 - d) And just what are these "present conditions" which are slated to change?

- (1) Israel's Dispersion Among the Nations
Since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Rome and the dispersion of the Jews among the nations, a large number of Jews remain outside the land. Moreover, and equally significantly, they remain under the thumb of Gentile control in relation to the status of their land and their capital: Jerusalem. This condition will be brought to an end.
 - (2) Israel's Rejection of Jesus as Messiah
Presently, the majority of Jews are unwilling to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. Scripture reveals that this situation is temporary.
 - (3) The Overwhelmingly Gentile Composition of the Faithful
Although the church which began on the Day of Pentecost was almost entirely Jewish, this changed rapidly as the majority of the Jews rejected the gospel and it, in turn, went out to the Gentiles of the world. This has resulted in a predominantly Gentile population among the faithful. This Gentile dominance in coming to faith is also slated to end.
- e) Let's look briefly at each of these "untils" in the NT which set a limit on these present conditions.
- (1) Concerning: Israel's Dispersion Among the Nations, the first "until" is found in the 21st chapter of Luke:
 - (a) **Luke 21:20-24** "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles **until** the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
 - i) At the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 AD, the Jews were led away captive into all nations.
 - ii) Jesus reveals that thereafter, Jerusalem is to be "trampled" by Gentiles—the city will not be under the ongoing sovereign control of the Jews—UNTIL a particular point in history which Jesus refers to as the fulfillment of the "times of the Gentiles."
 - (b) Several important points should not be missed:

- i) This is a Jewish/Gentile distinction being made by Jesus which applies to our time. It was *Jews* who were dispersed worldwide. It will be *Jews* who return to Jerusalem and retain control over it when the time spoken of here comes to pass.
 - ii) This period of loss of sovereignty over Jerusalem and the lack of a Davidic king on the throne of David will not continue indefinitely.
 - iii) It is God's purpose that the "times of the Gentiles" will come to a close. If the "Gentile times" are to come to a close, what else can be inferred but that "Jewish times" are to follow wherein Israel is back in her land with sovereign control over Jerusalem with a Davidic king in residence as promised in many passages within the OT.
- (2) Concerning: Israel's Rejection of Jesus as Messiah
the second "until" is found in the 23rd chapter of Matthew:
- (a) **Matthew 23:37-39** "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! "See! Your house is left to you desolate; "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more **till** you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" [cf. Luke 13:35]
 - (b) Jesus is speaking to *Jerusalem* – the location of "the house" – the temple of God. Jesus longs to gather her children (the Jews) together, but they were not willing. So the temple was to be left desolate (without God's presence and ultimately unprotected and destroyed).
 - (c) Yet, according to this "until," Jerusalem will not see Jesus again until she says, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" It is not the Gentiles that will say it, it is the Jews.
 - (d) In point of fact, the turning of the Jews back to Jesus is here established, by Jesus Himself, as a prerequisite for His return.
 - (e) Thus, unless and until there is a conversion of the Jews (not Gentiles) to faith in Jesus, we won't see Jesus on this earth. If this isn't a significant Jew/Gentile distinction being made I don't know what is? Clearly, the remaining Jews, as a nation—the literal, physical descendants of Jacob—are going to turn to faith in Christ en mass and declare Him as the blessed One.
 - (f) This teaching of Jesus dovetails perfectly with what Paul says in the next "until."
- (3) Concerning: The Overwhelmingly Gentile Nature of the Faithful,
the third "until" is found in the 11th chapter of Romans:
- (a) **Romans 11:25-28** For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel **until** the fullness of the Gentiles

has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." Concerning the gospel *they are enemies* for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers.

- (b) Paul has been teaching about the relationship between believing Jews, unbelieving Jews, and believing Gentiles. He uses the analogy of an olive tree where the root and trunk represents the promises made to the fathers beginning with Abraham, and the branches represent those who are nourished or blessed by the promises. At the time Paul is writing, unbelieving Jews, the "natural branches" in the analogy, have been broken off and branches from a "wild olive tree," representing believing Gentiles, have been grafted in.
- (c) Paul is concerned that the Gentile church may conclude that they are to permanently replace the natural branches, the Jews. The Gentile church might erroneously conclude that perhaps the breaking off of some of the natural branches at the present time indicated that this situation was to continue permanently.
- (d) Paul indicates there is a time coming when, as he refers to it, "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" where the blindness in part, which is Israel's condition today, will come to an end and the Jews will turn to faith in Jesus. This, in combination with persecution revealed in other passages, will result in the conversion of all Jews who remain: "all Israel shall be saved."
- (e) Although many interpreters attempt to make "Israel" in the NT a generic term for "the people of God"—denoting believers who are sons of Abraham by faith—this cannot be done without completely distorting Paul's teaching.
- (f) Pay special attention to what Paul says concerning *Israel*: "concerning the gospel they are enemies." Whoever "Israel" means in this passage, it cannot mean "the people of God" in the sense of those who are children of Abraham by faith, because this "Israel" both rejects and opposes the gospel.

VII. Other Passages

- A. Several other passages in the NT could be mentioned in support of the ongoing significance of Israel.
- B. In the interest of time, I will be brief in my treatment here—and encourage you to look at these passages in more detail on your own:
 - 1. The Sheep and Goat Judgment (Mtt. 25:31-46)
 - a) **Matthew 25:31-33** "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd

divides *his* sheep from the goats. "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

- b) The separation of sheep and goats is on the basis of how people from among the nations have treated "my brethren" (Mtt. 25:40).
 - c) The question arises as to who is Jesus referring to in this context when He says "my brethren"?
 - (1) Is Jesus referring to the "brotherhood of man"? Clearly not because both the sheep and goats are in that brotherhood and distinguished from His brethren.
 - (2) Is Jesus referring to the "brotherhood of the faithful" – as when he declared, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Mtt. 12:50)?
 - (a) If so, we have a logical dilemma because Jesus distinguishes the sheep from "my brethren" and yet the sheep, by their righteous acts, have demonstrated their faith.
 - (b) Since the sheep enter the kingdom, they *must be* believers. Otherwise we have the logical contradiction of non-believers entering the Kingdom of God.
 - (c) Yet if the sheep are Gentile believers from among the nations, but differ from "my brethren" what are we to conclude?
 - (3) In this context, "my brethren" refers to His *Jewish brethren*.
 - (a) His brethren are the "sheep of *this* fold" – as Jesus taught in John 10:14-16.
 - (b) The sheep who enter the kingdom and ministered to His brethren are from among the "sheep of another fold" which Jesus also spoke of (John 10:14-16).
 - d) The Gentile nations are judged by their treatment of the Jews at a time in history where it is extremely risky to extend help—thus the Gentile "sheep" are rewarded, representing the faithful non-Jews who stand with "his brothers."
 - e) Here again we see the continued relevance of the Jewish nation and the same theme as Obadiah: at the time of the end, the Gentile nations will be judged regarding their treatment of Israel.
2. Waiting for the Promise or the Kingdom?
- a) **Acts 1:4-8** And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

- b) Notice several aspects of this passage:
- (1) The disciples have been with Jesus for 40 days of post-resurrection teaching. Any and all expectations of an “earthly Jewish kingdom” ought to have been completely vanquished by now if it was never to be.
 - (2) Either Jesus failed to teach them there would never be an earthly Jewish kingdom or the disciples remained completely unable to learn from Him, even after He had bestowed upon them a special impartation of the Spirit (John 20:22) . . . OR . . . their expectation of a future earthly Jewish kingdom is correct, *but the timing was wrong*.
 - (3) It is extremely significant that Jesus does not correct their expectation. Rather, His answer implicitly endorses their expectation by explaining that there will be a “time or season” corresponding to the Jewish kingdom which the Father has put in His own authority.
 - (4) Surely, if there were ever a time to correct their doggedly held, but mistaken notion of a Jewish kingdom this would have been the place—yet no such correction follows.
- c) I submit to you that this expectation of the apostles concerning Israel’s eventual kingdom was correct in regard to its characteristics, but misguided in relation to timing and sequence.
- (1) Their expectation of such a kingdom, base on OT passages, dovetailed with the words of Jesus said in Matthew 19:28 where He said: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me [the Jewish disciples] will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
 - (2) This is not a promise to all believers—it is specific to His Jewish disciples—who will yet sit in rule over a restored Jewish nation.
 - (3) Without a future Jewish kingdom with twelve thrones and twelve tribes, this teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19 – along with many other passages found throughout scripture – is stripped of its contextual meaning and reduced to only mystical significance as it is tortured at the hands of fanciful and varied interpretation.

VIII. PRAYER – That the faithful would not walk in the path of the unbelieving Gentiles.

IX. References

- Allen Leslie Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), ISBN 0-340-216-794.
- Bullock C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction To the Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988), ISBN 0-8024-4142-4.
- Feinberg Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1990), ISBN 0-8024-5305-8.
- Finley Thomas J. Finley, *Joel Amos Obadiah: An Exegetical Commentary* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003), ISBN 0-7375-0018-2.
- Freeman Hobart E. Freeman, *An introduction To The Old Testament Prophets* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968).
- Friberg Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller, vol. 4, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker's Greek New Testament library (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000).
- Ironside H.A. Ironside, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2004), ISBN 0-8254-2910-2.
- JSB Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford, NY: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004).
- Lange John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff and Edwin Cone Bissell, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures : Apocrypha* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2008).
- Morgan R. J. Morgan, *Nelson's complete book of stories, illustrations, and quotes* (electronic ed.) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000).
- Unger Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary On The Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002). ISBN 0-89957-398-3.