

OBADIAH 1:19-21 - THE KINGDOM SHALL BE THE LORD'S

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I. Introduction

II. Context

- A. Twin brothers: Esau and Jacob.
- B. Esau/Edomites refuse to accept God's sovereign choice and purpose in Jacob/Israel.
- C. God's judgment of Edom prefigures His judgment of Gentile nations in the ultimate Day of the Lord.
- D. Judgment of Gentile nations in the future Day of the Lord is contrasted with the restoration of Israel ("but" which opens v. 17).
- E. Last time together: judgment of Gentile nations and triumph of the Jews over their enemies (vv. 15-18).

III. Obadiah 1:19-21

- A. The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead. And the captives of this host of the children of Israel *shall possess the land* of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South. Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.
- B. Restoration of Israel to her land of promise:
- C. Why should we be concerned to understand this relatively obscure passage in the Old Testament?
 - 1. Jesus said: "In this manner, therefore pray:
'Our Father Who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .*'"
 - 2. Obadiah is revealing details concerning the sequence of events associated with the arrival of God's Kingdom on earth.
 - a) Day of the Lord – Gentile nations judged as Edom (v. 15, last session).
 - b) Triumph of the Jews over their enemies (vv. 17-18, last session).
 - c) Final restoration of Israel to her land (vv. 19-20) in conjunction with . . .
 - d) Establishment of God's Kingdom on Earth (v. 21).

¹

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

IV. Final restoration of Israel to her land.

A. Geographically specific!

1. Israelites living in the south (the Negeb) will eventually possess the mountains then occupied, in Obadiah's time, by descendants of Esau.
2. The lowland refers to the coastal plains, the western foothills north of Philistia—the land of the Philistines (between Joppa and Gaza). This would include the fertile agricultural plain of Sharon—known for producing the beautiful rose of Sharon mentioned in the Song of Solomon (Sos. 2:1).
3. "The fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria" designate central Israel – at one time having been occupied by the northern kingdom which is often referred to as *Ephraim* or *Samaria*.
4. At this time, "Benjamin shall possess Gilead." Small Benjamin (with Judah in the south) will extend its borders to Gilead (east of the Jordan). This refers to the mountain region east of the Jordan River, also known as the *Transjordan* and occupied by the ancient kingdoms of Bashan, Ammon, Gilead, Moab, and Edom.
5. The captivity of Israel at the hands of her oppressors will be reversed: those previously taken as captives in Israel will then take captive the region occupied by the Canaanites.
 - a) Zarephath – a coastal city between Tyre and Sidon where Elijah lodged with a widow during the drought in the time of Ahab.
6. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.
 - a) Sepharad
 - (1) Suggestions on the location of Sepharad include two countries (Spain, Media [Persia]) and two cities (Hesperides in Libya, and Sardis in Asia Minor—near Sart in modern Turkey, [Freedman]).
 - (2) Spanish Jews today are called Sephardim (in distinction from the Ashkenazim Jews of Central Europe), which causes speculation that Sepharad may have been in Spain.
 - (a) An ancient Jewish translation and commentary on the OT, the *Targum of Jonathan* also associates Sepharad with Spain, but is not considered to be a reliable indicator of its actual location [Freedman].
 - (b) Whatever the location, the verse indicates that Jews previously dispersed in another country will return to possess the southern (Negeb) area of Israel.
7. This passage is far too specific to be spiritualized away as mere metaphor denoting "generic heavenly blessings."
 - a) "The territorial and imperialistic emphasis of the passage is embarrassing to the Christian reader . . . Certainly the NT transmutes the territorial into the celestial, the material into the supernatural. . . . it is difficult to see how any Christian can

contemplate turning the theological clock back to a limited, pre-Christian point of expectation." [Allen, 172].

- (1) But *where* did such literal expectations come from if not from clearly communicated promises such as this passage in Obadiah?
 - (a) Is not God bound by the plain meaning of what He has said?
 - (b) Is the Old Testament meaningless at face value without the New Testament to "reinterpret" it?
 - (c) Did God really expect Obadiah's hearers to interpret these specific geographic borders as a "spiritual piece of pie in the heavenly by-and-by"?
- b) John Walvoord, late president and chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary, saw this spiritualizing slight-of-hand for what it is. He observed, "A literal promise spiritualized is exegetical fraud."²

B. Final restoration – not something obtained in history past.

1. Isaiah, in his 11th chapter, describes a time when Israel will be gathered a second time from the four corners of the earth and during which both Edom and the Philistines will be plundered—in agreement with Obadiah.
 - a) This time is particularly noteworthy because God will destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt [probably the Gulf of Suez] and wave His hand over the River [Euphrates] so the Jews can return to their land on foot. So miraculous is this event said to be that it is compared with the original crossing of the Red Sea at the Exodus (Isa. 11:16).
 - b) Since these notable physical events are not recorded by history, it would seem they are yet to transpire.
2. Amos, in his 9th chapter, also in agreement with Obadiah, speaks of a time when Israel shall possess both Edom and "all the Gentiles [or nations] who are called by My name."
 - a) The Holy Spirit, speaking through Amos, emphasizes the permanence of the restoration of Israel to her land: "*I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up* from the land I have given them." Says the Lord your God (Amos 9:15).
3. How can we know?
 - a) The kingdom shall be the Lord's.
 - b) This speaks, not only of the end of all kingdoms which have stood in opposition to God, but also of the institution of the rule of Jesus from Jerusalem when the believing Jewish remnant is restored permanently to the land of promise.

² John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), 200.

V. The Kingdom shall be the Lord's.

- A. **Obadiah 1:21** Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, And the kingdom shall be the LORD'S.
1. These "deliverers" may be resurrected saints who return with Jesus. Since they are said *to judge*, we could infer that these are among those who reign with Jesus at the establishment of His kingdom at the beginning of the millennium.
 - a) **Revelation 20:4** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them . . .
 2. Or perhaps these "deliverers" are heroic Jewish individuals who, like the judges of Israel's past, are raised up by God as part of the overthrow of Edom associated with the events leading to the Second Coming. A similar idea may be expressed by Zechariah when he describes leaders among Judah who are enabled by God to do great exploits in association with the events of the Second Coming.
 - a) **Zechariah 12:6** "In that day I will make the *governors of Judah* like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place-Jerusalem.
- B. What else are we to conclude? Prior to this time described by Obadiah, the kingdom will *not* be the Lord's.
1. Times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24).
 - a) As we saw in our last time together, according to Jesus we are living in the times of the Gentiles.
 - (1) **Luke 21:24** "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."
 - (2) The Jews remain dispersed among the nations. Those Jews who are in Israel remain under duress and ongoing harassment by the nations of the world.
 - (3) Can there be any doubt that Jerusalem is *still* trampled by Gentiles? It is neither recognized as Israel's capital nor is it under the sovereign control of the Jews.
 - b) Began with God's judgment of the line of corrupt Davidic rulers leading to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.
 - c) **Ezekiel 21:25-27** Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity *shall* end, 'thus says the Lord GOD: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing *shall remain* the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no *longer*, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it *to Him*." '
 - d) That which Ezekiel says will be overthrown is the ruling scepter—there will no longer be a Davidic king reigning *until* . . . He comes whose right it is.

(1) This is none other than Shiloh of Genesis 49:10 – Messiah Jesus.

e) This “gap” in Davidic rule was foreseen by Hosea.

(1) **Hosea 3:4-5** *For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.*

C. Hope Deferred

1. Character of the Reign of the Gentile Nations

- a) Prior to the second coming and the establishment of the Lord’s kingdom, the rule of the Gentile nations will remain predominantly ugly, harsh, and sinful.
- b) It may appear glorious to man—as the glorious image of metals were seen by Nebuchadnezzar, whose rule began the times of the Gentiles (Dan. 2:31-45).
- c) As David was shown in a subsequent vision, rule during the times of the Gentile—as characterized by God—is a succession of savage beasts, continually degrading in majesty while increasing in brutality with time (Dan. 7).
- d) Until Jesus returns and the “stone cut without hands” crushes all other kingdoms we remain living in a time dominated by unrighteous and pompous rulers who overwhelmingly reject God’s law, doing instead “what is right in their own eyes.”

2. The Perfect Reign of Jesus

- a) From this passage in Obadiah—and many others—we know the unrighteous dominion of the first Adam and his descendents will finally be supplanted by the righteous dominion of the virgin born, perfect God-Man.
 - (1) **Daniel 2:44** "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.
- b) Then shall many of the most beautiful, longed for, prayed over, passages of Scripture find their fulfillment at the establishment of the millennial reign of Christ.
 - (1) **Matthew 5:3-9** "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
 - (2) **Isaiah 11:4-9** [W]ith righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf

and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

- (3) **Isaiah 65:19-23** I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

VI. Conclusion

- A. When you pray the Lord's prayer—which includes a request for His kingdom to come on earth—are you also looking for the coming vindication and restoration of Israel as described by Obadiah and elsewhere in Scripture?
- B. It is critical, as Christians, that we understand the interrelationship between the Coming King and the promises of restoration for Israel.
1. As we saw in our last time together in Obadiah, neither Jerusalem nor the world will see Jesus again unless and until the Jews say, "blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord" (Mtt. 23:39; Luke 13:35).
 2. Paul, in a passage warning gentile believers not to neglect God's will in regard to Israel, emphasizes the blessings connected with the future restoration of the Jewish nation.
 - a) **Romans 11:12** Now if their fall [that is, the Jews] *is* riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!
- C. As glorious and important as worldwide salvation is, it is not Jesus' only ministry. We would do well to pay attention to the words of Isaiah here:
1. **Isaiah 49:1-6** "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name. And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me." "And He said to me, 'You *are* My servant, O Israel, In whom I will be glorified.' Then I said, 'I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; Yet surely my just reward *is* with the LORD, And my work with my God.'" "And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You

should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will **also** give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."

VII. What Have we Learned in our time in Obadiah?

- A. Opposition to God's chosen is as opposition of God Himself. Those who love Him will recognize and promote His will.
- B. God has revealed His choice of Israel: both Edom and the Gentile nations would do well to heed.
- C. As in the case of Edom, a seemingly insulated, prideful nation can be overthrown by God. God can reveal her hidden secrets and destroy wisdom itself from her midst.
- D. In the Day of the Lord the nations which reject God's restorative purposes for Israel will be as Edom—they will drink the cup of God's wrath to find themselves on the receiving end of His judgment.
- E. Israel will be upheld by God to overthrow her oppressors. She will be completely and permanently restored to her land upon the establishment of God's earthly reign at the Second Coming of Christ.
- F. Worldwide salvation is only one of two major redemptive tasks of Jesus: the restoration of the covenant nation Israel back to God is the other task. He will not fail at either task!

VIII. Pray

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