

Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical prophecy, Lecture 17

Obadiah Continued, Joel

C. Content of Obadiah

1. Outline

For our time this morning in Obadiah we will look at some features of the content, and then get on into Joel. As you're aware, Obadiah is only one chapter, and only 21 verses. So it's a short book. I have what I think is the best way to break that up into sections. In the first nine verses you have "the pronouncement of judgment on Edom." Verses 10 and 11 explain "the reason for that judgment." We looked at 10 and 11 last week in connection with the discussion of the date of Obadiah, and you'll remember that discussion centers around which destruction or plundering of Jerusalem is involved in those verses, because 10 and 11 says, "Because of violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame, you will be destroyed forever. 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." So, it's for that reason that Edom will be judged.

I mentioned last week, that there is debate over whether you should follow 10 and 11, with 12 to 14. In other words, is 10 through 14 a unit, or, do verses 12 to 14 constitute a warning for the future? In other words, you've done this, now don't do it again. I'm inclined to think the latter. We're going to come back to that and look at it in more detail. Verse 12 says, "You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune, or rejoice over the people of Judah," and that goes on down to 14. We'll come back and look at that in more detail, but it seems to me, verses 12 to 14 are a warning for the future.

Verses 15-16 is another transition, with the message of Obadiah, it moves from a judgment on Edom to "a judgment on all nations," all the ungodly. That's 15 and 16. And then the last section, verses 17 to 21, "restoration and blessing for Israel."

Now, let's go into some more detail on each of these sections. You read in verse

one, “The vision of Obadiah. This is what the sovereign Lord says about Edom.”

Remember Edom is the nation that traces its ancestry back to Esau. So it’s the brother nation to Israel. “We have heard a message from the Lord, an envoy was sent to the nations to say, ‘Rise and let us go against her in battle.’ See I will make you small among the nations. You will be utterly despised.” I’m taking the NIV translation. How do you translate that? You notice the verbal form is in the perfect tense. Is it a prophetic perfect? That’s the way the NIV translates it, “I **will** make you small.” The King James says, “I **have** made you small.” Now that’s an interpretative point. The question is: Is it a reference to a coming judgment or to a past historical reality, namely that Edom was a small insignificant people and never a great empire. Seems to me in the context it should be taken as a prophetic perfect, as something in the future. That is the flow of the passage as it is a judgment that will come on Edom. The NIV has translated it correctly as a prophetic perfect.

Petra / Sela

When you get to verse 3 you read, “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 yourself, ‘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,” again I’m reading from the NIV in 3b, “you who live in the clefts of the rocks.” There is an alternate text in the notes, “Clefts of the rocks” or “Sela.” Is it, “You who live in the clefts of the rock” or “in Sela,” taken as a proper name? Sela means “rock.” The city of Petra means “rock.” Is this a reference to the ancient city of Petra? I don’t know if any of you have visited or seen pictures of that site. It is an amazing site. Many years ago on our honeymoon my wife and I visited Petra. We had to go in there on horseback. It was a city that was forgotten about until the Swiss explorer Burkhart rediscovered it in 1812. The entrance is through a winding canyon or Siq that in places is as narrow as 12 feet, with these walls going up probably a 100 or 150 feet on either side. So you go in through this canyon, which of course was cut by a stream that flowed through there. In the dry

season you can go through there with no problem. But as I note here unexpected rainstorms and flash floods can sweep up through that canyon, up to 20 feet deep. Twenty French tourists died in such a flash flood in 1963. It's the only entrance into the city. Once you go through that siq and you come into this wide-open valley, with mountains all surrounding it, and pretty high rock barren areas. In the sides of those mountains you have carved out of very colorful red sand stone, dwellings, houses, various kinds of buildings, and then in the center of that valley there are some freestanding buildings and an old Roman road. But that site originally goes as far back as to having been settled by the Edomites. The ruins you see there today are from a much later time. But the early stages of that site were built by the Edomites. So it's a debatable point how do you read that phrase, "you who live in the clefts of the rocks." Is "sela" a proper name for "Petra," or is it simply the word for "rock."

Nabateans Dispossess Edom

But in any case, verse four says, "Though you soar like an eagle, and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down." I think this is best understood as a prediction of Edom's loss of her territory that was fulfilled historically by their defeat by the Nabatean Arabs. The Nabateans came from a region in Northern Arabia. If you look at Malachi 1:3-5, I think it's clear that at 430 BC, during the time of Malachi, the Edomites had already been driven away or out of their territory by these Arabs because Malachi 1:3-5 says, "Esau I have hated and have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals." So by the time of Malachi, the Edomites had been driven away from their territory. Malachi 1:4 continues, Edom said, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins. But this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the Lord. You will see with your own eyes, and say, "Great is the Lord even beyond the borders of Israel."'" So, Obadiah pronounces judgment to come on Edom, and by the time of Malachi that judgment had already been enacted.

The dispossessed Edomites settled after being driven out of their territory by the

Nabateans in an area of southern Judah which eventually became known as Idumea. There they maintained an independent existence for a time, before they were conquered by John Hyrcanus and forcibly converted to Judaism. You may come across in your readings and commentaries that “Idumea” was the Greek form of Edom. So, “Idumea” is really the Greek for Edom. The Edomites settled in southern Judah, eventually forcibly Judaized in 135 to 105 B.C. by John Hyrcanus and the Maccabees. The Dynasty of Herod the Great descended from Idumean stock and he came to control the Kingdom of Judah. So, Herod, of course, persecuted the Jewish people. You have that Jacob/Esau controversy really extending on into the time of Herod, who was Idumean in his origin. In Roman times, the Edomites disappeared as a people. Few Idumeans remained and they disappeared in history. Here is one of the brother nations of Israel, which simply disappears from history. The remarkable thing is the Jewish people have not. They’ve kept their identity. So, that is the judgment you see in verses 1-9, that’s pronounced on Edom.

b. Obadiah 10-14 Reason for Judgment and Warning for the Future?

As we discussed last week, verses 10 and 11 are the reason for the judgment, because when Jerusalem was plundered, “You stayed aloof, you were like one of them.” That’s 10 and 11. Now we get to 12 to 14; is that a continuation of 10 to 11, or is this a separate section, warning for the future? The reason for the question is because of the verbal form. This is “*waw ‘al*,” and then a verbal form in the jussive. Those are a series of eight *waw ‘al* forms plus the jussive verb. This is normally translated from Hebrew as “do not, do not.” On page five of your handout, there’s a question whether these verbs have a reference to the past, as endorsed by Allen in the NICOT commentary and a number of other commentators who dated the book after the destruction of Jerusalem. The question is whether it’s the past, the present or the future, that is, the future to Obadiah. Allen, in his NICOT commentary, as on page 6, tends to deal with the tense issue of the verbal form in these verses by arguing that, “In highly imaginative fashion, the prophet speaks of events in the past, as if they were still present.”

Now, Niehaus, in the *Exegetical and Expository Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, a three-volume commentary on the Minor Prophets says, “It is difficult to understand these prohibitions to have anything other than a future event in view. The NRSV translates the prohibitions as perfect tense, ‘should not have,’ but this is grammatically untenable.” Now, as I mentioned, there are eight jussive forms giving these warnings, frequently taken as referring to events that have already occurred, and therefore a reference to the same events described in verses 10 and 11. See, that’s the issue. Is 12 to 14 speaking of the same thing as 10 and 11? Or is 10 and 11 the reason for the judgment and 12 and 14 a warning for the future? I have various translations of this. The King James translates these jussive warnings, “You should not have looked down on your brother, you should not have rejoiced over the people of Judah. You should not have boasted so much in the day of their trouble. You should not have marched through gates of my people on the day of their disaster, again.” That “should not have,” means 12 to 14 is just the continuation of 10 and 11. But, the issue becomes if it is permissible to translate *’al* plus the jussive as “should not have.” In other words, it is a completed action, rather than as “do not,” either in the present or the future. You notice King James says, “Shouldst not have.”

The New American Standard is “Do not.” Now see, that’s better as far as *’al* plus jussive, that can either be present or future. “Do not, do not, do not.” The Jewish Publications Society has, “How could you have?” That’s past but a footnote says, “literally ‘do not.’” The NIV has, “You should not,” which implies present. The NLT, “You shouldn’t have.” That’s past tense. It’s much like the King James. So, translations differ on how to deal with those eight jussive forms, as do commentators. Depending on how you translate those forms, you’re going to decide that either 10 and 11 are to be combined with 12 to 14, and it’s all speaking for the reason of the judgment on Edom, and it’s something of the past; or you’re going to say, as I’ve suggested on the outline, that 10 and 11 are the reason for the judgment, and 12 to 14 is a warning for the future.

Now, let’s go a little bit further with that, after those various translations. Keil in his commentary says, and I think rightly, that that jussive form cannot be taken as the

future of the past, “shouldst not have.” Keil says that jussive form does not allow that kind of a translation—it should be either present or future. But then what he says is, it is “neither past nor future specifically, but in an ideal sense, it includes both.” To me that kind of suggestion is too abstract; I’m not even sure exactly what he means by that.

Theodore Laetsch, a commentator on the Minor Prophets, uses 11 to 14 as an eyewitness description of the present, and thus finds the warning of 12 to 14 as appropriate. He places it in the time of Jehoram as something that’s ongoing, in the present. I think that’s possible. Gaebelien mentions another scholar, who says 10 to 14 initially applies to Jehoram’s time, 2 Chronicles 21:16, but had a forward fulfillment in the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem. What he’s doing is what we call double reference, this plundering of Jerusalem applies to the plundering of the time of Jehoram, but also at the same time, with the same words, the plundering refers a second time to the Babylonian plundering in 586. It seems to me that although Laetsch’s present tense is possible, a future reference is intended in 12 to 14. While 10 and 11 and 12 to 14 refer to similar actions by the Edomites, verses 10 and 11 refer to past actions that had already happened to Jehoram. But 12 to 14 are warnings for the future that Edom ignored at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. because we know that the Edomites did participate, or at least rejoiced, in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586. If you look at Ezekiel 35:5, you read there, “Because you harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax, therefore as surely as I live, declares the sovereign Lord, I will give you over to bloodshed.” So, the Edomites seem to have ignored that warning. Aalders is similar to Allen, who sees these forms as rhetorical. He argues that 10 and 11 refer to the same events as 12-14. J. Eaton takes it with irony to the past. Hengstenberg takes it as future.

Why have so many of these commentators refused to take 12 to 14 as future, when this form is jussive? It seems to me so clearly to refer to the future. One may object, as Aalders does, that it is strange for judgment to be pronounced on Edom in verses 10 and 11 and then a warning given concerning the future, in verses 12 to 14. That seems to be

the primary objection. Why would you have judgment pronounced on Edom for something Edom has already done in 10 and 11, and then in the next verses give a warning concerning the future? The argument is: that makes no sense. The judgment's already been pronounced—Edom has already committed this offense against God's people and the Lord, she is going to be judged—what's the point of warning for the future?

Future Warnings Elsewhere: Jer 18; Amos 2 & 5

Notice Jeremiah 18:5-10. We talked about that earlier. In Jeremiah 18, “The word of the Lord came to me. He said, ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as a potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hands of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or a kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.’” In other words, it seems to me there's still a place for warning for the future, “don't do this again.” Perhaps, Edom would repent and turn away from the kind of attitude and actions that they had had in the past.

If you go to Amos—of course this is concerning Israel not Edom, but I think the same principles are involved—you get in the early chapters, warning after warning of impending judgment. Look at Amos 2:13-16, “I will crush you as a cart crushes, when loaded with grain. Even the swift will not escape, the strong will not muster their strength.” Verse 15, “The archer will not stand his ground. The fleet-footed soldier will not get away.” Verse 16, “The bravest warriors will flee naked on that day.” Now that's a pretty strong announcement of judgment. In 3:2, “You only I have chosen of all of the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.” 3:11-15, “An enemy will overrun the land, he will pull down your strongholds, and plunder your fortresses,” and so on. Amos 4:1-3, “Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy, you who say to your husbands, ‘Bring us some drinks!’ This sovereign Lord has sworn by his holiness, ‘The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fish hooks... you will

be cast out.” Amos 5:27, “I will send you into exile, beyond Damascus.” Amos 6:14, “I will stir up a nation against you, house of Israel, that will oppress all the way from Lebo-Hamath to the valley of the Arabah.” So you get all these pronouncements of judgment.

But look at Amos 5:4. At the same time you have the judgment, in 5:4 you read, “This is what the Lord says to Israel, ““Seek me and live.”” Verse 6, “Seek the Lord and live.” In verses 14 and 15 of chapter 5, “Seek good not evil that you may live,” 15, “Hate evil, love good, maintain justice in the court.” Then notice the next statement. “Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Jacob.” So, there’s always that open door, it seems to me, that the Lord leaves when he gives these pronouncements of judgment and warnings of judgment to come. If whoever it’s directed to repents, perhaps the Lord will relent. So it doesn’t seem to me that there’s any inconsistency between describing a reason for judgment in 10 and 11, and then also at the same time, saying, don’t do this again. Of course, Edom ignored that warning, and did do it again, when the Babylonians attacked in 586.

But if you take it the way I’m suggesting, that also has implications for the date. It suggests that the plundering in 10 and 11 was the time of Jehoram in the 800s, and the warning for the future is the 586, which the Edomites ignored. Now if you say 10 through 14 is all the same, a description of the reason that judgment’s coming on Edom, that might result in your thinking this is all about 586. So, this issue of how you interpret the relationship between verses 10 and 11 and 12 to 14 not only has relevance to how you understand what is being talked about, whether you have “a reason for judgment and warning for the future,” it also has implications for dates.

4. Obadiah 15-16 Announcement of Judgment on Unjust

Let’s go on to 15 and 16. 15 and 16 says, “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 nations will drink continually, they will drink and drink as if they had never been.” So, you move in 15 and 16 from a pronouncement of judgment on Edom to a pronouncement of judgment on all the unjust.

So you have a transition from Edom to the heathen in general, or, as the text says, “the day of the Lord is near for all nations.”

Day of the Lord discussion

Now, if Obadiah is dated at 840 B.C., then he is the first of the prophets, and that means this is the first reference in the prophetic books to the Day of the Lord, which becomes a rather prominent theme, for example, in Joel. What is the Day of the Lord? I have a few comments here on that because this says, “the Day of the Lord is near for all nations.” I think in general terms you could say the Day of the Lord is a time in which the Lord will bring judgment on his enemies and blessing to his people. You find use of this expression in many of the prophetic books, even with variations such as the “day of his anger,” in Zephaniah 2:2 and “the Day of the Lord’s wrath,” from Ezekiel 7:19. There are other slight modifications of it but all with reference to the day of the Lord. It seems to be a term known and understood by the people, even with the earlier prophets, Amos and Joel both speak of the Day of the Lord.

In Amos 5, the people desire the day of the coming of the Lord because they expect it’s going to be one of blessing for Israel, but Amos tells them they are mistaken. So, let’s look at that. In Amos 5:18, he says, “Woe to you who long for the Day of the Lord, why do you long for the Day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light, it will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house, rested his hand on the wall, only to have a snake bite him. Will not the Day of the Lord be darkness, not light, pitch dark, without a ray of brightness,” why? “because Israel has turned away from the Lord and God will put judgment on Israel.”

So, if the day of the Lord was a well known expression, and these prophets seem to use it, what does it mean? I think it’s not difficult to determine it’s tied to God’s judgment, but as Amos suggests, the popular conception is that this day would be a day of judgment on Israel’s enemies only. Consequently it would be a day of blessing on Israel itself. Joel and Amos warn against that idea. Then, on the basis of the coming of the day of the Lord, they call the people to repentance with their whole heart.

So those are some general comments about the Day of the Lord, which we'll discuss a little bit further. Does the Day of the Lord refer to one specific day only, and if so, when is it? If you look at usage, I think you'll be forced to make the conclusion, that it's not a reference just to one specific day. Look at Isaiah 13:6 and 9, where you read about the Day of the Lord, "Wail, for the day of the Lord is near, it will come like destruction from the Almighty." Verse 9, "See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light." Verse 11, "I will punish the world for its evil." The context of those statements in Isaiah 13 is a prophecy against Babylon. Judgment is coming on Babylon, and Babylon will be destroyed. Go down to Isaiah 13:17, "I will stir up against them the Medes." Verse 19, "Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, Babylon's pride will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah." That overthrow of Babylon is referred to as the coming of the Day of the Lord.

If you go to Jeremiah 46:10, you have another use of it, in another context, you read, "That day belongs to the Lord, the Lord Almighty—a day of vengeance, for vengeance on his foes. The sword will devour till it is satisfied, till it has quenched its thirst with blood. For the Lord, the Lord Almighty will offer sacrifice in the land in the north by the River Euphrates." Then you have the message of verse 13, "This is the message the Lord spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon to attack Egypt." So in Jeremiah 46, the Day of the Lord of Hosts, is the day of the battle involving Egypt and Babylon at Carchemish in 605 BC, in which Babylon was victorious and Egypt suffered defeat. This passage is a passage of judgment on Egypt.

So, I don't think you can say that the Day of the Lord, as used in various contexts in these prophetic books, is always the same Day of the Lord. And as I noted in that next paragraph, it's not just one particular day, but it's used to refer to special times of God's judging and punishing activity. In some passages there's an eschatological context. That eschatological context says there is a yet future Day of the Lord when ultimately God

will bring judgment on all the ungodly, much like Obadiah 15 and 16. But one cannot say that the Day of the Lord in prophecy is always the day of judgment at the end of the world. It would seem that manifestations of God's judging, punishing activity that foreshadow that final judgment, are also referred to as the Day of the Lord. So you have to be careful. The Day of the Lord is not automatically the eschatological end times. In some contexts it is, but in others like a couple of the ones we have looked at, it is not.

Let's get back to verse 15 of Obadiah, "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." What's the connection between Edom's judgment and the judgment of all nations? Keil has a comment on that, it's on page 37 of your citations, where he says "The difficulty is only removed by the assumption that Obadiah regarded Edom as a type of the nations that had risen up in hostility to the Lord and his people, and were judged by the Lord in consequence, so what he says of Edom applies to all nations which assume the same or similar attitude toward the people of God. From this point of view he could without reserve extend to all nations the retribution which would fall on Edom for its sins." So, I think that's the logical flow of thought there, all nations who exhibit similar attitudes and actions to that of Edom will also experience God's judgment.

So, you go onto verse 16, and there's another question that arises. It says, "Just as you drank on my holy hill, all the nations will drink continually, and they will drink and drink and be as if they had never been." Who is the "you" there? It says, "you drank." Is it the Edomites, or is it the Jews? I think in the context, it's the Edomites. In this whole message of Obadiah, Edom is addressed, not Judah. The parallelism is "As you, Edom, have done," (Verse 15) "And just as you drank," (Verse 16). What that means is that in verse 16, the verb "to drink," is taken in two different senses. In 16a, "Just as you have drank on my holy hill,"—drink is in the sense of celebrate in triumph, rejoicing at what happened to your brother Israel when Jerusalem was plundered— "so all nations will drink continually," drink, in that second phrase, not in a sense of celebration, but drink in the sense of tasting judgment. In other words, "drinking the cup of God's wrath." Just as you drank in celebration on my holy hill, so all the nations will drink continually, drink in

the sense of tasting judgment, the cup of God's wrath, which becomes a rather common expression in the prophets as well.

I've listed some references there, let's just look at one, Jeremiah 25:15 and 16, where you read, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel said to me, take from my hand this cup, filled with the wine of my wrath, and make all nations to whom I send you drink it." Drink here is in the sense of tasting God's judgment. "When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them." So he took the cup and made all nations to whom he was sent drink it.

d. Obadiah 17-21 The Restoration and Future Blessing for Israel

That brings us to verses 17 to 21 in Obadiah, the final section, which I have labeled, "The Restoration and Future Blessing for Israel." Let me read 17 to 21, and then look at how various people have interpreted these verses. Verse 17 says, "But on Mount Zion will be deliverance, it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess his inheritance." In other words, judgment is coming on Edom and on all the nations, but in the contrast to that, on Mount Zion, there will be deliverance. Obadiah verse 18, "'The House of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame, the house of Esau will be stubble, and they will set it on fire and consume it. There will be no survivors from the house of 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 Sepharad 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 Lord's."

Ways of Interpreting Obadiah 17-21:

1. Spiritualization Approach -- Church

So, these are interesting verses. Some real interpretive issues arise here. How are

these verses to be understood? There are really three basic ways they have been understood. Notice one, some suggest 17 to 21 should be spiritualized and understood as descriptive of the extension of God's kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel. Remember we looked at the latter part of Isaiah 11 when we were talking about the question of how to interpret "culturally dated terminology" and of those categories, take it literally, take it symbolically or spiritually, or take it in some kind of correspondence or equivalence. See, that issue comes right back here. Some say, spiritualize it. Theodore Laetsch is an example. He says, "Briefly stated, we have here the future history of Judah and Jerusalem. What's due to Jerusalem? It's a symbol for the Church, of its enemies, of those members of the Church who are oppressed, held captive by the enemies."

On Verses 17 and 18, where you read, "On Mount Zion will be deliverance, the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance, the house of Jacob will be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, the house of Esau will be stubble." What's that talking about? Laetsch says, "Jerusalem, the very fitting symbol of the New Testament Church, on Mount Zion, within the Church of God shall be deliverance. Literally that escape from the old, evil foe, promised already in Paradise. As a result of this deliverance, there is holiness. A holiness perfect in every detail, a holiness not of man's making, but procured by the promised Messiah. Another result of this deliverance, and the resulting holiness is the house of Jacob will possess their possessions."

On verses 19 and 20, where it elaborates on that, and says, "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." You get all this speaking in geographic terms, re-occupation of the land by various segments of the people of Israel. What does Laetsch say about that on 19 to 20? He says, "19 and 20 do not mean that every district named shall possess only that territory named in the predicate. We meet here, rather, with quite a common Hebrew idiom. A number of subjects and first the number of predicates are listed. Each of the predicates are connected with one of the subjects. In reality, all of the subjects are the parts of one body, which carries out the work described by the predicates."

Israel, God's people, shall again possess or take possession of the various districts and countries named. So that the land occupied then by them shall exceed by far the territory they possessed in the day of Obadiah." And then he says, "When and how were the promises of 19 and 20 fulfilled?" That becomes the interpretive issue. His response is, "We need not resort to guess work, Matthew and Mark tell us that people from Judea, Jerusalem, Galilee, beyond Jordan, Decapolis, Idumea, Tyre, and Sidon were gained for Christ's kingdom by Christ's preaching. The book of Acts records the fulfillment of Obadiah 17-20." What's Obadiah 17-20 talking about? Laetsch suggests the expansion of the Church. "The conquest of the countries and districts named by Obadiah by the Church of the New Testament, the true Mount Zion."

"Philistia," in verse 19 of Obadiah, where it says, "the people of the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines." Where is that fulfilled? Laetsch says Acts 8:40. What's Acts 8:40? Philip appears at Azotus, and traveled about preaching the Gospel in all the towns until he reached Cesarea. It's the preaching the gospel in Philistine territory. Acts 9:32, "As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. And there he found a man named Aeneas, and he said to him, 'Jesus Christ heals you, get up and take care of your mat.' All the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord."

You have a reference on the outline there to Samaria in verse 19. Where it says, "People from the foothills will possess the land of the Philistines, they will occupy the fields of Ephraim and Samaria." How's that fulfilled? Acts 8:5-17, where you read, "Philip went down to a city of Samaria and proclaimed Christ to them, when the crowds heard Philip, and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said" and so on.

Zeraphath in Phoenicia, verse 20 of Obadiah, is fulfilled in Acts 11:19, "Now those who have been scattered by the persecution in connection with Steven, traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message only to the Jews." Zeraphath is in Phoenicia. Sepharad is in Asia Minor, that's the Church at Sardis from Revelation 3:1. So, the spread of the Gospel is, in Laetsch's view, what is being described here in

these verses of Obadiah.

On verse 21, “Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom will be the Lord’s.” Laetsch says, “But what about Edom? Are they hopelessly doomed to eternal damnation? No. Obadiah spoke in stern words of judgment against the relentless enemies of God’s people, yet he closes his prophecy with a glorious promise. “Deliverers will be sent to Edom.” Gratitude for their own salvation will prompt the delivered children of God to ascend Mount Zion, proclaim salvation to Edom, their enemy and oppressor.” And here’s the crux of it, “Edom is a ‘type’ and symbol of the grace of God, evidence of the preaching of the Gospel of salvation unto all people. Thus, by faithful cooperation, the members of God’s Church, be they clergy or laymen, the kingdom shall be the Lord’s.”

So that’s one way that verses 17 through 21 have been understood. This is not talking about anything in reference to the ethnic or national “nation” of Israel, and geographical, or territorial conquests, but rather it’s talking about spiritual realities of the spread of the Gospel in the context of the beginning of the Church, recorded in the Book of Acts.

2. Predicting the Return of Israel to Her Possession

Two, others suggest that these verses are to be understood as predicting the return of Israel to her possession, that is, to her land, and the judgment of Edom as a nation. If this is so, the question then is, has it been fulfilled, or is it yet to be fulfilled? Opinions are divided on that. Some of the commentators, J. B. Payne and Aalders, understand the prophecy as having been fulfilled, for the most part, in the inter-testamental period. Aalders on 17b “Israel will re-possess the land from which he had been driven.” That’s that last phrase at 17, “the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance.” Verse 18, “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, the house of Joseph a flame, the house of Esau stubble,” destruction will be brought on Edom by a returned Israel. Verse 19, “occupations of those various areas, people from the Negev will occupy the mountains of Esau,” and so on, is Israel’s return to the land, and taking possession of those areas. Verse 20, is really a

repetition of 17b, Israel possessing its inheritance. 20 is a repetition and enlargement you might say, giving more detail, “something about Israelites possessing land as far as Zarephath. Exiles from Jerusalem are in Sepharad, will possess the towns of the Negev,” so you get more detail in verse 20.

J. Barton Payne is similar, who says verse 17 is fulfilled in the return from the Babylonian exile, that’s where the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance. Verse 18, house of Jacob, house of Joseph, are to return in fulfillment from exile. 18b to 21a, where you have all those different territories being occupied, these conquests were accomplished, in Payne’s opinion, in the second century B.C., when northern Judah and Benjamin were the nucleus from which the Jews under the Maccabees pressed out into the areas indicated by the prophet. The saviors, or deliverers, of verse 21, are human, not messianic. Judas and his nephew John Hyrcanus, are the deliverers, who will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. But, Payne believed most of this was fulfilled in the inter-testamental period. Payne then draws a line between 21A and 21B. And at 21B, he says “the kingdom shall be Yahweh’s” is fulfilled in the future Messianic age. So, you move from that inter-testamental period, Maccabean time in 21A, to eschatological end times, in 21B, “The kingdom will be the Lord’s.” My question there is why not take 21B in the less absolute sense? That is, in the action of the saviors or deliverers if you understand them to be a reference to the Maccabees, why not understand 21B “The kingdom will the Lord’s” as God’s sovereignty being displayed in the achievements of the Maccabees?

So, Aalders and J. Barton Payne both see 17-21 as something, at least with the exception of 21B, as already fulfilled. Rather, with some kind of spiritual sense that these words take a pretty literal understanding of what is being described. Now, the interesting thing is, Aalders is an amillennialist. You might expect Aalders to understand this as descriptive of the Church, in a spiritual sense, the way most amillennialists do. But he does not. Payne is a premillennialist. You might expect Payne to take it in that way then.

But notice what Aalders does at this point. He’s an amillennialist, but he thinks this is fulfilled in the inter-testamental period. He says, “We must take into consideration

the matter of typology.” And then we see in the relationship of Edom to Israel, the relationship of the world to the church of Christ. Just as here a strong judgment is pronounced on Edom for its animosity towards Jacob, so also the world will undergo God’s judgment for its animosity towards the Church. And like restored Israel shall triumph over Edom, so shall the Church triumph over all who were opposed to her. Esau was just as Jacob, a son of Isaac and a grandson of Abraham. But the Edomites were the bitter enemies of Israel. So also in the new economy there are those born in the family of the Church who later become her most bitter enemies. But God will cause the Church to triumph over such enemies.” Now you see, what Aalders is doing there, he’s saying in that relationship between Edom and Israel you can see a typological significance portraying the relationship between the Church and the world. Seems to me that’s legitimate, you’re talking about the same kind of dichotomy or relationship. He’s not saying that 17 to 21 is speaking directly about the Church, but he’s saying that in the relationship between Edom and Israel, typologically, we can see something about the relationship between the Church and the world. Now among those who suggest that we should view 17 to 21 as the return of Israel to her possession, Aalders and Payne see that as something already fulfilled in the inter-testamental period.

3. The Other Side of Prophecy is Yet to be Fulfilled – Final Reapportionment of the Land

B., “The other side of prophecy is yet to be fulfilled.” The example is Gaebelein. He says 17B is the restoration of Israel to the land, “the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance,” is not yet fulfilled. In other words, he doesn’t see that fulfillment in the inter-testamental period. Although, and this is where his interpretation doesn’t work very well, he then in verse 18, where it says, “The house of Jacob shall be a fire, the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau stubble,” he says 18 was fulfilled by Judas Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus. So, 18 is already fulfilled and then when you get to 19 and 20, that is also yet to be fulfilled. Gaebelein comments of 19 and 20 where you have that possession of various parts of the land, he says, “One might write over these two verses, this heading, in large letters. ‘The Final Re-apportionment of the Land.’”

Conclusion on Obadiah 17-21

How are these verses to be taken? Are we to agree with those who see their fulfillment in the past, or like many others, are we to give up any attempt to take them as meaning what they say but simply spiritualize geographical details into a vague prediction of the dominion of the Church? Or, finally, do we have here a brief outline of God's ultimate solution to the Palestinian problem during the millennium? Surely, this last alternative is best. For read in this way, the verses are consistent with the course of Old Testament prophecy as a whole. At the discussion of details, Gaebelien observes that we'll come to a conclusion with difficulty. "You may be certain that these details are all known to God, he has not forgotten his dispersed people, his covenant with them is enduring. One day when the Messiah will occupy the throne of David, the tangled scheme of these predictions will be unraveled." So he looks for future fulfillment of verses 19 and 20. Exactly how, he is not too certain, but it has not yet been fulfilled. Of 21, "The deliverers go up on mount Zion." He says, "In the restricted historic sense of this prophecy, Obadiah is looking forward to such a human deliverance as a Zerubbabel or Judas Maccabeas, but these saviors, are at best a foreshadowing of the Savior, who is yet to come in Obadiah's day, and who's second glorious return we are now awaiting." Skip down a bit, "It is hardly relevant to ask what he meant, but what he saw was the Savior of the world, the Savior who will judge, the Savior who it is said by biblical prophecy, 'The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Lord, and of his Christ.'"

Scientific exegesis sees nothing of this sort in these words, but we may venture to say it is that. And in reference to that last note in the Scofield Bible. There's a note on verse 18, "House of Jacob shall be a house of fire, Joseph's house a flame, Esau's house of stubble," saying, "Edom will be revived in the later days." Remember we talked about that with culturally-dated terminology? This pushes culturally-dated terminology to its limits and says, nations that are mentioned, those very nations will be involved at the time of fulfillment.

So you get a host of interpretive issues with a passage like this, there are a lot of passages like this in the prophetic books, it's kind of what you'd encounter any place, in 17 to 21. What do you do with them? Is it talking about the Church in a spiritual sense, is it talking about a more literal sense, and if so has it already been fulfilled, or is it yet to be fulfilled? I'm inclined to come down on that more literal sense, but in the way Aalders and Payne do, and say it was fulfilled in the inter-testamental period, particularly with the activities of the Maccabees.

Concluding Comments on Obadiah

Go over to the last page of this, just a few concluding comments. Obadiah is a remarkable prophetic book. It deserves much more attention than it normally receives. Paul Raabe captures its significance in the first paragraph of his Anchor Bible Commentary on Obadiah, I think this paragraph kind of pulls it all together. He says, "The book of Obadiah is the smallest book in the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, with only one chapter." There, what do you call the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, the proper word is the *Tanak*. "Hebrew Bible" is generally the thing used in academic circles today or Christian circles, but usually Jewish people, they call it the TaNaK, which comes from the Law (Torah), prophets (Nebiim) and the writings (Kethubim). "With only one chapter and 21 verses, it can easily be overlooked by readers of the Bible." What are 21 verses, compared to say, the 1364 verses of Jeremiah? "Yet, a close study of Obadiah is worth the effort. For one thing, its small size proves to be advantageous. Readers can hold in the mind, and memorize the whole book without too much difficulty. This enables them to see the entire forest without getting lost among the trees, something that cannot be done so easily with a large book. Furthermore, Obadiah flows in the mainstream of the Israelite prophetic tradition, a characteristic that has not always been recognized. This short book elegantly summarizes many of the great prophetic themes, such as divine judgment against Israel's enemies, in this case Edom, the Day of Yahweh, the Day of the Lord." We talked about that briefly, "the Lex talionis as the standard of judgment, as you have done, so will you have done to you, the cup of

wrath metaphor, Zion theology, ‘on Mount Zion will be deliverance,’ Israel’s possession of the land, ‘Israel will possess its inheritance,’ and the kingship of Yahweh, ‘the kingdom will be the Lord’s’ at the end of the book. That is a remarkable collection of themes that are developed elsewhere in more detail but flow through the prophetic books. Thereby, the book serves as a concise epitome of much of the message of the prophets. It also illustrates the nature of prophetic discourse. It’s poetry and prose, it’s types of speech, such as judgment, accusation, warning and promise, and it’s rhetorical style. It especially exemplifies oracles against the foreign nations, a category that occupies much of the corpus of the latter prophets, you have numerous prophecies in Isaiah, in Jeremiah, against heathen nations, against unjust Israel. Therefore, attention to the little book of Obadiah should prove to be a rewarding experience for serious students of the Bible.” So I think he sort of summarizes quite well here, the importance of this book which, I think, we generally overlook and ignore.

In Obadiah, my own comment here, we’re also given a remarkable view into the future in the short span of 21 verses. Significant prophecies, one judgment on Edom. Two destructions of Jerusalem, which are not mentioned by name, but it seems to me that’s what surfaces in 12 to 14, and a warning for the future. Scattering of Israel and Judah is intimated in verse 20, return of the Israelites from exile and dominion extended over Edom in Maccabean times and lastly perhaps the establishment of a future messianic kingdom of Yahweh in 21, although I’m inclined to pick 21 as simply a part of that section that is fulfilled in the inter-testamental period.

Joel

A. Author and Date

Now let’s move on from Obadiah to Joel. Joel, A. is, “Author and date,” and B. is, “Content.” So, we’ll look a little bit at author and date. It’s probably the most difficult of all the prophetic books to date with any degree of certainty but, as you’ll note on this handout, it takes its name from Joel, the son of Pethuel, which you find in 1:1, “The word of the Lord came to Joel, son of Pethuel.” But we know nothing otherwise about the

personal history either of Joel or Pethuel from the book itself or from anywhere else in the Old Testament. So, as far as the date is concerned, you only can get at that by indirect indications from the book and inferences from those indirect indications. For that reason it's difficult to come to a conclusion that everyone believes. There are two basic positions. First, the post-exilic date, after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, 430 B.C. or something even much later. Or, a pre-exilic date at the time of King Joash 835 B.C. I've opted for that pre-exilic date but not with a great degree of dogmatism. Let's look at what the issues are.

1. The Arguments for the Post-exilic Date

The arguments for the post-exilic date, a., it is said that verses such as 3:2b, 3, 5, 6, and 17 only could have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586, and therefore Joel prophesied after this event. Now those verses, 3:2b says, "They scattered my people among the nations, and divided up my land." Verse 3, "They cast lots for my people, traded boys for prostitutes, sold girls for wine." Verse 5, "You took my silver and my gold, and carried off my finest treasures to your temples." Verse 6, "You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland," and 17, "Then you will know, that I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy, never again will foreigners invade her." The argument is statements like that could only have been written after the Babylonian exile of 586 B.C. But in connection with that, because the first couple chapters presuppose the existence of a temple and temple service, it must be later than Haggai and Zechariah. In other words, not only after 586, but also after return from exile and re-establishment of the temple service.

I don't think it's so certain that chapter 3 presupposes the events of 586. It should be noticed that there's nothing said about the destruction of the temple and city. The presence of aliens in Jerusalem, the plundering of silver and gold, taking of prisoners could have happened in connection with several such incidents, from Shishak's invasion to that of the Philistines and Arabs, to that of Jehoram's day. But more importantly, and I

think this really is the issue, it is also possible to take the reference in 3:2b, as a prophetic reference to the present day diaspora of Israel which began with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. “I will enter into judgment against them, concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they have scattered my people,” who is the “they”? That’s “the nations,” it goes back to 3:1, “In those days at that time when I destroyed the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations.” That could be prophetic, many maintain. But that’s one argument, those statements could only have been written after 586.

2, There are Some Arguments from Silence

Then b., there are some arguments from silence. Arguments from silence are generally not very convincing. But 1., the prophecy concerns Judah and Jerusalem,” that is the language used for example in 3:20, where it says “Judah will be inhabited forever, Jerusalem, through all generations.”

a. No Explicit Reference in Joel to the Northern Kingdom

And it is argued that there’s no explicit reference in Joel to the Northern Kingdom. It is argued that if the Northern Kingdom was still in existence, you would expect some reference to it. The conclusion is that the Northern Kingdom had already been destroyed. Where the term “Israel” is used, which it is, it’s to be understood as a reference to the Kingdom of Judah, in 2:27, 3:2, and 16, but as E. J. Young points out in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, “There was in the prophecy no particular occasion for using the name of the Northern Kingdom.” In other words, the name of Israel belonged to the Southern as well as to the Northern Kingdom; there’s no distinction made between them as you find elsewhere sometimes, Ephraim, and Judah, the Northern Kingdom, you don’t find that in Joel. But how much can you make of that?

b. No Mention of the King

A second argument from silence is that there's no mention of the king. But there are several references to the elders, 1:2, 1:14, and 2:16. Joel, 1:2 says, "Hear this, you elders." In 1:14, "Summon the elders and all who live in the land," and 2:16, "Gather the people, consecrate the assembly, bring together the elders, gather the children." Now, it seems to me that in both these arguments, no distinction is made between Ephraim and Judah, no reference to the king, they are arguments from silence, and share weaknesses of all such arguments. Pre-exilic prophecies of Nahum and Habakkuk also don't mention the king. The references to the elders, you find in all periods of Israel's history. Furthermore, it's not entirely clear whether these references are references to the office, or simply to older men. It seems to me if you look at 2:16, it's probably just older men, because it says, "Gather people, consecrate the assembly, bring together the elders," and look what follows, "gather the children. Those nursing at the breast, let the bridegroom leave his chamber, let the priests and ministers." It's just different categories of people, not necessarily the office. So, I'm not sure you can say that no mention of the king and the couple references to elders means you must place this in the time when there wasn't a king.

C. No Distinction between Ephraim and Judah – So Called Apocalyptic Sections

A third argument, after those references in chapter 3 that presupposed 586 had already happened, no distinction between Ephraim and Judah, and no reference to a king is c., the presence of the so-called apocalyptic sections. This is pointed to by some, although, usually, not by evangelicals, but in mainstream commentaries you will find this strongly emphasized, as evidence for a late date. Now what are some of the apocalyptic features? The term "apocalyptic" means disclosure or revelation. This is used in Revelation 1:1, "The apocalypse of John." It was borrowed and applied to a genre of Jewish literature which flourished from about 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. There's a genre of apocalyptic literature—on the basis of genre classification, any book containing this type of literature is considered by some scholars as necessarily late and that would include for

example, Isaiah 24-27, the “Isaiah apocalypse,” which is a section of Isaiah that has similarities to what is characterized as apocalyptic literature. If all apocalyptic literature is late, then Isaiah 24-27 is late and it’s not from Isaiah, and Joel is late.

However, I don’t think it’s quite as simple as that. I think a distinction has to be made between what you might call biblical and later non-biblical apocalyptic literature. There is a category of non-biblical apocalyptic literature that flourished in that late period from about 200 B.C. to 100 A.D. The next paragraph is a paragraph from R. K. Harrison’s *Introduction to the Old Testament*, describing the features of the later non-biblical apocalyptic literature. Notice what he says there, “The visionary material of Daniel has frequently been described in terms of ‘apocalypticism,’ which is popularly understood to have originated in Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Persia, and to comprise a dualistic, cosmic, and eschatological belief in two opposing cosmic powers, God and the evil one, and in two distinct ages, the present one, which is held to be under the power of the evil one, and the future eternal age in which God will overthrow the power of evil and reign supreme with his elect under conditions of eternal righteousness. While this approach has elements in common with the thought of certain OT writers, it is important for a distinction to be drawn between biblical and non-biblical apocalyptic,” that I think is the issue here, and we want “to avoid reading into the canonical Scriptures thought that either occurred in Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature of a subsequent period or that was foreign to the thought of Judaism altogether. In this connection it should be noted that the prophets of Israel placed the final redemption of the elect in this world. While the new order is to be established by the coming of the divine kingdom would be continuous with the present world sequences, it would be different in that suffering, violence and evil, would be absent from the scene.

Discourse on Apocalyptic Literature and Its Features

There’s an enormous amount of literature on apocalyptic literature. If you look in your bibliography under this heading, there are some references if you want to look further into that. There is one volume mentioned there by Leon Morris about apocalyptic

literature. In Morris's second paragraph on the handout, he points out that apocalyptic literature is professedly revelatory. In other words, it claims to be giving revelation. It is pseudonymous, that is, we don't know who the real writers are, but they come under assumed names such as Enoch, the Testament of Moses, 2 Esdras, the Apocalypse of Abraham, writings of that sort. So it's professedly revelatory, pseudonymous, and contains much symbolism.

He also notes that it is characterized by these four dominant concepts: dualism, pessimism, determinism, and ethical passivity. Now what does Morris mean by dualism, pessimism, determinism, and ethical passivity?

Dualism: Late non-Biblical apocalyptic literature expresses an eschatological dualism involving a sharp contrast between the present age and the age to come. The present and the future were seen as quite unrelated. Why? The problem is, Israel has received and kept God's law. Why, then, are they suffering? It can't be God's doing, the only answer is that God's ways are inscrutable. He will ultimately rectify the situation, but the final redemptive act has no bearing on the present. The present age is under the power of the evil one. So, there is that contrast between the present age, which is under the power of the evil one, and the age to come.

Pessimism: The apocalyptic literature was pessimistic about things. God had abandoned this age to suffering and evil. It's the only possible explanation for the current plight of the Jews.

Determinism: There's little emphasis on a sovereign God who is acting in history to carry out his purposes; rather, God himself is awaiting the passing of the times that he has decreed.

Ethical Passivity: As the apocalyptic writers saw it the problem in their day was not the need for national repentance. Ethical exhortation is lacking, because there's a loss of a sense of sinfulness. The problem of the apocalyptists is that Israel does keep the law, and therefore is righteous, and yet they are permitted to suffer. In contrast, the prophets continually appeal to Israel for repentance, to turn to God. So, there is quite a distinction there between the prophetic eschatological literature and this late apocalyptic literature.

This late apocalyptic literature involves these ideas of dualism, pessimism, determinism, and ethical passivity.

With that in mind, it seems to me, there's no basis to classify Joel as apocalyptic literature of the sort that would justify using this literary type as the basis for a late date. In other words, this argument seems to me to be invalid. All that can be said is that the eschatological element is prominent in the book of Joel. That's true, and there is some imagery in the book of Joel, especially imagery of the locusts in chapter 2. But that in itself is no reason to date it late, particularly for those who accept the authenticity of Isaiah's little apocalypse in Isaiah 24-27, that it was written in the 8th century B.C. So, those are arguments for a late date, that latter argument about the apocalyptic character of the book really comes more from non-evangelical scholars than from evangelical. So then you're left with those references in chapter 3, the lack of a reference to a king, and the lack of a distinction between Ephraim and Judah. So those are not strong arguments.

C. The Pre-exilic Date of Joel

a. The Nations Mentioned fit pre-exilic times

Let's quickly look at the pre-exilic date. Those who opt for a pre-exilic date usually place the book in the time of Joash at about 835 B.C. Letter a., the nations mentioned in chapter 3 as enemies fit a pre-exilic time better than post exilic-times. Assyria and Babylon are not mentioned. Those who are mentioned are the Phoenicians, Philistines, Egyptians and Edomites. Philistines in verse 4, and Egyptians in verse 19 and Edomites in verse 19. In other words, the enemy nations mentioned in chapter 3 are early pre-exilic enemies of Judah.

b. The Absence of a King and Prominence of Priests

Point b., the absence of a king and prominence of priests. Quite a few references to the priests may point to the time when Joash as a young boy, ruled under the regency of the high priest. Remember, he assumed the throne as an infant, and the high priest was really the ruling authority. Though, again, that's an inference, there's no direct

connection from any statement in the book of Joel to that time.

c. The position of the Book in the Order of the Minor Prophets

Point c., position of the book and the order of the minor prophets. Although this is not a decisive argument, remember we talked about the order earlier. What is clear, is Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi, the last three, are post-exilic. If this is post-exilic why isn't it put with Haggai and Zechariah? But again, why is the order the way it is? It's only those last three that seem to have a chronological principle.

The argument from parallel passages of other prophets is used for dating. Those that try to use this find some parallels in Amos and some other prophets and then argue that Joel is primary, the others secondary, but I think it's extremely difficult to use that argument. As Driver says, "Nothing is more difficult (except under especially favorable circumstances) than from a mere comparison of parallel passages to determine on which side the priority lies." So, I don't think that's a strong argument.

Conclusion: There is no Decisive Basis for Fixing the Date of Joel

That brings us to a conclusion; there is no decisive basis for fixing the date of Joel. I don't see any urgent reason to place the book in late post-exilic times. It seems to fit in pre-exilic times; I suggest that, but it certainly can't be proven. So I think we leave it as an open question. But I'm inclined to suggest the earlier time, during the reign of Joash around 835 B.C. rather than later during the post-exilic period.

That brings us to B., "The Content of the book" and we'll begin with that next time.

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