

Dr. Marv Wilson, Prophets, Session 19, Joel, Part 3, and Obadiah

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This is Dr. Marv Wilson in his teaching on the Prophets. This is session 19, Joel, Part 3, and Obadiah.

As we make choices, help us to make choices to the glory of God. Thank you that you have become wisdom to us, says Paul to the Corinthians. We also recognize not only the Christ who lives within us who is wisdom, but his word is also wisdom. So, help us to study scripture, realizing that it reveals the will of God to us and helps us as we make choices today.

Help us to sort out the spurious from the true, the authentic from the phony and false. We know we can't do that in and of ourselves. So, we ask you as a source of wisdom to enable us to so live today that we might glorify you through Christ, I pray. Amen.

Any last people you want to add to the Passover Seder list, I sent in the money today. Everyone has got the material, added names on the master list.

Just check. I did add, update the master list. That's not it.

I have the updated version in my computer. See if they're not there, make sure you speak to me about that after class. Not the easiest name to, is it Slininski? I'm not great at Polish names.

My name is simple. I derived from William the Conqueror, 1066, the Battle of Hastings. So, son of William Wilson.

It's very simple to spell. My wife is half Armenian, and all the Armenians have an IAN ending, which means son of. So, her mother's name was Chorleian, son of Charles.

So just about all your Armenian names are like the O'Brien, son of O'Brien, O'Malley, son of O'Malley, like the Irish. Alright, what do they do in Ghana? Do they have any ways of saying son of in a proper name? No. Alright.

The Swedes are Johnson and Swenson. Well, in the Bible, it's Ben or Bar. Even some of the proper names begin that way.

Bar and Nabus, which is Aramaic for son of consolation or comfort. Alright, I have a couple of final words on Joel. On the last chapter of Joel, before we go on to Obadiah today, I wanted to go back to this interesting story.

Joel was a literary expression we have in 3:10 of Joel. The last chapter of Joel deals with the restoration of Judah and the judgment upon enemies. The picture of the Yom Yahweh, the Day of the Lord, in the last chapter, is the latter days.

Joel is the last day of the Jewish people, the very end of the Messianic age. The time when all the prophets of Israel viewed the evils of this earth being abolished. The enemies of God's people were destroyed.

In reference to this destruction of these nations, we have in verse 10, beat your plowshares into swords, your pruning hooks into spears. Now, the plowshare, of course, was the metal part that was actually used for plowing. That's one of the fascinating things that biblical archaeologists have uncovered in Israel.

In their digs is a good number of these plowshares. Curiously enough, because the Philistines were the technical wizards of Bible times and seemed to come off the sea and settle along the coast and brought with them all the latest technological inventions, Israel did not get an A plus in metallurgy. She was not known for inventing weapons or working in the art of metal.

So, they used to take their plowshares and put them into the sea, and their hoes, their implements they would use mainly for agricultural and also for military purposes. They would actually take them to the Philistines. In Samuel we have actually a description of that which says what the Philistines would charge per sharpening. There were sickles for agriculture, and there were other things.

Of course, the Iron Age came in around 1200, which was a major technological revolution. So, plowshares after 1200 were made of iron. You notice the chariots of Sisera.

There are two Sisera's in the Bible. Not two Siseras's; let me back up and say that again: my mind was working faster than my mouth. There were two Jabins in the Bible, and the Jabin in the story of Deborah and Barak, fourth and fifth chapter of Joshua.

Those chariots, the Deborah, I'm not having a good day. Let me start over again. Hazor, where King Jabin was found, was up in the northern part of the country. There seems to be a dynasty of kings up at this place called Hazor about ten miles north of the Sea of Galilee.

He is mentioned there toward the middle of the book of Joshua. His chariots were burned with fire by Joshua. When you get into the book of Judges and meet Jabin number two in Judges four and five in the Deborah Barak narrative, those chariots were made of metal and so they were not burned.

So that's internally one of the things that may say something about dating. Up until about 1200 all the chariots were made of wood and hence could be burned by an enemy. After 1200, they were made of metal.

What is going on here in this Synecdoche? This is a figure of speech where a part is used for a whole or a whole for a part. We saw the reverse of this; I mentioned it in Isaiah chapter two, where you, in that case, refer to peace. Where you take one part, namely a plowshare and that represents total disarmament.

Moving from, as it were, war, where the word sword can represent warfare, to plowshare, representing peace, because it speaks to us of agriculture. The same goes for a spear to pruning hook. Now we have the reverse of that here.

So, one item can be used for a plural and so this then instead of representing the flip side of that, total peace, this represents total armament. This idea of judgment of nations. We have that song in American life, he is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored, his truth is marching on.

In Revelation 14:19, the angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God. Cutting all these grapes it says in Revelation 14:20 the wine press was trodden outside the city and the blood flowed from the wine press as high as the horse's bridle. Why do I mention that? Well, you have in this interesting third chapter of Joel verse 13, put in the sickle for the harvest is ripe, and that word to harvest is, of course, the word sounds like the action of the sickle.

It's very onomatopoeic. Katsar. Katsar means to harvest with a sickle, to cut grain.

Katsar. So the Katsarim are the reapers or the harvesters, literally the sickle people of Bible times. We can hear that word.

So put in the katsar, the sickle for the harvest is ripe. Go in tread for the wine press is full. The vats overflow for their wickedness is great.

So, you see, he's using it; as you know, there are over 400 allusions or quotations of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. So, this is the way these agricultural figures are taken, and it's as if in the book of Revelation now, the judge of all the earth who now becomes Christus Victor, who now reigns and rules in all nations, tongues, and peoples submit to him. He brings judgment upon the world's sin.

And so, the end of Joel then speaks to the vindication of God's people. Corporately, Israel is chosen at Sinai. Corporately, Israel somehow experiences God's vindication before the nations of the earth.

So as 3:17 says, you will know that I am your God. And then he ends with the sweetness that we saw in the end of Amos. The mountains drip with sweet wine; the hills flow with milk, and the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water.

It speaks in the extremely poetic language of the fertility of the land and the abundance and blessing for God's people. And so, what do you have? You have the same ending to Joel that you had to Amos. People come back to their cities, live in the land, and never again be uprooted.

What do you have at the end of Joel? Judah will be inhabited forever. Jerusalem to all generations. The Lord dwells in Zion.

Now, I'd like to go on to the book of Obadiah. This little book tends to get very much neglected. I guess there are reasons for that.

It's like asking Larry Lehman, what can you tell me about Nahum or Zephaniah? Zephaniah's name gave rise to one of the famous bagel shops on Route 1, Zeppi's Bagels. I don't know if you ever stopped there. But most people would say, who's Zeppi? Never mind, who's Zephaniah? This little one-chapter book is the only one of these that we have in the Old Testament.

We, of course, have several of these in the New with Philemon and who else? Second and third, John and Jude. So, we've got a bunch of them in the New Testament. So, this is brief and indeed to the point.

Obadiah, the first Obadiah I ever met in life, was a Basset Hound, which I think is a very appropriate name for a Basset Hound. You like those long ears that drag on the ground. He sort of looked just like a Basset Hound.

He looked like that, very lugubrious, very sad. Twelve people are named by Obadiah in the Old Testament. And whenever you hear the name Abdul, which is a very common name in the Muslim world today, it's the same root.

Obadiah means simply servant of God, servant of the Lord, or possibly worshipper of the Lord. Remember, the same Hebrew verb, *avad*, means both to serve or work, do service with your hands, as well as to worship. And in the Ten Commandments, which forbids worshipping idols, this is the same root that's found in the first part of Obadiah's name.

So, to serve or possibly to worship is the idea. The question of when Obadiah was written seems to be a very simple one. It's a very simple one.

And it's something that reading through the book reveals to us. When you read through the book, it is an indictment of Edom. And Edom is being arraigned particularly because of her failure to come to her twin brother's aid.

What you learn in Bible 101, you remember that Esau was the father of the Edomites. Remember, Esau came out first. He was red and hairy.

He was Esau, which means hairy. But he's also described as Admoni, which is ruddy and reddish. And so there's definitely a pun between the description of this twin at birth, Jacob and Esau.

Esau, of course, in Scripture defaults, sells his inheritance, is not certainly in the plan of God, the elect one through whom the covenant promises would come. They would come through Jacob. And while the language sounds extreme, the opening words of the prophet Malachi, Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.

And, of course, Paul picks up on that language in Romans 9 to 11. We don't think of God actually hating people, but the language there is simply God's election love was to be realized through this chosen one of God between those two. Not because he was perfect.

If you check out the curriculum vitae of Jacob, you'll find he has a lot of flaws. A lot of flaws. And the good news of the Gospel is that God can accomplish his purposes on earth through flawed people, which indeed is the story of the Gospel.

So, no one boasts of the excellence of God. He works not because of us but in spite of us. And Jacob is one of those guys, warts and all, cheater, trickster, conniver in many ways, but yet the one who was called Yisrael, the one who struggles with God.

And in rabbinic literature, there's a lot of discussion of what it means for this one who gives his name to these people in the Old Testament. Those who are to struggle, strive, and wrestle with God. And that's really a good thing, although we may have our arguments with God from time to time, as Yisrael did.

It is important we own our own faith. We struggle with it. We articulate it in our own language.

It's not an heirloom that's passed down, but it's something personally we must claim. Jacob had violence done to him, according to Obadiah verse 10. And instead of coming to his support when Jerusalem was under attack by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, in that period of time leading up to the 70 years of exile, basically Edom, what was reprehensible here, Edom, the twin brother, was there cheering on the demise of his twin brother.

All the more reprehensible in failing to assist one's own. And so, those verses, you should not have, you should not have, it's a mantra that occurs eight times starting with verse 12. You shouldn't have gloated over the day of your brother.

You shouldn't have rejoiced over the people of Judah and their ruin. You shouldn't have stood at the gates of the city, gloating over his disaster, looting his goods, grabbing, fleeing people from the city. So, the dating of this, therefore, based on looking at what's going on in the narrative would seem to be at a short period of time after 586.

So, we might want to date it four or five years after that. 582, something like that. Because it refers to this period of time when the people of Judah were taken away.

There seems to be some kind of literary interdependence between the book of Obadiah, particularly the first half of the book, and the 49th chapter of Jeremiah, verses 7 to 22. And if you read Jeremiah 49, 7 to 22, and then read the book of Obadiah, and while I'm not going to compare these passages, we certainly don't have time to analyze them, it reminds you sort of the synoptic problem. Or there is a harmony of Kings and Chronicles, which some of you may not be aware of.

You can study 1 Kings 1 to 11, which is the story of Solomon's kingship. There is a parallel account in Chronicles to that, where material is repeated. Some of it's identical.

Other parts of it vary. Much like 90% of Mark is repeated in 1 Kings 1 to 11. So, there is Luke and Matthew, or it's parallel.

While John is indeed the unique gospel, there are a few things that are shared by all four, like the feeding of the 5,000 and the resurrection. But by and large, John is quite different from what we call the synoptic gospels. So, here among the prophets, either Obadiah and Jeremiah are quoting some kind of older prophecy that may not be extant today, or Obadiah is taking the material of Jeremiah.

Remember, Jeremiah was a witness of the final events in the southern kingdom. Our dates for Jeremiah are 627 to 587. He was right there to the end, and he ends up down in Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem.

So, Jeremiah was a contemporary of this sack of the prophets. He was a witness of Jerusalem. So, it could be Obadiah is quoting Jeremiah here, or it's also possible the other way around, that Jeremiah is quoting Obadiah.

In any case, we have in this book, like we've seen in the prophets, the balance of judgment and hope, bitter and sweet. In this particular book, it works from the particular to the universal. There's a tendency for that to be elsewhere in scripture.

God calls one man, Abraham, the particular, to make a covenant with a particular people. Why? So that the whole world would be blessed. Obadiah proceeds from the particular, namely the judgment of Edom, to a universal judgment and then moves from the restoration of God's people to a universal establishment of God's reign and rule on the earth.

As Obadiah puts it in his last line, the kingdom will be the Lord's. In other words, the Lord will reign. Edom was to be punished for her sin, and specifically, her sin is in aiding the Babylonians in the capture of Judah, in the looting of Jerusalem, the gloating over this event.

The typical formula that we've seen in the prophets is that the prophet claims divine inspiration or origin for his words. Thus says the prophet, the Lord God, concerning Edom. Verse 1, verse 4: I will bring you down, says the Lord.

Again, verse 8, says the Lord. This emphasis, and again it's found in verse 18, the Lord has spoken. So, going back to where we began the course, who are the prophets? Spokespeople for God.

The message originates with God is the emphasis. The prophet simply, like a postman, speaks or delivers a message that originates with someone else. This little book begins with the vision of Obadiah.

We saw those five visions in Amos, and that is the language that is used here. I mentioned the ancestor of the Edomites was Esau, and if you go back to Genesis 36, you will find quite a bit of material there in Genesis. I will not go into about the Edomites.

The book focuses on the indictment of these people. Now, the Edomites—one of the words in the New Testament—is Idumea, which in the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, is how Edom is expressed. Idumea was the area south of Judah, and when you look at where the Edomites settled, they settled directly east of Dry Gulch, which is the Arabah, this 90-mile extension.

It's a valley, a dry valley from the southern end of the Salt Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. The Edomites settled over here east of this area, and after they were brought down, they were taken to the west and destroyed. They, for the most part, moved from the east of the Arabah over to the west side of the Arabah and settled south of the tribe of Judah.

In fact, when we talk about Micah, there's a little town in the Shephelah of Judah that Micah came from called Moresheth, or Tel Morissa, as it became known in the Greek world. That town was inhabited for quite a few decades by the Edomites. The

Edomites were living now south of Judah after they were driven out by a group called the Nabateans.

The Nabateans were the first to settle here. The Nabateans came into this area shortly after the captivity of the southern kingdom. And the Nabateans moved into Silah, to use the word here, or Petra as it was later called, the stronghold of the Edomites.

And the Edomians, who were a nomadic Arab tribe, they came in and captured this area a number of decades after the fall of Jerusalem. And they controlled it for about a century and a half. They made Petra their capital.

And Petra of course means rock and is a connection between the word Petra and Silah as it was called in the Greek language. Which means a rocky crag. So, Petra was one of the principal cities renamed Petra after the influence of Greek culture.

Remember, this whole region after 330 was greatly influenced by Greek culture, 330 BC. Over the course of the throw of Alexander's empire, Seleucus was pushing his Greek culture from up in Damascus. And the Ptolemies were controlling from the south.

And so that whole region of the biblical world was under Greek influence. The people were driven out of Petra by the Nabateans. And again, as I said, they moved to the area of Judah.

During this time, the area was renamed Idumea around 310-312 BC. Just a couple of decades after Alexander died, this region south of Judah became Idumea, bearing the Greek name now. And Petra reflects that also.

Hebron now becomes a capital under the Idumeans. And we read in 1 Maccabees in the intertestamental apocryphal literature that Hebron was the capital of Edom now moved south of Judah. The Maccabean revolt against these Idumeans, who were very Greek-oriented and very anti-Semitic.

Judas the Maccabee slew 20,000 Edomites around 160 BC as this priestly family was seeking to fight off Hellenistic influences. On this map you see Tell Moreshah, where Micah is from. That was one of your key Idumean cities.

I've done a little excavating at that particular city and the evidence of Greek materials found in honeycomb caves that filled that whole area is rather strong. Now, during a period of independence in the second century BC, the last time the Jewish people had a king, John Hyrcanus, came along. And he, following the Maccabees, John Hyrcanus, reigned about 125 BC.

He comes along, and he wants to Judaize; remember, he represents that Maccabean or Hasmonean family that wants to do away with the Hellenization of the land. And he comes in there, and he compels these Idumeans to accept circumcision, and he forces them to adopt Jewish law. Obviously, that did not go down well, not even with a spoonful of sugar.

It was a very painful thing. The Herods in the time of Christ were Idumeans, and in John Hyrcanus' case, where he conquered this region around 125, he forced Judaism on these people, and is forced to convert them to Judaism. Some of them fled the area, and some of them reluctantly accepted Judaism.

But this is one of the few cases in biblical history where Judaism was forced on conquered subjects. For the most part, Jews have been reticent to push their culture on other people. Particularly their religious beliefs about other people.

Even in the modern world, since I have been at Gordon, there have been three attempts by one movement within Judaism to restore more active conversionary campaigns in America. Which never got off the ground really very much or was well accepted. Judaism saw throughout its history, in the Inquisition, the expulsion from Spain in 1492, in the Crusades centuries before that, Jews were reluctant to have other people use force.

So, missions became associated with violence. And the Jews are reluctant to push their own faith. They welcome converts who come willingly but never those who have this forced upon them.

So, there is a reluctance there. So, what was happening here during John Hyrcanus, which produced these Herods of Bible times who were themselves insensitive to spiritual truth? We at least know a little bit about where they came from.

Now, I'd like to talk a little bit about the text itself in the Bible. And I'd like to read the book of Obadiah. Look at the language, starting to begin with, as he says, get ready for battle.

And the nations, as it were, are arrayed in battle against Edom. The Jews had a pride problem, and one of the main things in Obadiah's criticism of Edom is that she regarded herself as superior. But in God's eyes, she was insignificant.

So, in verse 2, when it says, I will make you small among the nations, you will be utterly despised. Reminds how God, in his sovereign wisdom, exalts some nations and topples others. The thing that is particularly emphasized is the pride of Edom's heart.

Verse 3, this proud confidence is probably born because of her impregnable, seemingly impregnable position. There, in the hills of Edom, it is inaccessible. If you travel into Edom today, you go through very narrow canyons.

Is that where you went last summer? It takes a number of hours to get in there. It's a beautiful, beautiful, rosy, red rock area that you can come into today; hear from the Boston Globe travel section, show you; it's called the Treasury of Edom. And where you have some beautiful structures in there.

This article being on the mass, majesty and mystery of Petra. And people go in there and they're very, very impressed with the architecture they find in there. And this position which is hidden, really, very, very well hidden off the main path.

And so you feel secure in the clefts of the rock. Your dwelling is high. You say in your heart, verse 3, who will bring me down? And so you feel secure.

And so that expression in verse 4, though you soar aloft like the eagle, and this fortress was, again, located very high, likened to an eagle's nest among the stars. And the language here, again, typical of the prophets, is hyperbolic. And though you make your nest among the stars, I will bring you down.

While nations often pride themselves, we have one in the Mediterranean area today who's priding himself; he stores a lot of money and has acted very brutally toward a lot of people. And so, he's very, very proud of the people, has taken down airplanes and other things. Who will bring me down? Not going easily with that kind of pride.

The Lord says here he gets the last word as inaccessible and as secure as the Edomites positioned themselves. The completeness of Petra, the completeness of their destruction is alluded to in the verses that begin with 5. It describes people coming in, thieves or robbers, taking certain things away. But this place is going to be totally pillaged, cleaned right out.

He says if grape gatherers came to you, they're going to leave something, but not in your case. In contrast, how Esau has been pillaged, her treasures, inaccessible, mysterious, hidden things sought out. And the Lord says here, then in verse 7, he says, even your allies are going to trick you.

Interesting how the Hebrew expresses what the NIV renders allies or friends. It's the same thing we have in the Latin word companion. A companion is one you eat bread with.

Con means together and pan is the word for bread. And so, a companion is a mess mate or someone you share food with. And so that expression in verse 7, those who eat your bread will set a trap for you.

In other words, those people you break bread with, tokens of friendship, your own allies, are the very ones who are going to turn against you. In that day, verse 8, a familiar expression we've seen in the prophets, Edom's wise men will be destroyed. So he's critical of the Edomites, their behavior toward Jacob in particular, and threatens, in verse 10, to cut them off forever.

Now, the Edomites, after the Nabateans came in a number of decades after the fall of Jerusalem, we never again hear anything serious about the Edomites. The Edomites, of course, were a pain in the tuchus of Israel when they were wandering through their land after they came out of the Sinai Peninsula. But Edom's overthrow, her sins, this age-long antagonism, you stood aloof, this is a key term, bystanders.

You stood aloof, gloating over your brother, cheering on his demise, and finally even capturing your brother as he fled the city. So, this is the indictment for Edom. He ends the book by widening the lens and talks about judgment on all nations and God's ultimate reign on the earth.

But I'll pick up on that theme when we return to class on Friday.

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