

# **Dr. Robert Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16, Session 18, Apologetic Value of Prophecy, Introduction to Obadiah Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16, Session 18, Apologetic Value of Prophecy, Introduction to Obadiah, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Vannoy's lecture explores the apologetic value of biblical prophecy, questioning whether fulfilled prophecies can be used to argue for the Bible's truthfulness and God's existence. He discusses differing viewpoints, including G.C. Aalders' skepticism due to disputes over fulfillment, dating, and symbolic language. Vannoy then presents J.G. Machen's argument for apologetics and examines the relationship between faith and reason, referencing Augustine and the Reformed Theology schools of Princeton and Amsterdam. The lecture then transitions to the book of Obadiah, discussing dating and authorship. Finally, the lecture highlights the theme of Obadiah as a pronouncement of judgment on Edom, descendants of Esau, with the lecture connecting it to the historical and theological tensions between Edom and Israel.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16,  
Session 18 – Double click icon to play in Windows media  
player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the  
audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets →  
Foundations).**



### 3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16, Session 18, Apologetic Value of Prophecy, Introduction to Obadiah

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts, along with relevant quotes:

#### Briefing Document: Vannoy on Prophecy and Obadiah

##### I. Apologetic Value of Prophecy

- **Main Theme:** The central question explored is whether or not biblical prophecy has apologetic value, meaning its usefulness in defending the truthfulness of the Bible and the existence of God. Vannoy explores differing viewpoints on this topic.
- **Key Ideas:**
- **Affirmative View:** Historically, many believe predictive prophecy serves as an effective apologetic tool because prophecies given centuries ago are seen to be fulfilled later, providing evidence for Scripture's truth.
  - *"Because you can look at the prophecies, given centuries ago, and see fulfillment in much later times, and that provides a good apologetic tool for arguing for the truthfulness of Scripture and God's existence."*
- **Negative View (Aalders):** Some evangelicals and critical scholars dispute the apologetic value of prophecy. Vannoy uses the Dutch scholar G.C. Aalders as an example. Aalders raises objections, suggesting the apologetic argument isn't as strong as it initially appears.
  - *"In his view, when you look at those objections, the objections show that the apologetic value for the argument is not as great as you might initially be inclined to think."*
- **Aalders' Objections to Apologetic Value:**

- **Disputes on Fulfillment:** Some argue that there are unfulfilled prophecies, which weaken the argument for fulfilled ones.
- *"He quotes for example Abraham Keunen in his book *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, and it gives a list of unfulfilled prophecies. He says Keunen has turned the apologetic argument around and on the basis of non-fulfilled prophecies and has argued against fulfilled prophecies."*
- **Disputes on Dating and Subjective Factors:** Dating of prophetic texts (e.g., Daniel) is debated, and assessing connections between prophecy and fulfillment involves subjective judgments.
- Davidson's conditions for evidential value include: promulgation prior to the event, clear fulfillment, and the event being unforeseeable by reason. Aalders argues these are subjective judgments.
- *"First the known promulgation must be prior to the event. Secondly, there must be a clear and palpable fulfillment of it. Lastly the nature of the event itself if, when the prediction of it was given it lay remote from human view, and was such as could not be foreseen by any supposable effort of reason, or be deduced upon principles of calculation derived from probability or experience."*
- **Symbolic Language:** Aalders, being amillennialist, interprets Old Testament kingdom prophecies figuratively, applying them spiritually to the church. Literal interpretations (as in premillennialism) are viewed negatively.
- *"Aalders argues that the literal approach of men like Keith does not do justice to the symbolic nature of many prophecies. It is Aalders' view that the prophecies often speak of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple in order to indicate spiritual realities of the new covenant."*
- He believes that a literal interpretation leads to the "chiliast error" (premillennialism).
- **Observation on Eschatology and Apologetics:** Vannoy notes a connection: amillennialists tend to be presuppositionalists in apologetics (not using prophecy as evidence), while premillennialists tend to be evidentialists (using prophecy as evidence).
- **Aalders' Conclusion:** Conviction of the divine truth of Scripture leads to belief in the fulfillment of prophecy, not the other way around. Certainty rests in God, not outward evidence. Prophecy can support the faith of believers, but may not

convince unbelievers. He argues for an "internal principle" where belief is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

- *"Aalders then concludes that it's not the fulfillment of prophecy that brings the conviction of the divine truth of scripture, but the reverse—the conviction of divine truth of scripture leads to belief in the fulfillment of prophecy."*
- He suggests apologetics should retreat to a subjective standpoint.
- **Machen's Counterpoint:** While acknowledging the necessity of the Holy Spirit, Machen argues for the importance of intellectual preparation for receiving the Gospel. He emphasizes the need for reasoned defense of the Christian faith, especially the inspiration of the Bible, to address legitimate questions and objections. He refutes the idea that argument is unnecessary, stating that the Holy Spirit clears away mists to enable people to attend to the evidence.
- *"But because intellectual labor is insufficient it does not follow, as it so often is assumed, that it is unnecessary. God may, it is true, overcome all intellectual obstacles by an immediate exercise of His regenerative power. Sometimes he does. But he does so very seldom. Usually He exerts His power in connection with certain conditions of the human mind."*
- **Faith & Reason (St. Augustine):** Vannoy uses Neuhaus's article to introduce Augustine's view on faith and reason. Augustine believed faith is reasonable and reason without faith is incomplete. Belief is necessary for understanding, and is rationally explicable. Augustine is presented as an opponent of fideism.
- *"'Understand my word in order to believe,' says Augustine, 'but believe God's word in order to understand.' As Ephram Gillson writes... '[In Augustine] the very possibility of faith depends on reason... because only reason is capable of belief.'"*
- **Princeton vs. Amsterdam:** Historically, Amsterdam University was associated with presuppositionalist apologetics, while Princeton Seminary was associated with evidentialist apologetics.
- *"Warfield and the old Princeton theologians believed that reason and faith cooperated in order to provide a knowledge of God coordinate with a true human knowing, even if knowledge was incomplete."*
- Warfield advocates courage in investigating the truth, arguing that Christians should be leaders in every science and should not fear truth.

## II. The Revelatory Claim of the Bible

- **Main Theme:** The Bible presents itself as the Word of God, making verifiable claims about history (both past and future).
- **Key Ideas:**
  - The Bible's historical statements, predictive and non-predictive, are open to verification.
  - The connection between prophecy and fulfillment (particularly in the Old Testament and Christ) creates an "objective prophecy/fulfillment structure" that points to God's existence and veracity.
  - This structure is objective, breaking through religious subjectivism, and is recognizable apart from religious commitment.
  - The Bible itself demonstrates God's existence through recognizable signs and coherent prophecy/fulfillment (e.g., Exodus events).
  - Intellectual recognition of God's existence is a prerequisite for genuine faith, which is a response to God's demonstrated power in history.
  - Objective (external) revelation exists apart from the subjective (internal) response of faith worked by the Holy Spirit.
  - Aalders (and similar thinkers) miss the importance of external revelation – the objective evidence of God's claims.

### III. Prophecy and Fulfillment

- **Key Ideas:**
  - Old Testament revelation includes objective components demonstrating the reality of God:
    - Recognizable signs, wonders, and theophanies witnessed by many.
    - A plan for future history revealed through prophets.
    - Fulfillment of that plan.
  - The Old Testament distinguishes itself by grounding belief in revelation connected to external signs and the progression of history according to a previously announced plan, rather than simply on claims of divine revelation.
  - *"Rather, belief is founded in revelation that is connected with external signs and the progression of the history according to a previously announced plan."*

- Signs and wonders authenticated God's words to those who observed them, but prophecy and fulfillment continue to function as evidence for succeeding generations.
- Bloom, Gaugh, and Newman argue that fulfilled prophecy is an accessible, testable miracle, bypassing the difficulty of reported miracles.
- Old Testament demonstrates that Israel could hardly do anything other than believe based on the objective facts they saw and experienced.

#### IV. Introduction to Obadiah

- **Minor Prophets Classification:** The terms major and minor prophets refers only to the length of the books, not their importance. The speaker lists the major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
- **Arrangement of the Minor Prophets:** The order of the Minor Prophets differs between the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint. There's no convincing explanation for either order, although the last three (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) are all post-exilic.
- **Dating the Minor Prophets:** They can be divided into three periods: Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian.
- **Obadiah's Date and Author:**
  - Obadiah is one of the most difficult prophetic books to date. Dates range from 840 B.C. to 450 B.C.
  - The crux of the dating question is identifying the plundering of Jerusalem mentioned in verses 10 and 11.
- **Three Main Views on the Plundering:** A plundering during the reign of Jehoram of Judah by a coalition of Philistines and Arabians (mentioned in 2 Chronicles 21:8-17).
- The Babylonian plundering of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
- An attack on Israel by Syria during the time of Ahaz, accompanied by an Edomite attack (2 Chronicles 28:16-18).
- The author is Obadiah, meaning "Servant of the Lord," about whom nothing else is known.

- **Theme of Obadiah:**

- The book is a pronouncement of judgment on Edom, descendants of Esau.
- Edom was located south of the Dead Sea and east of the Rift Valley.
- Conflicts between the Edomites and Israelites stemmed from the Jacob/Esau controversy.
- Keil's comments on the relationship: Edom's violence against Judah was reprehensible because of their fraternal relations.

**In summary, the lecture explores the complex issue of the apologetic value of prophecy, presenting various viewpoints and emphasizing the importance of considering both objective evidence and the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith. The lecture then introduces the book of Obadiah, highlighting the challenges in dating the book and identifying the historical context of its prophecies.**

## **4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16, Session 18, Apologetic Value of Prophecy, Introduction to Obadiah**

### **Prophecy & Obadiah: A Study Guide**

#### **I. Quiz**

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to Aalders, what is one of the main reasons symbolic language reduces the apologetic value of prophecy?
2. What is the relationship between amillenialism and presuppositional apologetics?
3. How does J.G. Machen suggest God usually exerts power to bring people to the gospel?
4. How does St. Augustine explain the relationship between reason and faith?
5. According to Fuller and Gardiner, what is the difference between Princeton and Amsterdam in the late nineteenth century?
6. What does Vannoy state is verifiable and testable and objective?
7. According to Vannoy, how did God make himself known through Scripture?
8. What is the general view of the identity of the author of the book of Obadiah?
9. What is a key aspect of the historical relationship between the Edomites and the Israelites that contributes to the context of Obadiah's prophecy?
10. According to Vannoy, why is establishing the dating for the book of Obadiah so difficult?

#### **II. Quiz Answer Key**

1. Aalders argues that symbolic interpretation, which is associated with an amillenial view, makes it difficult to present a convincing apologetic argument to non-believers because they are less likely to be swayed by such an interpretation.
2. Amillennialists tend to interpret prophecy more symbolically and figuratively and are often also presuppositionalists in apologetics, meaning they do not typically use prophecy and fulfillment as evidence for the Bible's truthfulness.



3. Machen states that while the regenerative power of God is decisive, God usually works in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it is our responsibility to create those conditions to receive the gospel.
4. Augustine suggests that faith and reason are interconnected, where belief is necessary for understanding, and reason is essential for the very possibility of faith.
5. Fuller and Gardiner suggest that Princeton in the early 1900's followed an evidentialist apologetic, while Amsterdam followed a presuppositionalist one.
6. Prophecy and fulfillment is verifiable and testable and an objective structure that stands outside of the individual.
7. God made himself known through Scripture by signs and wonders and prophecy and fulfillment.
8. The author of Obadiah is thought to be a prophet about whom we know nothing beyond his prophecy.
9. The historical conflict between the Edomites (descendants of Esau) and the Israelites (descendants of Jacob), stemming from their ancestral struggle, forms the backdrop for the pronouncement of judgment on Edom in Obadiah.
10. Establishing the dating for the book of Obadiah is difficult because it is hard to determine which plundering of Jerusalem the book references.

### **III. Essay Questions**

1. Discuss the varying perspectives on the apologetic value of prophecy, contrasting Aalders' view with the evidentialist approach, and explain how eschatological viewpoints influence these apologetic approaches.
2. Explore the relationship between faith and reason as presented by St. Augustine, and analyze how this relationship informs the approach to apologetics, particularly in the context of using prophecy as evidence.
3. Analyze the significance of the objective prophecy/fulfillment structure as a means of demonstrating the veracity of the God of biblical revelation, and discuss how this structure challenges religious subjectivism.

4. Discuss the challenges in dating the Book of Obadiah, and analyze how different interpretations of the plundering of Jerusalem mentioned in the text affect conclusions about its date.
5. Explain the historical relationship between the Edomites and Israelites, and analyze how this relationship shapes the themes and pronouncements of judgment in the Book of Obadiah.

#### IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apologetics:** The reasoned defense of the Christian faith.
- **Presuppositional Apologetics:** An apologetic approach that begins with the assumption of the truth of Christianity and argues from that basis.
- **Evidential Apologetics:** An apologetic approach that seeks to provide evidence for the truth of Christianity.
- **Amillennialism:** The belief that the thousand-year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20 is symbolic and is currently being fulfilled in the church age.
- **Premillennialism:** The belief that Christ will return to earth to establish a literal thousand-year kingdom.
- **Fideism:** The view that faith is independent of reason or that reason is unnecessary or even hostile to faith.
- **Internal Revelation:** The subjective experience of God's presence and truth within an individual, often associated with the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **External Revelation:** Objective manifestations of God's power and truth, such as signs, wonders, and fulfilled prophecies.
- **Theophany:** A visible manifestation of God.
- **Eschatology:** The study of end times or final events.

## 5. FAQs on Vannoy, Foundations of Biblical Prophecy, Lecture 16, Session 18, Apologetic Value of Prophecy, Introduction to Obadiah, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Biblical Prophecy and the Book of Obadiah

- **What apologetic value, if any, does biblical prophecy hold in defending the truthfulness of the Bible and the existence of God?**
- Many believe that fulfilled prophecies, given centuries in advance, provide a strong apologetic tool for arguing for the truthfulness of Scripture and God's existence. However, some evangelicals and many critical scholars argue against this, citing disputes over fulfillment, subjective interpretation of dating and symbolic language, and the fact that conviction often comes from prior belief, not the other way around. Ultimately, differing views on eschatology and apologetic approaches influence the perceived value of prophecy.
- **What are the main objections to using prophecy fulfillment as a tool for demonstrating the truth of Scripture?**
- Several objections are raised, including disputes over whether prophecies have actually been fulfilled, disagreements on the dating of prophecies and the subjective nature of assessing the connection between prophecy and its fulfillment, and the symbolic language used in many prophecies, which can nullify any apologetic value that a literal interpretation might offer. The issue of subjectivity in interpreting prophecy is a significant challenge to its apologetic use.
- **How do amillennialists and premillennialists generally differ in their views on apologetics and the interpretation of prophecy?**
- Amillennialists, who tend to interpret prophecy more symbolically, are often presuppositionalists in apologetics, relying less on prophecy fulfillment as evidence. Premillennialists, who typically interpret prophecy more literally, are usually evidentialists, using fulfilled prophecy as a key evidence for the truthfulness of Scripture.

- **What is the difference between a presuppositional and evidential approach to apologetics?**
- Presuppositional apologetics argues that belief in God and the Bible is foundational and prior to any evidence, while evidential apologetics seeks to provide objective evidence, such as fulfilled prophecy, to support the truth claims of the Bible and the existence of God.
- **How does the Bible itself present its prophetic claims, and how does this relate to the concept of an "external revelation?"**
- The Bible presents itself as the Word of God, containing a revealed plan for history, making a claim that can be verified and tested. Much of this plan has been realized in the history of Israel and Jesus Christ. This presents a tangible, "external revelation" in the form of prophecy/fulfillment that can be examined apart from subjective religious commitment. The biblical demonstration of God's existence relies on recognizable signs and the coherence of prophecy and fulfillment as external evidence.
- **What is the primary theme of the Book of Obadiah?**
- The primary theme of the Book of Obadiah is a pronouncement of judgment on Edom for their violence against their "brother" Jacob (Israel). This violence is particularly reprehensible due to the fraternal relationship between the two nations, stemming from their ancestors Esau and Jacob.
- **What is the central issue in dating the Book of Obadiah, and what are the main views on the event referenced in verses 10-11?**
- The crux of the dating question lies in identifying the plundering of Jerusalem mentioned in verses 10-11. Possible events include: 1) a plundering during the reign of Jehoram by Philistines and Arabians, with Edomite cooperation, 2) the Babylonian plundering in 586 BC, and 3) an attack by Syria during the time of Ahaz, accompanied by Edomite attacks.

- **How does the historical relationship between the Edomites and Israelites influence the message of Obadiah?**
- The historical relationship, rooted in the Jacob/Esau narrative, was marked by conflict and animosity. The Edomites' lack of brotherly support and their participation in the plundering of Jerusalem are seen as a betrayal of this relationship, intensifying the judgment pronounced upon them in Obadiah. The text highlights the wrongfulness of violence committed against a "brother."