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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED

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The Prophecy of Obadiah

by **STEPHEN G. BAKER** YPS Editor

Some people have commented that it would be good to have a section in *YPS* giving an overview of a book in the Bible. Hopefully when you read the main magazine (*Precious Seed International*) you have a look at the 'Book Reviews'. This gives you an overview of various books and a little insight into what the book is about. You may choose to read the book in question or not to read it depending on the impression you form from the review. This section is the same, but different. I want to give you an impression of what a specific book in the Bible is about (the similarity). However as you are most likely to be a believer if you are reading this you must resist the temptation not to read the book after you have read the review (the difference). All of God's word is essential for the spiritual health of the Christian. All Bible books are not directly about us but they can teach us how God thinks and operates, about other people's experiences with God and, most of all, the Lord can speak to us through any part of His word.

The Prophecy of Obadiah

This is the shortest of the writings of the Old Testament; it has only twenty-one verses. It will take you a couple of minutes to read, at the most, and if you are very lazy you could download it on to your phone and have it read to you.

It forms part of a group of books in the Old Testament which are described as 'The Prophets' and it will often be called one of the 'Minor Prophets'. Be careful with this expression as it describes only the length of the book, not its rating in God's eyes, or its importance.

The man who wrote it is unknown apart from the fact that he was a Judean; there are ten other Obadiah's in the Bible! His name means 'the servant worshipper of Jehovah'.

There is some uncertainty about when it was written; some estimate that it was written between 586 and 583 years before the Lord Jesus was born.

It's main message

In this book Jehovah is communicating the fact that the nation of the Edomites will be judged by God because of the part they played in the overthrow and destruction of the City of Jerusalem by the Babylonian Emperor, Nebuchadnezzar of 2 Kgs. 25; 2 Chron. 26. The Edomites had watched while the city was attacked and ransacked. In fact the Edomites had entered the city, looted, and stood and gloated at the pain of the residents of Jerusalem and blocked the exit of those that ran for their lives.

All of this would have been awful enough if it had not been for the fact that the Edomites were related to the Judeans. Read the book (only one chapter!) and look for the name of Esau. Then check back through the earlier books in the Old Testament to see how they and the Judeans were related.

God pronounced judgement on the evil actions of these people. Despite the sin of the Jewish nation (which Jehovah will always judge righteously) God will not permit those who oppose His people to prosper.

In closing, this summary of the book will hopefully help you get your head round its main themes:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 1-9 | The Punishment of Edomites predicted |
| 10-14 | The reasons for the punishment explained |
| 15-16 | The nature of the punishment defined |
| 17-18 | The deliverance of Judah predicted |
| 19-20 | Details of the disposal of the Edomites' land and possessions |
| 21 | The re-establishment of Jerusalem and the Kingdom |

Fellowship

Fellowship is a wonderful thing. Sometimes it can feel like being a Christian is a lonely path to tread. We might have difficulties with 'friends' who are opposed to what we believe or may feel that we should join in the activities that they engage in. It is a good thing to know that God never intended us to stand alone for Him. We need the companionship of those who believe the same things that we do, and that's what fellowship is all about.



Definition of Topic - Fellowship

In the Bible, the English word 'fellowship' is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*. It has the idea of association, community and partnership. If you like, sharing together those things we have in common, or 'fellows in a ship'; all experiencing the same general circumstance and pulling together for the common good. And what do we share in common? Basically this, that we all have the one and the same Saviour! This is the common bond of fellowship between true believers.

Why is Fellowship Important?

Firstly, the word of God teaches that mankind has a basic **need** for fellowship. In Genesis chapter 2 verse 18 God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him'. Secondly, fellowship is **valuable**. For example, one can support their companions if they stumble on the Christian pathway, Eccles. 4. 9-12. Finally, our God is a God who **specializes** in togetherness and fellowship. For example, the Lord Jesus called a group of disciples to follow Him, and many New Testament epistles were written to groups of believers gathering in local assemblies.

What Fellowship do we Share with Others?

As Christians we have fellowship with **God** and with **God's people**. All believers have fellowship with the Father, 1 John 1. 3, the Son, 1 Cor. 1. 9, and the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor. 13. 14. This

is the basis of our fellowship with each other. What a wonderful thought it is that we have a partnership and association with the Godhead and we share this in common as believers.

There are seven key aspects of fellowship that we share as believers with all of God's people.

Fellow-disciples, John 11. 16. We are fellow-learners and pupils together of Christ.

Fellow-soldiers, Phil. 2. 25. We are fellow-associates in conflict and warfare for Christ. This campaign is spiritual, not physical, and we're on the winning side!

Fellow-servants, Col. 1. 7. We are fellow-slaves to the same master and we obey His commandments.

Fellow-prisoners, Rom. 16. 7. Not many of us share the same prison for the name of Christ, but we may be called to experience suffering together for Him.

Fellow-workers/labourers/helpers, Phil. 4. 3. We work and labour together for the same cause.

Fellow-citizens, Eph. 2. 19. We belong to the same heavenly community and our home is in heaven.

Fellow-heirs, Eph. 3. 6; Rom. 8. 17. We share the same blessings and privileges.

Fellowship with Local Believers

You will undoubtedly have heard

of the phrase 'coming into fellowship'. It is often used but probably doesn't convey any truth particularly well! Acts chapter 2 verse 41 states, 'They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls'. Note God's divine order: salvation ('gladly received his word'), baptism ('were baptized') then added to the local company of Christians ('were added unto them').

Imagine you are someone who has just trusted Christ. As a young believer, you now share something in common with other believers; you have the same Lord and Saviour! You may **not** though, as yet, have been added to (become a member of) a local company of Christians (what is often called 'coming into fellowship').

This involves much more than just sharing in common the same Lord and Saviour. It involves commitment, responsibility and participation.

What is Involved in Local Assembly Fellowship?

Commitment (Acts 2. 42; 4. 23): by joining myself to a company of local believers I am declaring that this will be my spiritual home and I will make every effort to be at the assembly gatherings. I am now part of this local 'body' of believers (1 Cor. 12. 27) and as such 'little me' is indispensable (1 Cor. 12. 21-22)! I am not now open to other offers but my diary should be arranged around the assembly gatherings.

Continuance (Acts 2. 42): in Jerusalem the local believers continued 'stedfastly' (attentively/devotedly) in Bible teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Not only does this verse again emphasize commitment, but suggests that there is no biblical foundation for wandering from church to church. I should stick at it even when the going is tough. Of course, there were no other churches around in Jerusalem at this time and no cars to drive to another assembly when things got hard.

Conduct (Ps. 93. 5; 1 Tim. 3. 15; 1 Cor. 3. 16-17): the local assembly is God's dwelling place. Scripture calls it the 'House of God' and the 'Temple of God'. The believers will therefore reflect the character of its owner and occupier and be marked by holiness. The Tabernacle was God's dwelling place and made according to God's pattern. As such, Moses had no right to tamper with God's direction concerning its construction and order. Likewise, the assembly belongs to God. We use the Bible as our guidebook to its order, and we have no right to meddle with it or complain about it!

Contribution (Rom. 15. 26; 1 Cor. 16. 1-2): a freewill offering is often taken on the first day of the week so believers can contribute towards the running costs of the assembly. There are electricity and gas bills to pay as well as printing costs, etc. Not only should I contribute what I am able to financially, but I should be willing to contribute my time, effort, intellect and energy to every aspect of the work.

Care (John 13. 35; Col. 1. 4): the

local assembly is a wonderfully warm place to be. There will be a care and compassion between the saints which acts as a marvellous witness to the community.

Compliance (1 Pet. 5. 1-3): there is a distinct beauty about the order of a local assembly. It will be guarded by men the Holy Spirit has chosen (Acts 20. 28) called elders (also called overseers and shepherds when describing different aspects of their work). These men are guides and examples to the assembly; they are not there to rule, dominate or dictate. They are responsible to the Lord for any decisions they might make on behalf of the assembly. Every believer should be willing to humbly submit to their godly direction.

Space does not allow us to consider some other important aspects of fellowship. For example, the Lord Jesus gives a clear procedure to follow when arguments arise between believers and fellowship is temporarily broken (Matt. 18. 15-17). It is also a particularly illuminating study to consider the phrase 'one another' throughout the New Testament epistles. The word often indicates the key privileges and the responsibilities of fellowship with each other.

Idea for Study

Do you consider the following verses to be a privilege or responsibility of fellowship, or both?

John. 13. 34; Rom. 12. 10; 14. 13, 19; 15. 14; 1 Cor. 12. 25; Gal. 5. 13; Eph. 4. 2, 32; 5. 21; Heb. 3. 13; Jas. 5. 16; 1 Pet. 4. 9; 1 John 4. 7.

Does God believe in Genocide?

It would be easy to dismiss such a question if the idea hadn't caught the imagination of many, and if its spurious arguments weren't being taken up by those increasingly strident atheists opposed to the word of God and the gospel. Its arguments will be thrown in the face of young people in the same way that they have been bombarded with evolutionary propaganda for years. When they come to you for an answer what will you say? What passage might you turn to?

As a starting point for this article I want us to consider how the charge of genocide might sit alongside Saul's treatment of the Amalekites in 1 Samuel chapter 15. You will notice that in that chapter we read, 'Saul smote the Amalekites', v. 7. Again, he 'utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword', v. 8.

The events of this chapter seem to fit with verse 48 of the previous chapter and describe how the Amalekites were smitten and why. They are a further account of failure on Saul's part, failure which compounded the errors of chapter 14, and particularly the disobedience of chapter 13.

However, there are many today who read such chapters and this one's description of the slaughter of the Amalekites, and are shocked by the destruction of 'all the people with the edge of the sword', v. 8. Equally, the extent of the destruction is graphically given, 'slay both man and woman, infant and suckling', v. 3. It would appear to be an inexplicable and, in the mind of some, an inexcusable genocide. How can this God of love of whom we speak deal in such a way with anyone?

The situation seems worse when we notice that the slaughter of the Amalekites was by:

Divine command

– 'the words of the Lord', v. 1.

Saul was not acting on his own

initiative. The supreme reason for this battle and its resulting slaughter was that God commanded it.

If we ask the question as to whether Britain was right to go to war with Germany in the Second World War there would be divided opinion. Equally, over the war with Iraq there is divided opinion, even in the same political circles. Divided opinions occur because of human reasoning, often without full possession of the facts, and the fact that politicians have proved untrustworthy.

Here, however, we need not question the righteousness of the action as we know that the Judge of all the earth will do right, Gen. 18. 25. God is in possession of all the facts. He knew the sinfulness of Amalek, what those sins were and how great, as well as how unrepentant the people. This was clearly the reason for the judgement, as Samuel reminded Saul, God's command was, 'Go and utterly destroy the **sinner**s the Amalekites', v. 18.

The slaughter of the Amalekites was God's judgement for their sin. This is where we need to keep a right balance in our preaching of the gospel. We believe in a God who loves the sinner and has provided a way of salvation through the death of His Son. But we also believe in a God who hates sin and will ultimately punish the sin of those that reject Christ. Why do atheists despise the concept of God? It is because they do not want to be accountable for their actions and words. We need to emphasize that God does not and cannot overlook sin.

But even in the execution of judgement, God took no pleasure in that judgement that was brought to bear upon the Amalekites. Ezekiel records, 'As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live', Ezek. 33. 11.



Let us rather ponder.

Divine longsuffering

– ‘when he came up from Egypt’, v. 2.

The passage refers back to Exodus chapter 17 and the battle of Rephidim. When the people were without water and weak, Moses struck the rock in Horeb and God provided refreshment in the water from the rock. It was at that point that Amalek came upon the people from behind. The point that God is making in what He says through Samuel to Saul is that after the battle of Rephidim they, the Amalekites, had not changed! It is worth remembering how many years had elapsed since God passed sentence upon Amalek in Exodus chapter 17. A rough estimate puts it at more than 400 years since God pronounced war upon Amalek. That they were still alive to trouble the nation is a testimony to the longsuffering of God. Their sin had not abated, yet God had spared them until now. We might remind our hearts of God’s words to Abraham when He said, ‘The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full’, Gen. 15. 16. There would come a time when that iniquity would be full, ripe for judgement, and at that point God would visit them in His wrath. The judge of all the earth will do right!

But were all guilty?

Divine mercy

– ‘Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart’, v. 6.

We have said, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Are the righteous condemned with the unrighteous? Are the innocent subject to the same judgement as the guilty? Clearly, in the case of the Kenites they were encouraged to escape the soon-coming judgement that would be carried out by Saul.

Think of what we are told of the flood. We are told, ‘The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark

was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved’, 1 Pet. 3. 20. The way of salvation was being prepared and the preaching of salvation went on for as long as it took the ark to be built. Those that perished were lost because they rejected God’s offer of salvation and continued in their sin.

Think of God’s judgement upon Sodom and Gomorrah. As Abraham interceded on behalf of that wicked city where his nephew Lot was dwelling, we hear God say, ‘I will not destroy it for ten’s sake’, Gen. 18. 32. If you can find only ten out of a city whose population was probably measured in thousands, God said He would not destroy it because of those ten righteous folk. Even though ten could not be found, God even sent His angels into Sodom to rescue Lot and his family.

Think of Jericho, the first city to come under the judgement of God as His people entered Canaan. James tells us that Rahab the harlot was justified by works, demonstrating her faith, she was saved from the destruction of Jericho. So scripture records, ‘Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father’s household, and all that she had’, Josh.

6. 25. So we see that God is not unrighteous. He does not condemn the innocent with the guilty neither does He punish the faithful alongside the sinner.

But why children?

Divine principle of justice

A possible answer is given us by Samuel, ‘Thy sword hath made women childless’, v. 33. In judicial terms, what was visited upon the Amalekites was what they had visited upon others! The New Testament principle is this, ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’, Gal. 6. 7. What God visited upon Amalek was in keeping with their character and activity before that judgement fell.



We might also appreciate that the eternal destiny of the innocent child is not the same as the responsible adult. Equally, these children were saved from a life characterized by those factors that had brought judgement upon their parents.

Inveterate enemy

– 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel', v. 2.

Amalek was an implacable foe of Israel. We reiterate that it was at Rephidim, Exod. 17, when Israel had no water to drink until Moses smote the rock, that Amalek came out against Israel. It seemed a time of spiritual and physical weakness when Amalek attacked. You will notice too that their tactics are remembered, 'How he laid wait for him in the way', v. 2. Amalek sought to ambush Israel, to catch them unawares. What subtlety characterized this foe!

They were also a difficult foe for the outcome of the battle seemed to ebb and flow until Moses'

intercessory hands were held up by Aaron and Hur, Exod. 17. 12. God's estimation of Amalek's action at that time was such that Moses recorded, 'The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation', Exod. 17. 16. Would Amalek have spared Israel? To spare any here would merely leave unfinished business and the potential for that foe to return later.

In summary, then, this passage shows us a God who:

Will judge and punish sin – 'Be not deceived, God is not mocked'.

Is longsuffering – not willing that any should perish

Will judge righteously – He will do, and be seen to do, that which is right. His judgement is not indiscriminate.

Will, as Romans chapter 2 verse 6, puts it, 'Render to every man according to his deeds'.

Will, ultimately, subdue all this foes – they will become the footstool of His feet!

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transcendent splendour and greatness of His majesty, power and wisdom.

However, theistic evolution is seriously proposed as a good theory which keeps everyone happy!

Difficulties in the Detail

Already you must be very unhappy about this theory. You will have noticed great difficulties, insuperable difficulties, because you take the Bible as the clear, reliable revelation of God. Let us take just a few points and see how these totally disagree with the word of God.

The Bible speaks of creation as a finished, completed work (Gen. 2. 1-2; Ps. 33. 9; Heb. 4. 3, 10) – evolution we are told is still occurring². Scripture describes acts of immediate creation, including creatures separately in the sea and in the air, man from the dust, woman from the man – evolution describes a gradual, long-term transition and development of everything, including man.

In Genesis chapter 1 God describes the original creation as 'very good' – evolution requires a

continuous savage struggle for survival. God takes no pleasure in death and destruction. That is not 'very good'. Man is the *cause* of struggle and death, not a result of it, Gen. 3; cf. Rom. 5. 12, 15; 8. 19ff.

Genesis chapter 1, cf. 1 Cor. 15. 39, repeatedly emphasizes distinctions between living things, their kinds (or species) – evolution is based upon a common relationship between all living things. Scripture states clearly that man is uniquely created 'in God's image' – evolution focuses on man's development from, and relationship to, animals and to all of nature.

Scripture emphasizes that man was created perfect and that he subsequently fell to his present condition – evolution teaches that man arrived through a continual progression upwards. In Genesis chapter 1 the order in which different things were created disagrees strongly with the proposals of evolution, e.g., life first appears on dry land whereas evolution says it began in primeval oceans; birds and fishes were created on the same day whereas evolution says birds evolved from fish millions of years later.

The Impossibilities of the Merger

Apart from these and many other detailed points at which there is obvious and clear disagreement, fundamentally the two systems cannot match. This is because they start from completely opposite viewpoints. There is really no middle ground or sensible compromise.

Evolution operates on the basis of random chance. Creation is by deliberate design.

Logically and absolutely, Evolution does not need or want God – that is the main reason why it is so popular.

Creation does not need or want Evolution, a lengthy, wasteful process to produce species: 'God spoke, and it was done' – at once! Ps. 39. 9.

If Evolution is true, the Bible is misleading and dangerous. If the Bible is true, Evolution is misleading and dangerous.

And this is what we are really contending for – the dependability and truth of the Holy Scriptures, as a whole and in detail. We know that, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth', Gen. 1. 1, that 'all things were created by him, and for him', Col. 1. 16. There was no 'big bang', just an orderly, stepwise creation of a world for man to inhabit. Our Lord Jesus said, 'From the beginning of creation he made them male and female', Mark 10. 6. Male and female did not evolve from a sexless ancestor (how could they and maintain reproduction?) and

there was no evolving of different species either. We do **not** know all that we might wish to know about **how** it all happened (we might not understand it all anyway!), but 'through faith we understand **that** the worlds were framed by the word of God', Heb. 11. 3.

The theory of evolution and the Bible's account of creation are mutually exclusive and mutually contradictory. To profess to believe in both is an untenable position. Those who try to do this travel along a road which involves at best overlooking or at worst disbelieving and rejecting the plain teaching found in many parts of the Bible, including the words of Christ Himself. And along that road more and more of the Bible will be rejected. In areas of debate, the pronouncements of Evolution will be preferred above the statements of the scriptures. Less and less confidence will remain in the word of God and all its promises and precepts which are valid for all time and for eternity. Christians cannot really go there.

So did God use evolutionary processes at some point or points to create the universe and all that is in it? No. He did it His way – perfectly by design!

Footnotes

- 1 *Churches urged to challenge Intelligent Design* EKKLESIA 20 Feb 2006; see also en.wikipedia.org/theistic_evolution
- 2 Note that the 'evolution' here referred to is the overall, long-term production of new species, as is normally understood when the term is used. But changes do occur within species in the shorter term, for example due to environmental factors, selective breeding or geographical isolation. These are also called evolution, but more accurately should be called adaptation. This is an observed fact which cannot be disputed whilst classical evolution is an extrapolated theory based on huge inferences. Confusing the two ideas is common, even intended by the proponents of evolution theory, but adaptation is not evolution, and the two must be distinguished.



Theistic Evolution

By **BERT CARGILL** St. Monans, Scotland

Most readers of YPS understand clearly how and why the theory of Evolution is atheistic. But some people apparently believe in Theistic Evolution, wishing to include God in evolution somewhere. Many eminent figures in the religious world firmly believe and promote this strange mix of ideas.' This article will consider the tenets of Theistic Evolution and then look at the reasons why we reject it, notwithstanding its popularity in some circles.

Theistic Evolution Described

Theistic Evolution is an attempt to insert a religious concept into a scientific theory. Broadly speaking, it will be accepted that there is a 'Creator God' who may have instigated or created the material universe. Then, it is proposed that this God employed evolution over millions of years eventually to produce life and all we see around us. He did little else than allow it to occur. Thus, it is said that teachings about creation and theories of evolution need not be in conflict. This is not a new idea. Earlier it was called *Christian Darwinism* – another pair of strangely incompatible words!

According to Theistic Evolution, parts of the Bible also require some reinterpretation to fit modern thinking. Thus, Genesis chapter 1 is not to be taken literally but rather as a literary framework to introduce the book – written in a pre-scientific age it is intended for religious instruction only. The processes described are not physical and actual happenings but are rather of moral and spiritual value. Creation was not literally a week-long process but continues through all time by an evolutionary mechanism.

The Basis of the Theory

The starting point is that the grand theory of evolution as proposed by Darwin and developed in academia and science today is indisputable. It

is difficult, they say, indeed impossible to deny it, so let's take it as fact. Even though it is recognized that much of it is conjecture and many parts of it do not make proper sense, accept it anyway because 'it's the best we've got'!

Next, try to fit religious ideas, even Bible-based ideas around it. So take on board the concept of a powerful Creator who can and does act in a supernatural way sometimes – if He did, that could resolve some of the questions which evolution finds problematic. For example:

Did He create the matter, the atoms, of the universe from nothing (maybe by the 'Big Bang')?

Did He specially intervene to introduce life into dead matter and its molecules (a critical problem for evolutionists!)?



Did He at some point give to 'homo sapiens' a human soul in contrast to animal species (because most religions require this)?

If God does the 'impossible' things evolution can do the rest. If a creator starts it off, evolution can provide the gradual development of everything from simple to complex, from inorganic to organic, from invertebrates to vertebrates, from primates to man. Evolution is a process within creation (or creation is part of evolution), over millions of years developing everything from molecules to man.

These have been put forward as realistic proposals. But such ideas make God a convenience, a 'God of the gaps', with science making God less and less important or necessary; the gaps getting ever smaller as newer ideas about the natural world develop and become accepted. This is certainly not the God described in the Bible. For example, read again Isaiah chapter 40 verses 12-31 – worship before the

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