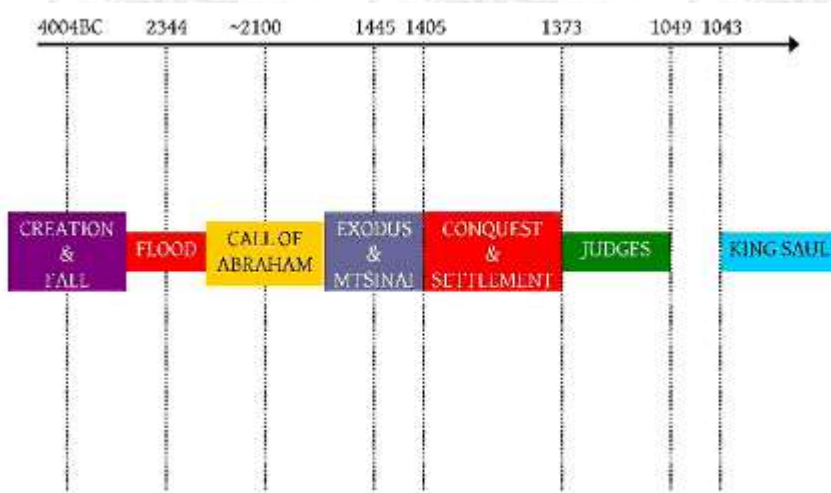


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C0801 –January 9, 2008 – Obadiah: Judgment For Anti-Semitism

Okay, we've been gone for a few weeks so let's review what we're doing. If you're anything like me then after a few days you've forgotten what we talked about. Hopefully you recall we're studying the Twelve, the twelve shorter prophets at the end of your English OT and we've been trying to get a hold on the greater context because there's not much in the immediate context so we have to span out to the greater context and we've been developing that by looking at the *flow of history*. The flow of history in the Bible is shaped into two categories. World History in Gen 1-11 where God is dealing broadly with all the people and Israel's History in Gen 12-Acts 1 where God is dealing specifically with the nation of Israel.



During this first period of history, ~2,000 years, that's a third of all history mind you, a tremendous amount of history is covered in the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Think about the ramifications of that for our attention to detail in that section of Scripture and ask yourself, "If very little is written about such a vast period of World History then how important must that information be? You can't speed read through Gen 1-11. Every word is jam packed full of the

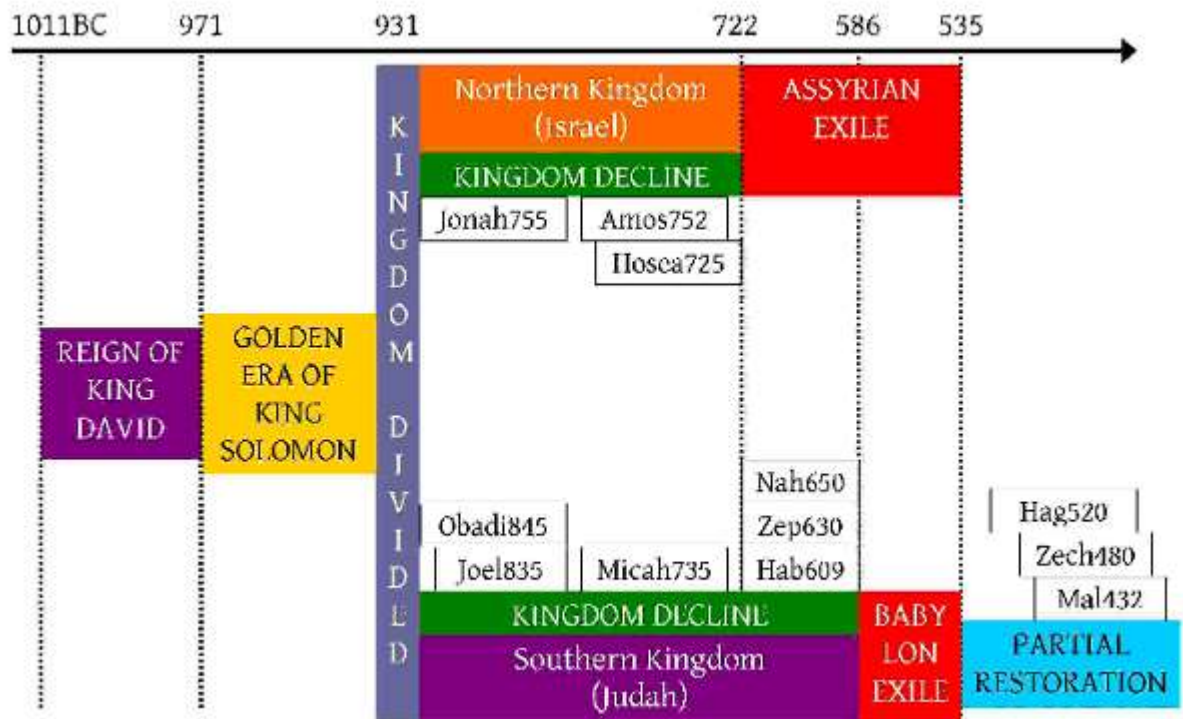
most important details of the first 2,000 years of history. And during that history one of the things we learn is that everyone spoke the same language. Scholars think it was some kind of proto-Semitic language. But the point is that you didn't have a linguistic barrier and the implications of that are astounding. Everybody on planet earth could work together and build a high culture and technology in a very short period of time. And that has implications for the post-Flood world and explains the evidence we find of an ancient high technology that was somehow lost. So high that it has only been surpassed during the recent industrial revolutions in Europe and America. Why is it didn't you have multiple languages in the pre-Flood world? What does a single language point back to? It points back to Gen 1-2 where God taught Adam to speak. God gave Adam his first vocabulary and Eve got the same language, she got it from God and her husband Adam and they had children and what language did the kids speak? Same language mommy and daddy spoke. Why? Because mommy and daddy taught them their language. You learn a personal language from a person and so ultimately the common language among the world's population even after the Flood points back to a monogenetic origin of mankind. So that language everyone spoke harks back to that first man Adam and ultimately to God Himself, the ultimate Speaker. So, these first few events of Scripture; Creation, the Fall, the Flood, these are powerful events, so powerful that they shape what we call modern civilization; everything is set up here, the social structures, what we call the divine institutions; responsible labor, man's role in the environment, ecologically speaking, labor, what is nature around me and how am I to care for it, what is responsible labor all about, basic question but we have a terrible problem in this area. Think about it, if you tell kids there's no Creator there then what have you done to responsibility. On an ultimate level you've wiped it out. Man just turns into a victim of his environment, a victim of his genetic makeup generated by random mutation and natural selection. What happens to the work ethic if no one's there to whom I'm ultimately responsible? Marriage, what's a man and a woman, we've got some serious issues there, this isn't a political issue it's a moral, ethical issue that goes back to my orientation to God, and we have family set up. What is a family? Half of America can't answer that question. But all of it is set up so simply and so fundamentally in Genesis.

The second category establishing our context is Israel's History. In other words, God cut off the "I'm going to work with everybody approach" and

limits His speech to this one nation, Israel, so the Bible is focused on that people. You say, "Well that's not fair. Why do you do that God?" Because of what everyone was doing to the Scriptures. The nations were distorting and twisting the truths of Gen 1-11, anything that was offensive to the pagan mind it just distorts it, says, "I don't want to remember that." The pagan mind has a selective amnesia. There are certain elements of truth that are so disgusting to the carnal mind that he willfully forgets them. There's an active suppression of the truth going on. That's what Rom 1-3 is all about. So God wasn't trying to be a meanie, He was just saying "Hey look, if I don't do something here to preserve the truth there's not going to be any truth left to preserve." So God chose Israel to be the conduit for preserving His message through the corridors of time and bringing salvation to the world in the Messiah. So, from Gen 12 forward we're dealing with Israel's history and that history begins with the first key to the Twelve, the Abrahamic Covenant. Remember, there are two keys, there is the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. Tonight we just want to deal primarily with the Abrahamic Covenant. Now, don't get all hung up on the word covenant. A covenant was a contract and here we have a contract between God and Abraham; a remarkable thing; think about it. God thinks enough about man to come into a contract with him. Have you ever thought about the immensity of that compliment? I don't see God coming into a covenant with the angels? Yet here is God obligating Himself to man. Did God have to do that? Was He compelled by man's goodness? No. This was a voluntary action. God, so to speak, condescended to man and said, "I'm going to do something for you no matter what you do." He didn't have to do that. He could have just let man go his merry way right into perdition. But He didn't. He covenanted Himself to Israel. We read a quote by Dr Albright, one of the greatest American archaeologists, taught at John's Hopkins. Here's a guy who's spent his entire life studying ancient cultures and he says, "Only the Hebrews, so far as we know, made covenants with their gods or God."ⁱ Why is that? Because only the God of Scripture is reliable enough to make a contract with. In paganism, what god or goddess are you going to trust? They were just as corrupt as man. What do you always find man doing? Fighting and fornicating. What do you always find the gods doing? Fighting and fornicating. They're just amplified humanity. Can you trust those kinds of characters? No. Not reliable. But the God of the Bible is infinitely good, he's not a mixture of good and evil, He's sovereign so He can make promises and guarantee their future fulfillment. The god's and goddesses of paganism can't do that. So God, who is

reliable, makes a Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and He promises, “No matter what I’m going to give you a land, a specific real-estate in the Middle East, a seed, this harks back to the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15, and I’m going to make you a worldwide blessing. I guarantee it. I swear this on my own character.” So, these promises are more certain than death and taxes. God will make it happen. And the rest of history from that point forward is driven by these covenant promises. Yet tell me, in what history class have you ever heard the Abrahamic Covenant taught? Never mentioned. And that tells you another thing about God. It tells you who is the architect of history. God is. God’s word takes history where He wants it to go. Hitler wasn’t running the show in the 30’s. George Bush isn’t running the show now. God is running the show. He has to be or else how can He guarantee future things? So, His plan is center stage. Israel’s still around despite Hitler’s Holocaust. Israel’s still around despite whatever happens with Bush’s two-state solution and Iran’s nuclear development program. Israel will always be around because God is what? God is faithful to His Covenant with Abraham. Now, turn in your Bibles to Gen 12:3. This is the aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant we want to look at tonight. There is an eternal principle here that, if you forget to bring this into the interpretive equation of history, you can never interpret history correctly. It will just turn into a pile of dates, a complete bore. But when you see this history becomes intriguing, fascinating because you can see God’s hand behind the grand movements of history. This principle is so vital it governs the rise and fall of entire nations. Now, you’ll see in this passage a lot of the “I will” language. That’s God obligating Himself and notice the “I will” language of verse 3, “And *I will* bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you *I will* curse.” The blessing and the cursing. But notice it’s not the blessing and cursing of Abraham and his descendants. It’s blessing and cursing on everybody else for their treatment of Israel. So, at this time in history you had all the nations, remember the Table of Nations after the Flood in Gen 10. Up till the Flood you didn’t have nations, you had one people, one language and then you have the rebellion at the Tower of Babel and God says “That’s it, if you won’t obey Me, you won’t scatter on the earth and have dominion, you want to come gather and build a kingdom of man in rebellion against Me. Fine, how do you like this curveball” and He changed the languages. And so you had people running around saying, “Hey, I was working with this guy yesterday and now I don’t know a thing he’s saying. What’s the deal?” And, just as a side note, we have this issue today with tongues, everybody wants to

speaking in tongues, some kind of a blessing. Oh really, every time I read about new tongues it's in a judgment context. This was a judgment for rebellion. What do you think tongues are for in Acts 2? Some kind of blessing? No. A warning of cursing against Israel for rebellion. Israel rejected the Messiahship of Jesus and the tongues were a sign that she needed to repent or else 5th degree cursing was going to be implemented. 70AD, boom. The judgment happened, total exile. Why are people still speaking in tongues? When the purpose for the tongues ceases the genuine speaking in tongues also ceases. It's real simple. Tongues are a judgment or a sign of impending judgment. So, at Babel God split everybody into language groups and that resulted in the division of the earth's populations into nations. Then they separated out on the earth to go do their own thing, they started suppressing the truth so God calls out Abraham. This isn't some kind of a righteous guy. This is a pagan guy who God calls out of a pagan culture to form a counter culture. And God says "I'm going to make you a great nation and any nation that blesses you is going to get blessed and any nation that curses you is going to get stomped." That's a dynamic of history that falls out of Gen 12:3. So, we can drive around in our cars with the bumper sticker "God bless America" but the precondition for God blessing America is that "America bless Israel." And I'm convinced that the real reason we won the cold war against Russia was because we were sending arms to Israel while they were sending arms to the Arabs. We blessed Israel and God blessed America in turn, Gen 12:3. Now, remember that promise because, when we study the Twelve and we see nations getting creamed by God it goes back to what? Gen 12:3, Gen 12:3, Gen 12:3, over and over and over. Those who curse Israel will be cursed by God. So, let's turn to Obadiah 1 and, of course, the key is Gen 12:3. This shortest book of the OT is about the destruction of Edom because she cursed Israel. You can see from our chart that Obadiah was a prophet of the southern kingdom, the kingdom was undergoing decline due to the 5 degrees of cursing pronounced in Lev 26 and Deut 28 for disobedience to the terms of the Mosaic Contract.



I'm going to treat the Twelve chronologically, I'm not necessarily following the order in your English Bible or the Hebrew Bible. I'm placing Obadiah first in time, around 845BC. There's debate on whether Obadiah was a 9th century prophet or a 6th century prophet. It's the most difficult prophet to date. I take the early date, 9th century. So, that makes Obadiah one of the nine pre-exilic prophets. Remember, the simplest way to divide the Twelve is into the pre- and post-exilic prophets. As long as you can remember that Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are post-exilic then you know the other nine are pre-exilic.

The key verses which harken back to Gen 12:3 are v 15, "For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head." See the principle? This is the general application of Gen 12:3 to "all the nations". But Obadiah is mainly concerned with one nation so we get the application specifically to Edom in v 10, "Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered *with* shame, And you will be cut off forever." Cause: violence to Jacob; Effect: cut off forever. Principle of Gen 12:3. If you don't get any thing else out of this book, get this principle. "If you bless Israel you will be blessed, if you curse Israel you will be cursed."

Verse 1, **The vision of Obadiah.** We know very little about Obadiah. It was a very common Hebrew name. 12 or 13 men are named Obadiah in Scripture. He doesn't give a genealogy or a place of birth so we don't know who he is. His name means "servant of Yah" or "worshipper of YHWH" depending on the vocalization of his name. But he saw a **vision**. A **vision**, *hazon*, constituted a sight and sound experience much like a modern movie with a narrator. Obadiah saw what happened and the Lord narrated what he saw. **Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom** and then you see a dashed line signifying a break so let's pause. The narrated sight comes from **the Lord God**. The names of God are *Adonai YHWH*, a rare combination. Remarkably the meaning of these two names summarizes the entire book. It means "God rules all the nations and has a covenant with Israel." The first 2/3 of the book deals with God's punishment of the nation of Edom and the last 1/3 deals with God's restoration of the covenanted nation Israel. But let's dig in and see how we get that. The first name is *Adon*. It comes from the Hebrew root for "pedestal, base or socket" (*eden*). For example the boards of the Tabernacle were placed in "sockets" (Exod 26:19) to give the Tabernacle stability. Thus *Adonai* carries the connotation of "stability, strength". So, this name refers to God's attribute of "sovereignty." God is sovereign. With respect to His creation sovereignty means He is in total control of the cosmos. If He's in total control of the greater thing, the cosmos then He certainly ruler over the lesser thing, all the nations. That's the sense of *Adonai* here. That God is sovereign over all the nations, including Edom. The second name is *YHWH*. We could talk for weeks about this name. The most pronounced aspect of this name in Obadiah is that it is the covenant name of God. God is in a covenant with Jacob, namely the Abrahamic Covenant here. So God is sovereign over the nation of Edom and He is in a covenant with the nation of Jacob. Now, let me explain these two individuals here, Jacob and Edom. Anyone know who they are? They are brothers, in fact they are twins. Jacob and Esau. These boys were born back in Gen 25:25-26. Both of them gave rise to a nation. The nation of Jacob is what? Israel. Jacob was re-named Israel in Gen 32:28. Anyone remember the context? Why was Jacob re-named Israel? He was wrestling with God. What does "Israel" mean? "Wrestles with God." So, Jacob was re-named Israel and this is the covenanted people of God to whom belongs Gen 12:3. And the other nation is Esau. What nation is that? Edom. Turn to Gen 25:25. Why was he called Edom? Well, for one, when he was born what color was he? "Now the first came forth "red". Edom means "red". v 30, Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there,

for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom.” This is the incident where Esau sold his birthright for a can of Campbell’s Tomato soup. Spiritually the guy was an ignoramus. So, he was called Edom because he wanted this “red” soup. So, Edom and Jacob are the names that go back to the source of these two nations; Israel and the Edomites (Gen 36:9, 43). Another name for the Edomites was the Idumeans and some of you may remember a very famous Idumean in the NT. A great builder, was ruler of Judea when Jesus was born, tried to have him killed. Herod the Great. He was a descendant of Esau, often called an Idumean. Also they were sometimes called Seir because the main topographical feature in their land was Mt Seir (Gen 32:3). So, Edomites, Idumeans and Seir are all the same people, all descendants of Esau (Gen 36:8, 9; 19, 43; Num 24:18; 2 Chron 20:22-23). But these two were twin brothers. Now, I have twin boys and I assure you they don’t always get along and here there were two twins and they did not always get along. But the main point here that I want you to see is that the name of God here, *Adonai YHWH* is a summary of Obadiah. *I am sovereign over the nations, including Edom and I am covenanted with Israel.*

Everything *Adonai YHWH* says about these two peoples begins in verse 2 after the dashed line but let’s go on in verse 1— **We have heard a report from the LORD.** **We** is the editorial usage referring to Israel. The nation of Israel had **heard a report from the Lord. And an envoy** or “messenger” **has been sent among the nations saying, “Arise and let us go against her** that is Edom, **for battle”**— So, this is a call to the nations to go to war with Edom. We don’t know who or what the **envoy** is but somehow the Lord sent a message to **the nations** to go to battle against **Edom**. Attribute of God? Sovereignty. God has total control over the nations so that He can influence them to go to battle against **Edom**. **The nations** become His instrument for judging **Edom**. So, this is the **report** heard in Israel; YHWH has stirred up the nations to go to war against Edom. That must have been a relief because Edom would never leave Israel alone. They were a constant thorn in Israel’s side.

Verse 2 begins what the Lord says. **Behold**, and that’s a word signaling “pay attention”. **I will make you** that is, Edom, **small among the nations**; The Hebrew word for **small** means “insignificant, unimportant”. **You are greatly despised.** YHWH **greatly despised** them for their violence against Jacob, v 15. Verse 3, **The arrogance of your heart has deceived you.** This is the

sin of pride. Pride has always been a big problem with Esau and his descendants. Pride cometh before a fall is the principle of the OT (Prov 16:18) and the principle applied to Edom. The Hebrew word for the cause of their fall, **arrogance** is *zadon*, they have a “swelling of the heart, a pride of heart”. They think of themselves more highly than they ought. And the Lord says this **arrogance** has worked deception. They cannot perceive reality correctly because of their **arrogance**. Their perception is that they are impenetrable because of their dwelling. No one can touch them in the rocky cliffs of Edom. How arrogant to think that the Lord could not bring them down (v 4). Let me give you an idea of the terrain where these people lived. It was very rocky terrain, reddish, extremely dry. **You who live in the clefts of the rock.** They didn’t live on ground level they lived up **in the clefts of the rock** where an eagle would built it’s nest. I wish they didn’t translate the word **rock** this way. This is the Hebrew word *Sela*, capital S, it’s a city, the capital of Edom, sometimes called “the rock” (Judg 1:36) but the other name is Petra, which means “massive bedrock”. It is a virtually impenetrable rock fortress that still exists in modern day Jordan, south southeast of the Dead Sea.

This was the capital of Edom. And the Edomites lived in the **clefts of the rock**. Importantly, the Hebrew word *sela* is also used of God. The Psalmist says, “God is my rock [*sela*] and my fortress” (Ps 71:3) meaning “God is my place of security and refuge” but the Edomites said “The clefts are my security and refuge.” This led to their arrogance. Only God is a true source of security and refuge. He is the only true *sela*.

The etymology of this word is interesting because it comes from the Arabic root *salaa* meaning “a split or fissure in the rock.” There is only one entryway into Petra called Al Siq and it is a massive “fissure in the rock” making it the greatest natural military fortresses in the ancient world.

The *Siq* is 1207 meters long and between three and six meters wide. The walls rise several hundred feet on either side making it easy to defend by its inhabitants, thus giving them a false sense of security. This is where their attitude of arrogance was based in verse 2. As a side note, several million people can live within Petra. It is an enormous area once you get inside. Many theologians believe this is where the remnant of Israel will flee at the mid-point of the Tribulation when the Antichrist sets up the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15). Once you make your way through the *Siq* you see the

Temple Treasury which was filmed in the movie *Indian Jones and the Last Crusade*. As you go in you can see all kinds of **clefts in the rock**. Some of these are massive, massive formations carved out of the rocks and you can see all kinds of smaller clefts carved out. Probably most of the large structures were built by the Nabateans centuries later and not the Edomites. Archaeologists think the clefts were tombs but there is no doubt that many of these clefts could have been made by the Edomites and used as dwelling places. Only 3% of Petra has been excavated so there is a lot more to uncover from Obadiah's message. So, the **clefts in the rock** the Lord is talking about in v 3 were something like these dwelling places and were here in this city, the capital of Edom. These superior quarters led them to arrogantly think they were impenetrable.

In the loftiness of your dwelling place, Who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to earth?' Hear the arrogance. They are totally deceived to think they are secure. Verse 4, **"Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," declares the LORD.** This is certain defeat. Why? Because God has declared it. He is *Adonai*, sovereign over all the nations and He is going to send the nations around them to **bring them down** (v 1).

Let's kind of pause here and draw some application. You know, this is a portrait we, as Christians in America always need to remember. The destruction of Edom because of the arrogance of false security and hatred toward Israel. We live in a country that was thought to be very secure before 9/11. We have two huge oceans bordering us on the east and the west. We have friendly neighbors on the north and the south. 9/11 was almost not even considered a possibility because of our geographic position. It's a lot like the Edomites. But we have become arrogant. If we, as a nation do not have God as our *Sela*, our rock, He will bring us down baby. We're already going down, brick by brick. America is crumbling and the *ultimate reason* has to do with our foreign policy department being anti-Israel for the last 30 years. Now we're working some kind of two-state solution; Israel and Palestine side by side with Jerusalem a divided capital? Does that sound like a Road Map to Peace? Only if you have no idea about Gen 12:3 or you play games with the Abrahamic Covenant as President Bush does, and say, "Well, those promises aren't for Israel any more. Palestinians have just as much right to the land as Israeli's." That is Replacement Theology, the view that the Church has

replaced Israel and the land promised to Israel is just heaven. George Bush believes a Replacement Theology so he tries to divide the land. Well, I beg to differ on the basis of Scripture. Obadiah 15-21 teaches that all the land will be Israel's. She has title deed to that land. God gave it to her as an eternal possession (Gen 17:8; cf Zech 10:6-12). The *second reason* America is going down is because of our arrogance. We don't think we need God, we think we can find security and refuge independent of God. That is a formula for disaster.

I just want to stop here in Obadiah but I want to close with a few notes here related to Gen 12:3. When the early church started they were literalists, they read their Bible's straightforwardly and so they were *chiliasts*, they believed in a future 1,000 years on earth with Messiah ruling, they believed in a future for Israel in the land of Israel. But then came Origen and Augustine in the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries and these guys started interpreting the Bible allegorically, following earlier interpreters like Aristobulus and this resulted in the replacement of Israel by the Church. Israel's promises were just heavenly promises, no longer earthly and this set in deep for a thousand years until the Reformation so that you read statements that are so anti-Jewish it's difficult to believe.

This comes from John Chrysostom in the 4th century, "The Jews are the most worthless of all men. They are lecherous, greedy, rapacious. They are perfidious murderers of Christ. They worship the devil, their religion is a sickness. The Jews are the odious assassins of Christ, and for killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. Christians may never cease vengeance, and the Jew must live in servitude forever. God always hated the Jews. It is incumbent upon all Christians to hate the Jews"ⁱⁱ Friend, do you hear the absolute hatred of the Jew. Here's something from Martin Luther. I'm not against all Luther wrote, he did great with justification by faith alone, but listen to his attitude toward the Jews in his later writings. The Jews are a "base, whoring people, that is, no people of God, and their boast of lineage, circumcision, and law must be accounted as filth." They are full of the "devil's feces ... which they wallow in like swine, "the synagogue is an "incorrigible whore and an evil slut ..." their synagogues and schools should be set on fire, their prayer books destroyed, rabbis forbidden to preach, homes razed, and property and money confiscated. They should be shown no mercy or kindness, afforded no legal protection, . . . these

“poisonous envenomed worms” should be drafted into forced labor or expelled for all time. “we are at fault in not slaying them” “we must drive them out like mad dogs” 400 Years later the Nazis followed Luther’s advice down to the letter. Again, extreme hatred, dangerously heretical. Next time we’ll get to the nations God used to bring Edom down.

ⁱ W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 108.

ⁱⁱ Rydelnik, Michael. *They called me Christ Killer*. Discovery Series, RBC Ministries 2005

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