

Commentary — From the Margins

The Vision of Obadiah

For the day of the Lord is near upon all nations. / As you have done, it shall be done to you; / your deeds shall return on your own head. / For as you have drunk on my holy mountain, / so all the nations shall drink continually; / they shall drink and swallow, / and shall be as though they had never been. / But in Mount Zion there shall be those who escape, / and it shall be holy, / and the house of Judah shall possess their own possessions. (Obadiah 15-17)

In 2004, four men jointly purchased real property at Port Austin, Michigan, in the name of a sacred purpose trust: Port Austin Sabbatarian Church Community (PASCC). These four all claimed belief in the necessity of keeping the commandments of God, but when one of the four found that he could not get along with the other three, he filed a revised Purchasing Agreement in a similar sounding name of a trust—Port Austin Sabbatarian Church Community Sacred Purpose Trust (PASCCSPT)—with himself as its sole trustee. With a few strokes of a pen, Norman Scott Edwards eliminated Terry Monte Williams, Paul Douglas Drieman, and Philip Daniel Frankford from any ownership position in the real property having a contracted value of \$670,000.

Edwards' blatant theft of the property—he filed the revised Purchasing Agreement that eliminated the other three on 17 September 2004, but neglected to tell the three until 29 October 2004—has served as a schism to divide the Sabbatarian community as little else has: Edwards has supporters who see nothing amiss in his elimination of Williams, Drieman, and Frankford. Apparently the position that Edwards' supporters take is that if he could do so, why not? Others Sabbatarian disciples, though, have a problem with Edwards' acts, and have marked Edwards as a person to be avoided; as a person with whom a genuine disciple shall not eat or have any fellowship.

The schism formed because of Edwards' theft and subsequent marking is akin to the schism that caused Jacob Amens' followers to separate from more liberal Mennonites in the late 17th-Century. And here is where understanding the vision of Obadiah begins.

The Apostle Paul writing to Gentile converts at Rome says that Abraham's offspring shall be named through Isaac (9:7), not through Ishmael or through the sons of Keturah, the sons of bondwomen born by the natural process of a man having his way with a woman. Rather, Isaac was a son of promise: God caused Isaac's birth by bringing fertility to a long dead womb, thereby making Isaac the shadow and copy of disciples born of Spirit by promise and not through the processes of the flesh.

In his juxtaposition of Spirit and flesh, Paul writes, “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise” (Gal 4:28). Paul further writes, “But just as at that time [in the days of Abraham] he who was born according to the flesh [Ishmael] *persecuted* him who was born according to the Spirit [Isaac], so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.’ So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman” (*vv.* 29-31 emphasis added).

Ishmael as a teenager did not “persecute” the weaned child Isaac (Gen 21:8-10) as English speakers understand the word. Rather, Ishmael laughed at, or sported with Isaac, as a teenager might with a child, who could well have been five years old, thereby making Ishmael as old as nineteen. But the Jews of Paul’s day were not merely laughing at or sporting with converts to the sect of the Nazarenes; rather, they were killing them as Paul well knew. So Paul read the account of Ishmael laughing at Isaac not in a “literal” way, but as a metaphoric way that would have equating to murdering a person.

According to Paul’s understanding of figurative language, disciples in the 1st-Century and since have been the spiritual reality foreshadowed by the patriarch Isaac. In this analogy, Ishmael, who dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, represents physically circumcised Israel; for it was in the wilderness of Paran where Israel believed the ten spies rather than God and thereby refused to enter the Promised Land when the promise of entering stood (Heb 4:1). So bondage and disbelief are linked in the person of Ishmael, and since God consigned all of humankind to disbelief, death, and disobedience (Rom 11:32) because of the transgression of the first Adam, Ishmael and the kingdom of the Midianites (descendants of Ishmael) also represent humankind prior to being born of Spirit.

Note the above: with the exception of Jesus of Nazareth whose Father was *Theos* (John 3:16), all of humankind since Adam’s transgression has been born consigned to disobedience and as such were born as sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2-3). This includes the natural nation of Israel, which forms a type and a representation of every pious person who seeks to have a relationship with God prior to being born of Spirit. And as Israel was liberated from physical bondage to a human king at the first Passover, Israel will be liberated from spiritual bondage to a spiritual king (Isa 14:4-20) at the [second Passover](#), when the lives of men are again given for Israel (Isa 43:3-4). Therefore, Ishmael serves as a type of natural Israel, what Paul understood but what has not been well understood since.

There was, however, only one son of promise born to Abraham, not many: there is only one spiritual Body of Christ, a Body without division (1 Co 12:25), not many bodies or many divisions formed by schisms of the one Body. So as Jesus’ physical body, crucified at Calvary, died and was buried in the Garden Tomb only to be raised from the dead after three days, His spiritual Body, crucified with Him, also died and was buried in Eden and now awaits resurrection after *the third day*.

Resurrection from death is a continuation of life that is not a continuation, a seemingly contradictory statement that is seen in analogy through one generation

of human beings producing another generation: Isaac as the single son of promise produces offspring by promise (Gen 25:21). Hence, Esau and Jacob are the continuation of Isaac as the *son of promise*.

A carnal son of disobedience who receives a second birth through receipt of the Holy Spirit becomes part of spiritual Isaac. This is what Paul taught. Thus, the new creature that is Spirit dwelling in a tent of flesh (together, the new creature and its tent of flesh) form a disciple of Christ Jesus. The new creature is born free to keep the commandments of God (Rom 8:1-2; 6:14), but the tent of flesh remains consigned to disobedience as Paul found out but did not like (Rom 7:21-25). Therefore, a war is created within the person with the law of God imbedded in the mind and written on the heart contesting for control of the tent of flesh in which the law of sin and death continues to reign. Not until this person is liberated from indwelling sin and death at the second Passover will the person truly be freed from sin (1 John 1:8-10).

The new creature that has been born of Spirit continues to dwell in a tent of flesh, but continues as Esau and Jacob are continuations of Isaac. This new creature has not yet been resurrected in glorify [i.e., the perishable flesh having put on imperishability] to become a spirit being that is a younger sibling of Christ Jesus (Rom 8:29). But an intermediary step between being part of spiritual Isaac and glorification exists for endtime disciples: since the spiritual Body of Christ died with the first disciples, who were personally taught by Jesus and had need of no other teacher, the need to restore all things by the last Elijah now exists (Matt 17:11), with John the Baptist being a type of this last Elijah. This restoration of all things includes resurrecting the Body to first empowered spiritual life in tents of flesh, then to glorification of the flesh.

When a disciple is “filled” with the Holy Spirit, there is neither indwelling sin nor death within the disciple. Literally, the disciple will not die from so-called natural causes, but must be slain by another. And because the liberated disciple will no longer have sin dwelling within him or herself, he or she must take on the sins of others to die—the disciple becomes the Body of Christ, the Lamb of God sacrificed at Calvary.

Both the head and body of the paschal lamb dies when sacrificed.

If disciples truly form the Body of Christ, the Body of the Son of Man, the Body of the Lamb of God, then disciples can expect to be sacrificed as Jesus was, for the disciple is not above his or her teacher, nor a servant above his or her master (Matt 10:24). It is enough for a disciple to be like his or her teacher and a servant to be like his or her master (*v.* 25).

Hence, the person who has been liberated from indwelling sin and death no longer is within the womb of Grace, but has been revealed as the Body of the Son of Man (Luke 17:30). The garment of Christ’s righteousness has been stripped away by liberation from indwelling sin and death—and the disciple who was of spiritual Isaac a day before will become part of children Zion brings forth in a day.

Quoting the Lord, the prophet Isaiah writes, “Before she was in labor she gave birth; / before her pain came upon her she delivered a son. / Who has heard such

a thing? Who has seen such a thing? / Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? / For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children” (66:7-8) ... the pain that will come upon Zion is the Tribulation, and the son Zion delivers is the *son of promise* that will become one with the glorified Christ through marriage.

Prior to Zion bringing forth her children in a day, all disciples who are born of Spirit are one with Christ through being His covered [by Grace] Body. They are spiritual Isaac. But in his treatise to the saints at Rome, the Apostle Paul, after saying that Abraham’s offspring shall be named through Isaac (9:7-9), adds, “And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ As it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’” (vv. 10-13).

In the womb of Rebekah were two sons of promise who would be born in a day: the Lord [YHWH] told Rebekah, “‘Two nations are in your womb, / and two people from within you [from birth] shall be divided; / the one shall be stronger than the other, / the older shall serve the younger’” (Gen 25:23).

The younger son, Jacob, wrestles with God and will not let God go until he receives a blessing: “Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the day has broken.’ But Jacob said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’ And he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ Then he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.’ Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him” (Gen 32:26-29). Striving with God and living to tell about it is the blessing (v. 30) Jacob received, a blessing that is revealed in the name “Israel.”

Israel begins as one man who strove with God and prevailed, but becomes the twelve tribes that descend from twelve sons. These tribes formed one nation that divided into two through the transgressions of Solomon—and from the remnant of the tribe God retained for the sake of King David comes the spiritual nation of Israel, circumcised of heart by the Spirit (Deut 30:6; Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:11), and not of the flesh by the work of human hands. But Paul identifies this spiritual nation as Isaac, so Israel remains a generation away—remains as one of the two nations in the womb of Rebecca, with, again, this womb of Rebecca being Grace.

Zion shall bring forth a spiritual nation of Esau, and a second spiritual nation, that of Jacob which will have to wrestle with God and prevail during the great pain of childbirth that, in this case, follows birth and precedes it. This pain of childbirth is the Tribulation, which begins with the second Passover liberation of Israel; hence, it follows the resurrection of the Body of Christ back to life. But the Tribulation also precedes the sons of God being glorified at the return of Christ Jesus.

What’s seen is that a son of disobedience (akin to Abraham’s natural son Ishmael) receives a second birth through receipt of the Holy Spirit to become a disciple of Christ Jesus. This second birth makes the former son of disobedience

like Abraham's son of promise, Isaac. Thus, the disciple who died in the 1st-Century formed the living but nailed to the cross Body of Christ—this disciple should not have needed a teacher, for as John writes, “But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you have knowledge. I [John] write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth” (1 John 2:20-21). Under the new covenant, “[T]hey shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” / for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (Heb 8:11). Therefore, if disciples are under the new covenant, then all have knowledge and there is no need for anyone to teach neighbor or brother to *Know the Lord*.

But the reality of the 1st-Century was that disciples were in need of instruction, and most of the instruction was contrary to the gospel that Paul taught; thus, while he still lived, all in Asia turned away from Paul (2 Tim 1:15). Paul wrote elsewhere, “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Phil 3:18-19).

The proof of anything is in the reality presented by the thing: in the 1st-Century, within the womb of Grace were two peoples, one of which was a people of the field or flesh, with their end being destruction. The other was a people that had to wrestle with God and prevail ... the blessing Jacob received was in wrestling with God and living to tell about the experience. The blessing those disciples who are of Israel receives is wrestling with God and living through glorification to tell about it.

Israel is a spiritual nation [i.e., circumcised by Spirit] — and since this is true, Esau is, at the end of the age, also a spiritual nation, but one that is hated by God even before it is born in a day.

The physical descendants of Esau became Edom, the nation that dwelt on Mount Seir. Therefore, when the prophet Obadiah wrote, “For the day of the Lord is near upon all nations” (v. 15), the timeframe for the prophet's declarations against Edom wasn't seven, eight, nine centuries before the common era, but in the near future when Edom is one of two sons of promise in the womb of a spiritual Rebekah.

Christendom is presently divided by the writings of Moses. On one side of this schism is all who are Esau, hated by God but today still covered by Grace. On the other side is all who are loved by God even though covered by Grace. What is the difference? What separates the one who is hated from the one who is loved—and this question should concern all of spiritual Isaac, for all who are Isaac will become either spiritual Esau or Israel when the Tribulation begins.

Jacob wrestles with God: how is a disciple to wrestle with God? Surely no one who is physical expects to prevail over what cannot be seen, or is not of these four unfurled dimensions. Therefore, wrestling with God can only be accomplished by wrestling with obedience to God; i.e., commandment keeping. And this is where Moses enters the fight.

Jesus said that if an Israelite believed Moses, the person would believe Him, for Moses wrote of Him. “But if you do not believe his [Moses’] writings, how will you believe my [Jesus’] words” (John 5:47). Yet visible Christendom rejects Moses and actually uses rejection of Moses as the determiner of whom should be identified as a “Christian.” Thus, the disciple who wrestles with God will believe Jesus’ words by believing Moses’ writings, which puts this disciple at odds with the visible Church, thereby causing this disciple to fight against what is accepted as *Christian* while knowing within the person that he or she is genuine whereas those with whom he or she contends are not. Wrestling with God morphs into wrestling for God against disobedience and lawlessness.

Today, disciples compose spiritual Isaac, in whose womb (Rebekah’s womb is Isaac’s womb) are two sons, one hated and one loved, with the prophecies against the hated son having this son utterly destroyed to the person. Disciples will not enter the heavenly realm as they are today. The flesh will perish. The new creature that has been born of Spirit—this new creature being likened to the next generation of a human family—will receive a new body that is composed of spirit, a body that is like the person’s present body in form but not in substance. This new creature is today either hated by God or loved even though no sin is imputed to this new creature because it remains covered by Grace, or in the womb of Grace.

Sin separates man from God, and causes man to hide from God as in the case of the first Adam hiding in the garden (Gen 3:10). Sin does not separate God from man although sin causes God to hide His face from man (Deut 32:20) so that man cannot find God, but sin *per se* does not separate God from man. If it did, then *Theos* would not have entered His creation as His only Son to die at Calvary by taking on the sins of Israel. So it is not presence or absence of a sin or sins that causes one son to be hated and another loved. Rather, it is the person’s attitude toward sin.

The above should not pass by quickly: both the son that is loved as well as the son that is hated will, today, prior to liberation from indwelling sin and death, commit sin. All sin and come short of the glory [righteousness] of God. But the person who truly hates sin is loved by God; whereas the person who is not appalled by sin is hated by God.

Jacob becomes Israel through wrestling with God, and Israel becomes a spiritual nation consisting of all who have circumcised hearts, not of all who identify themselves as Christians. Esau neither wrestles with God nor receives a circumcised heart on which are written the laws of God even though Esau is also *a son of promise* and spiritually born of Spirit. But an eight day gap occurred in the physical type that forms the shadow of spiritual birth: a Hebrew male was not circumcised on the day of his birth, but on the eighth day. The disciple who is born of Spirit does not receive a circumcised heart when he or she is born of Spirit, but after a journey of faith is undertaken that cleanses the heart, a journey that is equivalent to Abraham’s physical journey of faith. This journey of faith, thus, determines whether a person is Israel or Esau.

Esau was born as the son of promise that bore his own bloody hair coat (Gen 25:25); endtime Esau consists of those “Christians” who do not strive with God through obedience, usually outwardly discerned by keeping the commandments, especially the Sabbath commandment. But the Pharisees outwardly kept the commandments; yet Jesus said that not one of them actually kept the commandments (John 7:19). Thus, it is not enough to attend services on the Sabbath, then to show no love—the weightier manner of the law—to one’s brother. Rather, the person who keeps what is truly important will “sigh and groan over all of the abominations that are committed in [Jerusalem]” (Ezek 9:4), with this *Jerusalem* now being the heavenly city inhabited by those who have been born of Spirit.

Membership in spiritual Esau is determined not through when the Sabbath is observed, but through failure to sigh and cry aloud about the abominations committed within Christendom.

No one of endtime Esau, the hated son, shall be spared. God will not have pity on any, regardless of how well they sing praises to Him or create websites dripping of blood. If the disciple will not sigh and cry about the abominations committed within and without the Church, then the disciple is of the hated son.

It isn’t legalistic commandment-keeping that causes the one son to be loved; it isn’t a matter of all Sabbatarian disciples being Israel and all who observe Sunday being Esau although this is an easily discerned demarcation. Rather, it is the person who sighs about and cries out against “everyone who loves and practices falsehood” (Rev 22:15) that is of the loved son; for Christ bears the sins of both the one who sighs and cries, and the one who either actively or passively condones wrong-doing. The first is loved; the later is hated, for cause.

Returning now to Port Austin: those who support Edwards do not sigh and cry about his wrong-doing. They are, or would like to believe that they are, in the sanctuary, where the slaying will begin (Ezek 9:6). It will be their turn to cry aloud when they are cast into the lake of fire.

The Lord [*YHWH*] told Ezekiel, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice ... my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads” (9:9-11). And this is what God said in the vision of Obadiah.

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