

Why Edom?
Selected Scriptures
ABC 11/3/19

This is a long story, but I'll try to keep it short. One version of it goes like this: In 1878 Floyd Hatfield had a pig. Somehow this pig got a tiny bit of its ear bitten off or otherwise clipped, or so Hatfield claimed. On the other side of Tug Fork River on the border of Kentucky & West Virginia, lived a family named the McCoys. The McCoys notched their pigs' ears, to be able to identify them if they were stolen. When Randolph McCoy saw the notched hog in a Hatfield pen, he accused Floyd Hatfield of swine rustling. The matter soon escalated into a bitter lawsuit. Randolph McCoy took Floyd Hatfield to court over the issue. The problem was complicated because the local justice of the peace was &erson Hatfield. He found no evidence that Floyd had stolen the pig &, based on the testimony of Bill Staton, ruled in favor of the Hatfields. The case was closed. Or was it? Bill Staton was later killed, supposedly in self-defense by 2 McCoy brothers. Around that time Roseanna McCoy was courting Johnson Hatfield & the McCoys arrested the young man for bootlegging. The Hatfields rescued him by force. Johnson Hatfield then abandoned the pregnant Roseanna McCoy & married her cousin. Later, Roseanna's 3 brothers killed a Hatfield. The Hatfields then hunted down the McCoy brothers, tied them to pawpaw bushes & pumped them full of lead. The Hatfields were arrested but mysteriously got away with no punishment. The McCoys used political connections to reinstate the charges. In retaliation the Hatfields burnt down a McCoy cabin. Two McCoy children were killed that night, & 8 Hatfields were arrested. To cut a long story short, the Hatfield-McCoy feud raged for years, claiming a dozen lives from both families. Eventually the governors of Kentucky & West Virginia intervened, & even the US Supreme court got involved. Like I said, it's a long story & I have no idea what happened to the pig who started it all. What I do know is that when family feuds turn violent, the end is seldom, if ever, initiated by the feuding families. The dispute must be settled by the intervention of supreme powers.¹

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatfield%E2%80%93McCoy_feud & <https://thecripplegate.com/to-cut-a-long-story-short-preaching-obadiah/>

Today we begin our study of Obadiah, & maybe I should begin by saying, *Open your Bibles to the table of context & find where Obadiah is located.* It's right between Amos & Jonah. It's the shortest book in the OT & the least read & least preached.² In other words, of the Minor Prophets, the most *minor* is Obadiah. *Minor* doesn't mean unimportant, but refers to length. It has one chapter with 21 vss. Paul tells us in Rom 11:22 to **consider the kindness & sternness of God** & the Minor Prophets are a great place to do that. Although the OT mentions at least a dozen individuals called Obadiah, none can be identified as this prophet. There's also uncertainty regarding when the book was written. It refers to a sin of Edom at the time of the sacking of Jerusalem, but this could have happened as early as 850 or as late as 312 BC. The book is *minor* also in terms of most people's knowledge of it. What's Obadiah about? Yet the book has a major message for our & every other age.³ Why? Because it's God's Word to us & **all Scripture is inspired by God & profitable...** (2 Tim 3:16) for every one of us. Obadiah is the result of a family feud. Not between unrelated families, but families fathered by 2 brothers which became 2 neighboring nations. In a sense, this is the story of sibling rivalry. It's a pronouncement of doom against the ancient & long-forgotten nation of Edom. Let's read it in its entirety & then look at the background behind this book. **1-21 PRAY**

Obadiah means *servant of the Lord*. Other than that we know nothing about him. Who are the Edomites? They trace their origin to Esau, the 1st born twin son of Isaac & Rebecca (Gen 25:24-26). Esau's name means *hairy* (Gen 25:25). He's also called Edom, meaning *red*, because he sold his birthright in exchange for some **red stuff**. Gen 25:30 says, **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. He disregarded God's promises by marrying 2 Canaanite women (Gen 26:34) & later a daughter of Ishmael (Gen 28:9). He ended up settling in a region of mostly rugged mountains south of the Dead Sea (Gen 33:16; 36:8-9; Dt 2:4-5) called Edom or the land of Seir. This land was a wilderness area with narrow valleys & rugged mountains. Its towns were perched in the high places providing great defensive ground against attack (Jer 49:16). It's unclear when the

² <http://overviewbible.com/least-popular-book-bible>

³ Boice, J. M., *The Minor Prophets*, p 235

Edomites came to possess the land they inhabited. In Gen 14 a small nation known as the Horites possessed the land. The Horites were one of the 5 nations that attacked Sodom & Gomorrah & kidnapped Lot. However, by the time we get to Gen 32, Edom possesses this land. Edom also possessed wealth partly due to copper mining but mostly from being situated on the King's Highway, running from Elat at the northern tip of the Red Sea & running along the eastern plateau to Damascus & northward, providing an important caravan route linking North Africa with Europe & Asia (Num 20:17). Edomites controlled about 70 miles of this lucrative route, exacting tolls from the passing caravans. Edom was also known for her wisdom. Eliphaz, Job's friend, came from Teman, a city in southern Edom (Job 15:1, 18). Her position on the King's Highway allowed the wisdom of many cultures to be absorbed by her. But who are these people called Edomites? The brothers of the Israelites, descendants of Esau, Jacob's older brother. It's important we understand this because if we don't we're not going to understand the book of Obadiah. The struggle of Jacob & Esau form the background to Obadiah's writings. Turn with me back to Gen 25 where we read about the birth of Jacob & Esau. **Gen 25:21-26**

Do you see the history? Even as they were in the womb there was a struggle going on. Rebekah thought a war had broken out within her belly! She prayed & asked, *Lord, what's going on? What did He say? There are 2 nations within your womb & the older will serve the younger.* Throughout their lifetime they bickered, they struggled, they strove one against another. This antagonism carried on through their descendants where Esau's offspring held Jacob's offspring in perpetual contempt & hatred (Amos 1:11; Ezekiel 35:5, 11-12). In fulfillment of Isaac's prophecy (Gen 27:40, **by your sword you shall live**), the Edomites were frequently at odds with Israel. This wasn't without reason. Jacob means *supplanter* or *grasper*. Throughout the book of Genesis he grasped at everything he could get, beginning with Esau's heel as they were born. He tried to get everything by his wit & schemings. He relied on his cunning not on the promises of God. Throughout their lifetime they bickered & struggled against each other. Remember the day Esau came out from hunting & was starving? There was Jacob with a bowl of stew & Esau sold Jacob his birthright for it (Gen 25:27-34). But that's not all. Jacob also duped his own father, Isaac, out

of Esau's blessing. He disguised himself as his brother & asked his father for the blessing of the firstborn son (Gen 27:1-40). What was the result of that? Vs 41 says, **Esau bore a grudge against Jacob** & then Esau says, **I will kill my brother Jacob**. Hatfield & McCoys, right? These 2 were rivals throughout their life. One son was daddy's favorite, the other was a momma's boy. Jacob fled for his life to Haran, the land of his mother's relatives. He remained there working for his uncle Laban. 20 years later (Gen 31:38) Jacob returned to Canaan with his wives, children, & possessions. & Esau was waiting with an army of 400 men. Jacob got scared & split everyone up, then spent the night wrestling with God (Gen 32:24-32). The next day, Jacob thought Esau would kill him, but the 2 were kind to one another. Miraculously, it wasn't blood that flowed but tears as the 2 embraced (Gen 33:4). Both Esau & Jacob settled at 1st in Canaan. Their families grew into nations & prospered so much that the land **could not sustain them** (Gen 36:7). Esau moved to **the hill country of Seir** (8), leaving Jacob all of Canaan. Though the twins had graciously reconciled, the 2 nations carried on the struggle that began in Rebekah's womb.

Of course, Jacob wasn't without blame. Without pity he bought his brother's birthright for a bargain, a bowl of soup. He deceived his father into blessing him over his brother Esau. This resulted in Esau hating Jacob & wanting to kill him. Yet God used these troubles to bring Jacob to the end of himself. God used these tribulations to work a real faith in Jacob in the one true God (Gen 32:22-32). This became the foundation for God to work his redemptive plans through Jacob's family as the nation of Israel came from him. Esau on the other hand was no saint either. Heb 12:16 describes Esau as profane & godless for how he was willing to sell his birthright for a single meal. Esau himself married pagan wives which Scripture spoke against. Their animosity flared up generations later, after Israel was freed from centuries of Egyptian slavery (Ex 12:40-41). When Moses & the Israelites asked permission to pass through Edom on their journey to the promised land, the king of Edom said no & backed up his answer with a military barricade (Num 20:14-21). The Jews had to go around Edom.

Though God clearly worked in Jacob's life & brought him to a real faith, Jacob shared much of the guilt in his troubled relationship with Esau. Yet that doesn't excuse how Esau's descendants, the

Edomites, would later treat Israel. In fact, as you go down through history after Jacob & Esau until the time of Amos, there's an ongoing record of various conflicts between the 2 nations. For example, King Saul battles them in 1 Sam 14. David does so in 2 Sam 8. Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Amaziah, & Uzziah also have conflicts with Edom. Edom was later controlled by Assyria & Babylon. In the 4th century BC the Edomites were forced to leave their land by the Nabateans. They moved to the area of southern Palestine & were defeated by Judas Maccabeus & his nephew, John Hyrcanus, forced them to adopt Judaism.⁴ The record between the 2 nations fulfills the blessings that Isaac had given both of his sons. When Isaac blessed Jacob, he included a blessing that Jacob would be master over his brothers. But when he blessed Esau, Isaac said, **By your sword you shall live, & your brother you shall serve; but it shall come about, when you become restless, that you will break his yoke from your neck** (Gen 27:40). This may seem like a mixed blessing, yet God proved faithful to Esau's descendants in that he gave them a land & destroyed their enemies who lived there (Dt 2:12, 21-22). God's protection of the Edomites is seen also in His refusal to let the Israelites occupy their territory (Dt 2:2-6). These blessings characterize the relationship of their descendants. It very much describes the national relationship between Israel & Edom.

In Malachi God Himself tells us that He loved Jacob & hated Esau (Mal 1:1-3; Rom 9:13). What does God mean when He says He hated Esau? We don't have time this morning to get into that. Go on the church webpage & find the sermon on Rom 9:13.⁵ The mystery & the unfathomable thing isn't the fact that God hated Esau, but that He loved Jacob. God has a right to hate us all, hasn't He? We're all sinners who've rebelled against Him. His wrath abides on all sinners unless they repent & turn to Him through Jesus Christ. The mystery of the gospel, the thing we can't understand is that the God of Jacob is our refuge (Ps 46:7). Isn't that wonderful? It doesn't say the God of Esau, it doesn't say the God of the strong, the God of the wise, the God of the good, or the God of the moral. It doesn't say any of that. But praise God, the God of Jacob can be our refuge.

⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

⁵ *God's Sovereignty*, preached 8/9/15

One more clarification: Though these blessings of Isaac were prophetic of how things worked, it didn't mean the Israelites were supposed to treat the Edomites badly. In fact, listen to what God told the Israelites as they were about to come into the Promised Land. In Dt 2:4-6 God told them,

You will pass through the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau who live in Seir; & they will be afraid of you. So be very careful; do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even as little as a footstep because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. You shall buy food from them with money so that you may eat, & you shall also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink.

In Dt 23:7, God told Israel, **You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother.** As Israel takes its place in the Promised Land, God begins by reminding them of their brotherhood with the Edomites. That was supposed to count for something. I'm not saying that Israel did this perfectly. I don't think they did. But I want us to see this is what God says was supposed to be their attitude. They were to see Edomites as brothers & treat them well because of it.

Jumping forward 4 centuries we see that David conquered the Edomites in a great battle recorded in 2 Sam 8:13-14. From that time on through the reign of Solomon the Edomites were subject to the descendants of Jacob. One writer notes: *Until this time Edom must have been thought of as Israel's 'elder brother' in being stronger, older, & more developed. By this battle 'the elder' was 'supplanted' by 'the younger' in clear historical analogy to the Jacob-Esau parallel in Genesis. From this point on one can trace the bitter rivalry which is documented in the prophecy of Obadiah.*⁶ This rivalry continued throughout the monarchy of the divided kingdom (2 Chron 20-21, 25, 28; 2 Kgs 8, 14). Bitterness & hatred raged. The smoldering animosity between the Israelites & the Edomites blossomed into a blaze when Edom aided Jerusalem's enemy, the great & powerful Babylon, by standing by as a spectator. In 586 BC, Edom encouraged Babylon to destroy Jerusalem & even took part in pillaging & killing Israelites. We read in Ps 137:7, **Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, "Raze it, raze it To its very foundation."** Try to picture it. A Babylonian army surrounding Jerusalem with soldiers gathered around its walls. They breach the walls & come into the city. Fires are burning. They're slaying men, women, & children. The city burns while they pillage it. But we see something else

⁶ Boice, J. M., *The Minor Prophets*, p 237, quoting John D. W. Watts, *Obadiah: A Critical Exegetical Commentary*, p 15

as well, because around the city we see a group of people that aren't being harmed. We see a group of neighboring people, the Edomites. As the Israelites are being slaughtered, as the cry of their children comes out of the rubble, this nation, this people, these citizens of Edom, are standing around, watching as it all goes down. They're actually doing more than that. They're not passively standing by, but were actually taunting the Jews & encouraging the Babylonians to burn & destroy the city. As Ezekiel tells us, Edom had an **everlasting enmity** against Israel (Ezek 35:5) & used every opportunity to display it. Edom stood as spectators, doing nothing while Babylon attacked Israel. To add insult to injury, the Edomites plundered Jerusalem after the battle. She captured fleeing Israelites & turned them over to the Babylonians. The Edomites deceived their distant relatives bringing destruction & pain on the Jews. They were a thorn in Israel's side for centuries.⁷ While God did give a blessing to Esau & his descendants (Gen 36; Heb 11:20), Jacob was the child of promise through whom salvation would come. The promise given to Abraham would be fulfilled through Israel, not Edom. Obviously, that would cause competition & strife between these countries. So when Babylon came & destroyed Jerusalem, Edom rejoiced. Not only were they thrilled at Israel's destruction, they joined in the violence & plundered Israel as well. Obadiah is an announcement of God's judgment against them.

What did this nation do to arouse God's wrath? Why did God hate them? They were proud, arrogant, & self-sufficient. They looked down on & hated their brothers, the chosen people of God. This little book of Obadiah, if you turn back to it, deals with the oldest sin on the face of the earth. It deals with the sin of pride. We minimize pride today in our lives. We all have these top 10 lists of our own worst sins. But the foundational sin is always that of pride. Pride is behind every other sin. Pride is the sin that turned an angel into a devil. It's the sin that depopulated the realms of Heaven & emptied the Garden of Eden. Pride is the sin that brought Jesus to the cross & made Him bleed & die for our forgiveness. Pride is the sin that keeps sinners far from the salvation of God. Obadiah comes as God's messenger with God's message & the 1st thing he says is that God has judgment for Esau. Why? Because they were proud. **3**

⁷ Wiersbe, W. W., Be Concerned, electronic edition

Obadiah is the only place in Scripture where we find an explanation of why God hated Esau. It was because of pride. **The arrogance of your heart has deceived you** (Obadiah 3). God hated Edom's pride so much that He pronounced & carried out complete destruction on them. Edom doesn't exist today. Ever eat Edomese food? I think not. & it won't be coming back because God carried out His judgment on the sin of pride. By 100 AD they were lost to history.

The Edomites were proud for several reasons that we're going to deal with later, but before we get to all of that I hope you'll allow God to search your own heart for any hints of pride in your life. As the movie *Titanic* portrayed it, a lady who was aboard the Titanic asked a crewman if the ship really was unsinkable. The crewman responded, *God Himself could not sink this ship*. A similar spirit prevailed in Edom. Believing that God Himself could not bring them low, they were deceived by their pride. None of us probably considers ourselves to be anti-God. None of us would openly say we don't need God in our lives. But how often do our decisions & actions & attitudes reflect spirits of pride? Many are prideful of their success. Some are proud of their knowledge. Others are prideful of their talent or ability. It's even possible for believers to be proud they've been saved by grace. Salvation isn't something to make you proud, it isn't even something to brag about. It's something about which to glorify God & it's something that should humble us all. James said that God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble (4:6). Do you wrestle with pride? Is it possible your pride has deceived you & now you can't even see it? If so, you need to repent of your pride & your prideful ways. Humble yourselves before God & He will lift you up! Ignore your pride or continue in it, & you may find yourself suffering a fate similar to Edom's. While Obadiah is a prophecy of judgment on the Edomites, it was probably never read by them. We have no reason to believe Obadiah ever made his way to Edom & stood in some public square & preached to the Edomites the way Jonah did to the Ninevites. This is unique in that it's the only book in the Bible not addressed to God's people or mankind in general but directly to a particular enemy of Israel: the Edomites. The promise of God's retribution on them was given to provide comfort & hope for the beleaguered nation of Israel. Specifically, the book is a case study of Gen 12:1-3.

The LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, & from your relatives & from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; & I will make you a great nation, & I will bless you, & make your name great; & so you shall be a blessing; & I will bless those who bless you, & the one who curses you I will curse. & in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Edom's pride & hatred of her twin made her the object of God's wrath. She'd failed to comprehend the intensity of God's love for Israel (Zech 2:8). The main point of Obadiah seems to be that God's oppressed people should take courage because God is still the righteous Master of the universe: wrongs will be righted through His judgment, & the Judge of all the earth shall one day rule with all His people in safety forever.⁸ **Obadiah 21**

The kingdom shall at last be the Lord's. We must make sure we are the Lord's. Who is the Lord? The God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob. He's the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord Jesus Himself. &, as Paul tells us, everyone who confesses that Jesus is Lord shall be saved (Rom 10:9). God wants us to be secure in Him, not in ourselves or in our accomplishments. He alone is our Fortress, our Rock, our Shield, & our Provider. How can we be proud when we realize that every blessing we have comes from His hand? With that as the background, watch this summary of Obadiah. Video⁹

There are a few more Edomites we have to look at. When Greek became the common language of the area, the Edomites became known by another name, the Idumaeans. As Rome became the prominent power, an Idumaeen was named king of Judea. He is known to us as King Herod the Great. He & his family were the last notable Edomties. It was the Edomite Herod the Great who tried to kill baby Jesus by slaughtering the baby boys in Bethlehem. It was Herod Antipas who murdered John the Baptist. & it was Herod Agrippa who killed James, the ½ brother of Jesus & tried to kill Peter. All of them were Edomites & Satan used them to persecute God's people, the descendants of Jacob.

As we think of this judgment oracle against Edom, we remember again Jesus Christ. I remember how he referred to his disciples as brothers. Mk 3:34, pointing to those sitting there under His teaching, declared, **Behold My mother & My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My**

⁸ John Piper, www.desiringgod.org/messages/eagle-edom-will-come-down

⁹ www.thebibleproject.com

brother & sister & mother. & yet, we know we haven't treated this brother Jesus properly. In fact, none of us have done the will of God perfectly. Jesus is essentially that older Brother who was offended & betrayed by his younger siblings. As John's gospel says, Jesus came to his own, but His own did not receive Him (1:11). Yet Jesus knew this would be the case, but He came anyway. He came not in anger & wrath, but in great grace & mercy. He came in order to turn away from us the wrath of God for our sin. Jesus came & accomplished this through the cross. In Jesus, mercy has triumphed over judgment! So then, all of us who have repented of our sins & put our faith in Jesus, we are the younger brothers & sisters of the Lord. We are joint heirs with Him in Christ, adopted into that divine family & household. Let us praise our elder Brother, the firstborn from the dead among many brothers (Col 1:18, Rom 8:29)! **PRAY MEN COME**

The line of Jacob produced Jesus. The line of Esau produced the Herods. Both Jesus & the Herods were kings of the Jews. But only one of them was & is the King of kings. That is Jesus. Jesus stood before Herod, the lines of Jacob & Esau, face-to-face. Herod the Edomite proud, arrogant, & rebellious, watches the mockery of the soldiers as they strip the Lord & dress Him in royal robes. The gospels tell us Herod asked Jesus many questions, but there was no answer from the son of Jacob, Jesus. Jesus went to the cross, to His death, to a grave but from it He emerged the risen Savior. King Herod went on to disgrace, exile, & finally, to a grave forever removed from the presence of God. We remember Jesus & His death for us as we come to the communion table.

PRAY

The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, & when He had given thanks, He broke it & said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." We eat of the bread remembering God's promises were fulfilled in the death of His Son for us.

After supper He took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread & drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.** We drink of the cup remembering Jesus' work on our behalf & look forward to the day of His return.