

5041U

SHIPPENSBURG, BIBLE SCHOOL - 2006

ESAU - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Speaker: Bro. Jim Cowie

Study #2: The Character of Edom in History

Reading: Obadiah 1-14

Thanks bro. Tom and good morning, brethren and sisters and young people. Good morning, bro. Jim. Thank you.

I'd like you to turn to Genesis 36, if you would please, for here in Genesis 36 we have a chapter which deals with the development of the family of Esau and the development of a nation from him. I want to show you a curious feature here in Genesis 36, for 5 times in this chapter it's stated that Esau is Edom: look at verse 1, 'Now these are the generations of Esau who is Edom'; verse 8, 'Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom'; verse 9, 'And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir' (if you have the AV of the Oxford bible it will tell you it should read 'the father of Edom'); verse 19, 'These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom'; and, in verse 43, the last verse in the chapter we read in the last couple of lines, 'he is Esau the father of Edom' (as it should read). How many times do you need to be told, b&s, that Esau is Edom, because the Spirit wants to make a point, doesn't it? It's making a very clear point that here is a man who developed a people who were going to play a part in God's purpose. We're going to see how important a part Esau and Edom play, not only in the past, but in the present and in the future! They have an enormous role to play, and we're going to find that Edom is the #1 enemy, not only of Israel, because of course, he was the first anti-Semite, but #1 enemy of God Himself! That's how important this man is in the scheme of things.

The name Edom occurs 11 times in Genesis, and in chapter 36 when we read verse 1, 'Now these are the generations of Esau', that term 'the generations' (8435) in the Hebrew, this is the 11th occurrence of that word in the bible; so 11 times his name is stated in this chapter; this is the 11th occurrence of the term 'generations', and there are 11 dukes that came from Esau in verses 40 to 43. Now again the Spirit is trying to tell us something, 11 is the number of incompleteness and failure. We know of course, in Acts 1, that when Judas committed suicide there were left 11 apostles and then they replaced him; it would have been incomplete to have not done so! But perhaps a more important reference in determining that the #11 as far as God is concerned has to do with 'incompleteness and failure, is Exodus 20 verses 3 to 17 (you can turn it up if you like, but I don't want you to lose your place in Genesis 36) but what you'll find there, is

that we have the 10 commandments spelled out at Sinai. In those 10 commandments, 11 times it is stated, 'thou shalt have no' or 'thou shalt not'. There are 11 negatives in the Ten Commandments! Why would that be the case, b&s? The Law was ruthless in demonstrating to man, that he would not obtain to life by keeping Law, because his flesh would let him down. What God was telling Israel implicitly when He gave them those 10 commandments was, **no one will attain eternal life by keeping Law**. So He states, 'thou shalt have no' or 'thou shalt not' 11 times. So we see here that 'Esau who is Edom' is being set forth as a type of something which is the antithesis to what God requires in man! He's the antithesis **individually** of what God required, and **nationally** of what God required. His name, of course, Edom (red from adam, rosy, the root word being 'adam' to show 'blood in the face' or in the flesh) identifies him, doesn't it? he's related to Adam. Here is the family of Adam being developed as it were, out of the family of Abraham. So we see that this man's relationship is strong with our forefather and, therefore, we're going to see in him and in his nation, failure!

Now here in Genesis 36, we find that Esau produced many **dukes**; the list is given to us in verses 40 to 43, and these dukes who, of course, attained that status well before Israel became a kingdom; these dukes became the bitter enemies of God's people. They hated Israel as we shall see this morning. They hated them with a hatred that knew no depths and because of that, b&s, God has used the name 'Edom' to denominate all anti-Semitic nations. We will come in due time to Obadiah 15 and 16, and we'll see that very plainly, that all nations that oppose Christ at Armageddon are called 'Edom'. In our study, tomorrow morning, God willing, we'll have a look at Isaiah 34 and see how that is expressed very plainly in that chapter.

I think most of you are aware that 70 is the number of the nations, so we don't need to go back to Genesis 10. In Genesis 10 we have of course, the family of Noah after the flood developing, and by these, it says, were the isles, the nations, were developed. So after the rebellion of Nimrod, God divided mankind into 70 units and they're spelled out in Genesis 10 - there's a list of 70 families or nations that came through the sons of Noah. Now that #70 we know is used right throughout the scripture in relation to the nations. It is very interesting therefore, (this is not an easy exercise) but it's an exercise that yields this fact, that the generations of Esau listed in Genesis 36, list 70 different names of the offspring of Esau. As I said, it's not an easy exercise because you must exclude the names of cities you will encounter, nations and women, because there are other nations mentioned, and count the male offspring only once, and you will find that there are 70 names listed. You see, this is God's way of suggesting to us, right from the outset, that Edom is going to represent in the scheme of things, **the nations**, and particularly those nations **that are anti-Semitic, who hate Him and His people**.

So of course, this is perfectly consistent with what we find in the rest of the scriptures, and so bro. Thomas, when writing in Eureka, volume 5, page 50, said this, 'In this way, Babylon and the goat nations are made to drink of the wine of the wrath of the Deity prepared without mixture in the cup of His indignation. Esau will have had the dominion over Jacob long enough, and the time will now have arrived to prove to mankind, that

there is a God that judgeth in the earth. Esau has lived by his sword but not righteously, he crucified the king of Israel, persecuted and killed his brethren, corrupted the faith, trod under foot the holy city for 40 and 2 months, and poured out the blood of Jacob like water upon the ground. But they who were against Zion and her sons, shall be as nothing as a thing of nought'. Now bro. Thomas has put his finger on the meaning of Edom in scripture, particularly in prophecy, and as we look at these things over the next few days, God willing, we're going to see the he was exactly right in what he says here in Eureka. We're going to be able to nail that down, absolutely, by letting scripture interpret itself.

Now then, when Esau developed his kingdom, as I said, a kingdom long before Israel became one, he established his kingdom in Mount Seir, consisting first of dukes, then of kings; and as you can see the extent of his kingdom in that red oval shape, at its zenith was 100 kilometres or 60 miles wide, and 175 kilometres or 105 miles long. Bozrah was the second city to host a king, and soon became the capital (and you're going to see how important Bozrah is also in the prophetic scriptures). But this nation as it grew and developed became a problem for Israel, because you see, they had the characteristics of their father; the hatred of Esau for Jacob, his intention to destroy Jacob manifested itself in the people that came from him. In character they have been said to be shrewd, proud and self confident; strong, cruel and idolatrous (that comes from the Complete Word Study of the Old Testament). Josephus adds these words, he says, 'Edom was a turbulent and unruly race, always hovering on the verge of revolution, always rejoicing in change, roused to arms by the slightest motion of flattery, rushing to battle as if to a feast. They were noted for their cunning duplicity in political alliances'.

I want to take you now to the book of Obadiah and we're going to see that that's exactly the way Edom behaved towards the end of their history. Now Obadiah as I think we are all aware is a very short book, one chapter and 21 verses, but packed with information of importance to our subject of "Esau - Past, Present and Future". The prophet Obadiah begins his message this way, 'The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord Yahweh concerning Edom: We have heard a rumour, (he says), from Yahweh, and an ambassador is sent among the nations'. This term 'rumour' (8052) that we read there in verse 1, the Hebrew word means 'something heard, like a rumour' but it actually has the idea not so much of a rumour that circulates but of **an announcement that is made**. We have heard an announcement from God, and His ambassador (whom we believe is Nebuchadnezzar) is sent among the nations. So the judgment on ancient Edom is going to be delivered by the Babylonians, which is strange really, because Edom at the time was an ally of Babylon, but their demise came about because of their duplicity, their shrewdness in political dealings. They proved themselves to be like their father Esau, they simply took the line of least resistance, they did whatever was convenient for them as a nation at the time, providing, of course, it had in it judgment or punishment on Israel. They would always take the line that would see the demise of their hated enemy, Israel. So when it came time for the Babylonians to come down to the land of Israel, Edom fell in with Babylon. This we're going to see here in this prophecy.

Now the name of the prophet Obadiah means 'servant of Yahweh' (5662), that's a title of Christ, as we know from Isaiah 49 verse 6, and his prophecy foreshadowed the work of Christ in the future. The prophecy however has two parts, verses 1 to 14 deal with the coming judgment on Edom by Babylon, who they foolishly supported against Judah; while the latter portion of the prophecy, from verses 15 to 21, deals with the destruction of the latter day Edom, that is, all anti-Semitic nations resulting in the triumph of Zion. Of course, the key theme of Obadiah, as it is of Isaiah 35, is the controversy of Zion, and we're going to find that as we proceed in our studies.

Now the timing of Obadiah's prophecy has been something that's been discussed and debated for centuries. There are no allusions to Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans and that implies that it's written pre 587BC, and that is the year of the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah alludes to 8 verses from Obadiah and it's well worth reading through Jeremiah 49 verses 7 to 22, because he picks up the language of Obadiah's prophecy; and we know that Jeremiah prophesied at the time when Nebuchadnezzar came down. Linguistic evidence in both contexts confirms that Obadiah wrote much earlier than Jeremiah.

So how do we explain then the tense of the verbs that are used in this prophecy. Have a look at verse 2 of Obadiah, it says, 'Behold, I have made thee small among the nations, thou art greatly despised', so it's the past tense that is used. We don't have a problem with that because we know that throughout the prophetic scriptures, God often speaks in the past tense, though the events are future; He can do that because as far as He is concerned, those events will come to pass, they are certain. He speaks and it will be done, so that's not a problem for God! But there are those that suggest (and I'm not a Hebraist) but they suggest that the tenses of the verbs here in Obadiah are indefinite; for instance, verse 2 could be rendered, 'I will make thee small' so rather than the past tense you could render that as the RSV does, 'I will make you small'. A similar thing occurs in verses 11 to 14. If you come over to verse 11 it says, 'In the day that thou stoodest on the other side'. Verse 12, 'But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother', and so it goes on like that in the past tense; it is suggested that these succession of verbs in verses 11 to 14 can be rendered as indeed the Oxford bible margin has it, 'do not look on the day of thy brother', 'do not stand on the other side' etc., etc., so that's not really a problem. The fact that the past tense is used is easily explained.

Obadiah is speaking of calamities to come, calamities upon this proud people which in verse 3 are described as being like the eagle: 'The pride of thine heart have deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock'; and of course, we know that this is a reference to their principal stronghold, 'Sela', where they put great confidence in 'the rock', in the clefts of the rock, like the eagle which ascends to heaven in its prime and is able to stay apart from those who might be a problem for it. 'Whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, 'who shall bring me down to the ground?' and so of course, we know that the pictures of Petra emphasize the past glory of this place. This building

here, is actually called the 'treasury', they think it was a royal tomb, and they buried in here but they called it the 'treasury' (there's not much treasure in there because it's a tomb). This over here on the right hand side is the only entrance into the city of Petra - it was a very narrow defile and it was easily defended by a few soldiers; so they had great pride in their ability to fend off their enemies. They could soar like the eagle, and in fact, the language that's used in verse 4, 'Though thou exalt thyself, 'as the eagle' and though thou set thy nest among the stars thence will I bring thee down', that's a reference to the fact, that even though they were secure, there came a time when Edom decided to throw in its lot with the Babylonians. Now we know that this language 'of the stars' is used in Isaiah 14 verses 12 and 13 of Belshazzar the king of Babylon. Edom was to align itself with the Babylonians because they sought the destruction of Judah; they wanted to see the demise of their brother. Now that is the context of the first 14 verses of Obadiah's prophecy.

I just want to quickly give you a history of this era, b&s, so that we can see how things unfolded:

612BC saw the overthrow of Nineveh; Assyria had been weakened by successive attacks by Egypt, the Scythians and others and finally Media and Babylon brought it to an end in accordance with the prophecy of Nahum.

609BC Pharaoh-Nechoh advanced north to support the collapsing Assyrian empire against the rising Babylon. This is the incident, of course, where he killed Josiah on the way north. But he was defeated in the battle of Carchemish by Nebuchadnezzar son of Nabopolassar king of Babylon.

In **606BC** Nebuchadnezzar's father died and he became king of Babylon; in that same year he undertook an invasion of Judah, in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim. It was the time that Daniel went into captivity to Babylon.

In **598BC** Jehoiakim was taken into captivity and was replaced by Jehoiachin as king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar; so there was a series of invasions in which kings were taken away into captivity.

In **597BC** was when Jehoiachin was taken into captivity after a reign of 3 months and 10 days.

In **587BC** Jerusalem was finally destroyed and king Zedekiah was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in 2 Kings 25 verses 1 to 7.

So there is a summary of the history of this era. We find that when Nebuchadnezzar came down he had an ally to the east and south of the land of Judah and that ally was Edom. Let's have a look at what they did at that time!

Both Judah and Edom faced a common danger from Egypt and Babylon, but that didn't

deter the Edomites in their hatred of Judah. Aligning themselves with the Babylonians, they rejoiced at the destruction of Jerusalem and aided the defeat and the spoiling of Judah by Babylon. We read there in verse 10, the kind of attitude that they had at this time, verse 10, 'For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. Do not look on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; do not rejoice over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; do not speak proudly in the day of distress', and it goes on like that. They took great pleasure as they watched the Babylonians crush the nation of Judah and ultimately took it away, and they did everything they could to lend a hand to increase the distress as Zechariah 1 verse 15 tells us. They made sure that those which survived that invasion didn't live comfortably. The Edomites were there to ransack their cities and their houses, to take the survivors into slavery; they made life very painful for Judah and because of it, God sets Himself against Edom, and His judgment is final. He determines, here in Obadiah that He will utterly destroy Edom from off the face of the earth. As we're going to see, that actually had a literal fulfilment; you cannot find a nation called Edom today. You will not find anyone who can trace their origin back to Esau, they are gone! They have disappeared in accordance with the divine edict, that He would utterly cut off, by slaughter, all of Edom. We're going to follow that history and see how God achieved that!

So Edom allied itself to Babylon, but at the same time that it was allied to Babylon, it also had an alliance with its close neighbours Moab, Ammon, and Tyre. We're told that in Jeremiah 27 verses 3 to 6, and so the Babylonians are getting wind of the fact, that Edom had a foot in both camps, and decided to deal with them. They were overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar about 4 years after Jerusalem had been destroyed, when he attacked Moab and Ammon on his way to Egypt. Then 4 years after Edom had made Judah's life very difficult, they themselves received divine judgment and 40 years after Nebuchadnezzar had initiated that judgment, Nabonidus completed it, and he removed the Edomites (that is, the remaining Edomites) from their country and brought them into the south of Judah. We're going to follow that as well!

So then, God's judgments upon that nation were declared by Obadiah. You have a look at verse 7 of Obadiah, 'All the men of thy confederacy', the word 'men' is 'ish' (mighty men), it's talking about Babylon's mighty men) 'all the men of thy confederacy' ('berith' = covenant) 'have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee; and they that eat thy bread' (you've sat down with the Babylon emissaries, you think you've got a secure relationship with Babylon; Edom, I'm telling you, I'm going to use them as my weapon to destroy you! and that's what happened!). 'I have laid a wound under thee, He says, 'there is none understanding in him'; verse 8, 'shall not I in that day, saith Yahweh, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one (notice this) every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter', because of the way they treated their brother. You know, they

helped forward the destruction of Jerusalem, Psalm 137 comments on this, when the Babylonians came down, the Edomites were there saying, 'Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof'; they ransacked the cities of Judah; they helped capture and destroy the fleeing remnant; they rejoiced deliriously over the calamity of their brother Jacob.

Look at verse 12, that term there, 'but thou shouldest not have rejoiced' (8055), it means 'to be delirious with joy and happiness', and for that, b&s, they were to suffer divine judgments, and that's exactly what happened. They were subjugated, Edom was permitted by Babylon to occupy the south of Judah, so as a nation they ceased to exist; they were removed from ancient Edom and the territory that Esau had established as his kingdom, and they were placed by the Babylonians in the south of Judah. They were there when the Jews returned under Zerubbabel in 538BC, but of course, as you can imagine, hostility again flared between the remnant of the Edomites (now known as Idumaeans) and the Jews. There was continual war between the Idumaeans and the Maccabees until the remnant of Edom was finally defeated and compelled to accept Judaism and the right of circumcision by the Maccabees. Now Josephus actually comments on this and this is what he says, 'In the times of John Hyrcanus who subdued all the Edomites and permitted them to remain in the country on condition they would receive circumcision and adopt the laws of the Jews', and that's precisely what happened! They were **forced** to accept Judaism, they were **forced** to be circumcised; they were **forced** into total integration with Judah. We know, of course, that there were Edomites around at the time of Christ. Though completely integrated with the Jews, the character of the Edomites did not change; Herod the Great was an Idumaeen, his original base was in the south of Judah, that's where the Babylonians had placed them. He rose to power in 37BC, he was an avid builder, and he began rebuilding the temple because you see, the Edomites had been brought into Judaism. He died shortly after the birth of Christ, history says that was 4BC, so it was he (now this is incredible, you think about this, it's incredible that this nation that God had decreed would be utterly destroyed was still there at the time when our Lord Jesus Christ was born; they were still influencing the life of the Jews even though they had been integrated) Herod's dynasty and the sect of the Herodians who were detested by the Jews, continue to strongly influence Jewish life and politics until the fall of Jerusalem in AD.70; these two maps illustrate the situation we've just been talking about!

Here is the original Edom, that's the area Esau inhabited and developed; it became a kingdom. When the Babylonians destroyed this, they took the remnant of the Edomites, they destroyed the mighty men, they destroyed the government of Edom and they took the remnant to the south of Judah. On this map (I don't know if you can read that) you've got Idumaea, this is the area into which the Edomites were placed, at least the remnant of them. It was from that area that Herod arose, so b&s, as we follow the history of AD70 we're going to see just how influential the Edomites were in those horrendous events that occurred at that time.

Shortly before the siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian and then, of course, later on

completing the work, Titus his son in AD70, the country was ravaged by a group of 20,000 Idumaeans lead by one called Simon the Edomite. Now those of you who have read the history of this period will know of the dreadful confusion, the bitterness, the hatred that blighted the life of those who found themselves unfortunately locked away in Jerusalem when the Romans came in, in AD66. The events of that time, b&s, are absolutely unbelievable, it was divine judgment upon His people; they had killed their own Messiah, they had acted like Esau, and He gave them in a sense, poetic justice. He allowed Edomites to tear them to shreds. Finally, in Jerusalem the Jewish and Idumaeon factions fought one another for supremacy adding immeasurably to the miseries of the people. Rome and its legions had besieged Jerusalem, they would not let them in or out, but the Jews had been confident; they had huge stores of grain, they had endless supplies of water from the cisterns beneath Jerusalem, the only problem was, they didn't have **unity** amongst themselves.

There was the priestly class, there were the Pharisees, Sadducees and others. There were the Herodians, there were the Idumaeans (the Edomites) and they began to fight and to squabble amongst themselves, and the bitter hatred that had been manifested in the relationship between Esau and Jacob, at least from the one side, manifested itself here again, at the end of Judah's commonwealth. As Titus pressed from without, civil war and bloodshed dissipated the strength of the defending forces within, and in the final work of pillage and murder, the Edomites were foremost. You know what happened, all of these stores of grain and water were useless to them, because in the bitter struggle between the Jews and the Idumaeans, someone put a torch to the granary and it went up in smoke; they were more concerned about fighting amongst themselves than against the enemy. Now none of this would happen in ecclesial life today, would it? We'd never make this mistake, would we? unless we had the character of Esau!

It was a tragedy of enormous proportions, a tragedy which has reverberated down to this day. Titus conquered Jerusalem, the Edomites were prominent in those events and caused extreme suffering in Jerusalem prior to its overthrow by the Roman legions. If you want to know the details of all this, it's very easily done! You just need to go to the book, 'The Ways of Providence' by bro. Roberts and read chapters 24 to 26, it's spine-tingling stuff, I can tell you. It will tell you some of the details, but bro. Roberts has reduced, of course, the writings of Josephus into a manageable series of chapters. You read through that, as many of you will have done and you'll see, b&s, the Edomites had a role in the dreadful judgment of that time. When we look at these things, we notice the character of Esau coming out. His people were like their father, they manifested the same characteristics as their father. They were self-interested and proud as Herod was; they were self-confident and faithless; they were quarrelsome and belligerent; they were contemptuous of authority especially divine authority; they were turbulent and unruly; they were violent and murderous; they were filled with hatred for Jacob. All of those characteristics came out in AD70.

Do you know what happened to the Edomites after that? the Romans took the Jews

into captivity, at least those who didn't perish and there were at least a million that did in that holocaust! They took the Jews and the remnant of the Edomites into captivity, and they completely disappear from history. Exactly, in accordance with the decree of Obadiah, that they would be cut off by slaughter and the remnant would disappear! and it did, you will not find an Edomite that can trace his origins back to Esau anywhere in the world today. But you will find Edom, typical Edom! You will find those nations who hate Israel and who will oppose Christ at His coming. In our subsequent studies, b&s, we're going to be pursuing those prophecies; we're going to see how the history of Edom of old is going to be matched again in the future. We're going to see the destruction of the mount or the government of Esau and the integration of the remnant of his people into Israel in the kingdom age until Edomites finally disappear, and there will be just one nation upon the earth at the end of the millennium, the nation of Israel. So what God has done in the past, He proposes to do in the future! He's preparing that now; and as we see developments in Europe as we see nations gathering themselves in hatred for Israel, as we see peoples some of whose leaders are prepared to make statements in this egalitarian world like, 'Israel should be wiped off the map'; we are witnessing the redevelopment of the Edom of the latter days, and God has decreed their utter destruction!

B&S, you and I are going to be intimately involved in that, as we shall see in our studies, God willing, yet to come!