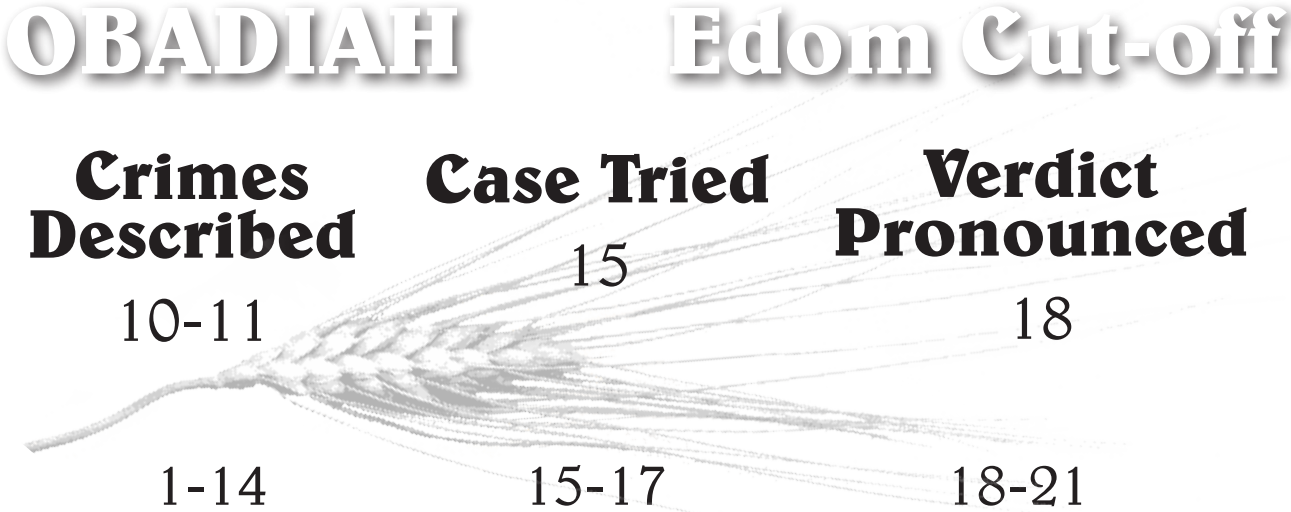


*Welcome to the book of Obadiah!*

We have chosen 1:10 as a key verse reflecting the reason for Edom's judgment. Sibling rivalry between the two brothers, Jacob and Esau, (Genesis 27) gave way to national hostility between their respective peoples, Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau). A long history of bitter dealings finds its culmination in the final annihilation of Edom.

Note the passages listed with the overview chart below. How does each passage relate to the corresponding section title? What do you learn about God's feelings about Esau's (Edom's) heart?



*"Because of violence to your brother." 1:10*

In Obadiah we see the fruit of centuries of conflict. Generation after generation carried the bitter hatred that began with Jacob and Esau. What Biblical principles are illustrated here?

*Open your heart as you read!*

Bitterness can consume an individual and even a nation. We are no match for the tentacles of bitterness. Do you harbor hatred in your heart for some past injustice? Would you consider yourself a person who is prone to being entrapped in bitterness?

## **KEY BACKGROUND on the book of Obadiah**

For the Edomites' stubborn refusal to aid Israel, first during the time of wilderness wandering (Numbers 20:14-21) and later during a time of invasion, they are judged and condemned by Obadiah. Rather than play the role of "brother's keeper", Edom allied itself with Israel's enemies, even helping to sack the city of Jerusalem (10-14). From the time of Obadiah's prophecy, Edom was continually subject to foreign powers. It lost its national identity before the time of Christ, and in A.D. 70 disappeared from the pages of history.

### **Author and Audience**

Obadiah was a resident of Judah. His name means "servant" or "worshiper of the Lord". In all likelihood, He prophesied before the Babylonian captivity. The strength of Edom was in its capitol, Petra. The city was in a naturally fortified valley accessible only by a narrow 12 to 20 foot canyon between towering natural mountain walls 200 to 250 feet high. Inside this protected valley, the inhabitants made their homes by carving them into the rock. Most assuredly the Edomites probably scoffed at Obadiah's prophecy and Judah probably doubted any possible fulfillment. And yet, a prophet of God proves correct - once again!

### **Why Study the book of Obadiah?**

Romans 12:18-21 speaks of the bitterness that motivated a nation for centuries. How are things in your own family? Your immediate church family? Is there someone with whom you are disputing? Don't delay... learn from the example of Edom!

Here are some questions that will encourage you to "dig deeply" as you seek to interpret Obadiah. You may wish to answer the questions as you read.

1. What was at the center of Edom's arrogance?
2. From where will their probable downfall arrive?
3. To which particular instance of Edom's sin against Jacob is Obadiah referring?
4. What will be the extent of the judgment upon Edom?
5. In what ways will Jacob be exalted through Edom's destruction?
6. What will be the final, glorious result of the complete fulfillment of Obadiah's prophecy?

### **What about today?**

1. What factors can be at the center of a 20th Century believer's arrogance?
2. How can Obadiah's message be applied to the body of Christ today?  
To the group of believers with whom you fellowship?
3. Make a list of all the potential "roots of bitterness" in your life.  
Learn from the example of Esau!

We are not above sinning the sin of Esau. "Violence to our brother" is serious business... that is why "loving one another" is given such weight in the teachings of Christ. Don't fall into the trap of hating your brother, however it may be disguised. Lack of concern, inactivity in helping, contributing to someone's downfall... "brother-violence" can take many forms!

# BETTERING BITTERNESS

Sibling rivalry between the twin brothers, Jacob and Esau, gave way to national hostility between their respective nations, Israel and Edom. For the Edomites' stubborn refusal to aid Israel, first during the time of wilderness wandering (Numbers 20:14-22), and later during a time of invasion (Obadiah 10-14), they are judged and condemned by the prophet. Rather than play the role of "brother's keeper", Edom allied itself with Israel's enemies, even helping to sack the city of Jerusalem. What a tragedy that the strife between Esau and Jacob, a contention settled in their own lifetimes (Genesis 32-33), should reappear in the form of bitter jealousy and hatred between their nations. Esau's offspring maintained their bitterness toward Israel for more than 1,000 years and ultimately paid dearly for it. From the time of Obadiah's prophecy, Edom was continually subject to foreign powers. It lost its national identity before the time of Christ and in 70 A.D. disappeared from the pages of history.

## **What about today?**

1. If you could be transported back in time to the days of Esau and the Edomites, what counsel would you give them as to how they might get the better of bitterness in their lives?

2. In the New Testament, every mention of bitterness comes from a Greek word meaning "to cut, to prick". The idea is one of pricking or puncturing. What principles can you glean from the following passages which relate to this New Testament definition of bitterness?

Luke 22:62 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 8:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 12:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 18:21-32 \_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:31-32 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Someone has said that you cannot nurture the Bitterness Plant and at the same time keep it concealed. The bitter root bears bitter fruit. In order for you to get the better of bitterness, study the following passages. List several ways you might apply these Scriptures to yourself personally in disputes you have had or are having with either someone in your family or the family of God.

Ephesians 4:2-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Colossians 3:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Timothy 1:15-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Romans 12:18-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Few things are more bitter than to feel bitter. A man's venom poisons himself more than his victim. This principle is seen in the tragic demise of Edom as Obadiah predicted "As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head." (verse 15) and "there will be no survivor of the house of Esau for the Lord has spoken" (verse 18).

We "stand at a fork in the road" just as did the Edomites (verse 14). We can choose to be bettered by bitterness or get the better of bitterness. Which way we turn will affect other relationships beyond even our own lifetime, just as it did for Esau and his people the Edomites.