

# Esau and Jacob

by J. Vernon McGee

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*The sermon explores the biblical story of Esau and Jacob as an illustration of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit in the life of a believer.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 25:30, Genesis 36:1, John 1:12, Galatians 5:17

**Topics:** "Spiritual Inheritance", "Flesh Vs Spirit"

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## Description

J. Vernon McGee delves into the prophecy of Obadiah, shedding light on the mysterious figure and the significance of Edom in the Bible. Through the story of Esau and Jacob, he illustrates the struggle between the flesh and the spirit within believers, emphasizing the importance of choosing spiritual inheritance over temporary desires, as seen in Esau's choice to trade his birthright for a bowl of soup.

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## Transcript

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom: We have heard a rumor from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the nations, Arise, and let us rise up against her in battle. (Obadiah 1)

Who was Obadiah? He was one of four prophets about whom we know absolutely nothing, except that he wrote prophecy. The other three prophets are Habakkuk, Haggai, and Malachi. All were great prophets, yet we know nothing concerning them. Therefore, when we ask, "Who is Obadiah?" I have to answer truthfully, "I do not know." Yet his name was as common in Israel as Abdullah is among the Arabs today. Both mean the same thing: Servant of Jehovah.

Obadiah tells us immediately, bluntly, and to the point: "Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom...." Now wait a moment - not only must we ask about the identity of Obadiah, but who is Edom? Edom is the key to the little book, and so we shall have to go back to Genesis to determine the identity of Edom. In Genesis, where we have the record of the generations of Esau, notice this comment:

Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom....Thus dwelt Esau in Mount Seir: Esau is Edom. And these are the generations of Esau, the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. (Genesis 36:1, 8, 9)

That is the record that is given, and it is repeated three times. Although I am sure Moses did not know, the Spirit of God knew that this would need to be emphasized: Esau is Edom and Edom is Esau. The Edomites were those who were descended from Esau, just as the Israelites are those who are descended

from Jacob.

The story of Esau and Jacob is that of twin brothers, sons of Isaac and Rebekah. The boys were not identical twins; actually, they were opposites. From the very beginning, these two brothers were struggling against each other. Esau was an outdoor fellow who loved to hunt. Jacob would rather stay in the house and learn to cook. He was tied to his mama's apron strings. However, Jacob had a spiritual discernment that Esau did not have. Esau was a man of the flesh and did not care for spiritual things. In fact, he so discounted his birthright that he traded it to Jacob for a bowl of soup!

And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:30-34)

He didn't sell his birthright because he was so hungry that he was about to perish, nor because there wasn't anything else to eat in the home of Isaac, but because his was a desire of the flesh and he was willing to trade all of his spiritual heritage for a whim of the moment. The man who had the birthright was in contact with God, and he was the priest of his family. He was the man who had a covenant from God. He was the man who had a relationship with God. In effect Esau said, "I would rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God."

This is an illustration of a great truth for believers today. It is a picture of Christians. A believer has two natures within him, and they are struggling with each other and against each other. In Galatians 5:17 Paul says, "For the flesh lusteth [wars] against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." These are the two natures of the believer - the new nature and the old nature - and they are opposed to each other. Esau pictures the flesh (the old nature) and Jacob pictures the spirit (the new nature).

The name Edom means "red or sunburned." A sunburn occurs when the skin is able to absorb all the rays of light except those that make it red. It is quite interesting to see that the sunburned man in Scripture is the man who could not absorb the light of heaven, and it burned him. My friend, the light of heaven will either save you or burn you; you will either absorb it or be burned by it. That is always true, my beloved. Esau represents the flesh, and he became Edom. Jacob, who became Israel and a prince with God, represents the spirit.

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