

Romans 9

Sunday 7/19/2009

SEC: The Prophetic Section of Romans: God's View of Israel

As we continue our study through the Book of Romans, we understand, or should understand, that it breaks down into four sections. We have been studying it by sections. We are currently in the prophetic section, and you should know and have noted that the prophetic section concerns God, through Paul, writing to us, the church. This is truly what the entire Book of Romans is about. When Paul wrote the Book of Romans, he was providing New Testament Christians with the complete context and concept of the church's role and how we should view every aspect of ministry. In the prophetic section, which comprises chapters 9, 10, and 11, Paul dedicates three chapters to reveal God's viewpoint concerning the nation of Israel.

We have learned a great deal about this in our basic Bible classes. We now know that the Bible is fundamentally divided into two main components. One is the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, and the other is the Body of Christ, the church, in the New Testament. Based on what we have already learned from our Bible basics classes and what I am teaching you on Sunday mornings, you are beginning to see how important it is for us to understand the nation of Israel. These three chapters are almost always taught completely out of context. As we place the Bible, and specifically Romans, into its proper context by breaking it down chapter by chapter, we recall that we were in Romans 9. I told you what Paul is doing in Romans 9, and this will help you better understand what we will discuss today.

Romans 9 basically shows the importance of the nation of Israel to God. In that chapter, God begins to show what we studied yesterday: the formulation, the calling out, and all those areas we discussed. You will now see, as I told you yesterday, how what you learn on Sunday can be integrated with what you have been learning to make the Bible work for you. In Romans 9, we see that Paul begins to discuss how important Israel is to God. He talks about how God protected Israel and brought them to their intended place. Then he discusses the fact, as we saw yesterday, that the nation of Israel rejected God. They discarded everything God gave them. We observed yesterday the demise of the nation of Israel and how it all came crashing down. Romans 9 basically provides us with the historical perspective of how God views the nation of Israel, how God brought them into this world, how they rejected His name—and why they rejected His name is even more important—and then how they, so to speak, self-destructed.

Romans 10 is a significant chapter because it shows that once the nation of Israel self-destructs, as we also saw yesterday, God then turns His attention to the Gentiles. This is where He calls out the church. This is why Romans 10 is one of the greatest chapters for winning someone to Christ, and we use it all the time. Then, in Romans 11, we see that the entire narrative comes full circle. While Romans 9 shows that God called Israel out and had a purpose for them, and then they rejected Him, leading Him to turn to the Gentiles, Romans 11 ensures that we, as Gentiles, do not become presumptuous and think that God is finished with the nation of Israel. Remember from yesterday, the nation of Israel and the church are the two main components. There will never be a time when God is finished with either of them. So, Romans 11 then focuses on the great

restoration of the nation of Israel, with God bringing them back and putting them in their proper place. That is what we have looked at so far.

I want you to notice this as well. My suggestion for putting notes in your Bible, specifically in Romans 9, is to break it down into small sections of verses. Our first message covered verses 1-5, where I basically showed you the eight things Israel had that could have kept them on the right path, but they did not. The next message covered verses 6-8, which we discussed last week, where it states that the Word of God did have some effect on them, and "not all Israel is of Israel." I showed you how that all played out. If I were you, I would first put a small header above each chapter explaining its content. Then, I would take each section, as I have explained it in the Book of Romans, and briefly break down and explain each section for your understanding. After that, I would keep a running record in your Bible of each set of those verses.

Romans is a book... I approach books of the Bible this way, but for me personally, I have probably "had" Romans and then forgotten it six or seven times. Romans is one of those books where you think you understand it, and then you find out you don't. It takes a while to grasp it, but I want to tell you the thing that has saved me time and again, not only with Romans but with any book of the Bible: it is the note system you put in your Bible. That is why we have those wide-margin Bibles available. I know you can buy a study Bible and spend a lot of money to get someone else's notes, which often don't mean much. But I have told you over the years that the best study Bible you will ever have is your own. You need to keep a running account, in time, of every book, every chapter, and every verse of the Bible. Right now, as we are in Romans, you should start doing this. I have found that if you do it as you go, and as we break things down, you will get it done. Otherwise, one day you will wake up and say, "Wow, I need to do that," but then you will have to go back. If you do it a little bit at a time, it takes care of itself. I encourage you to do that, and you should also do the same with today's passage.

Last week, as I said, we looked at verses 6-8 and discussed the context of "blindness in part has happened to Israel." We examined the idea that Paul is conveying: that the Word of God did have some effect on the nation of Israel, even though the nation as a whole rejected the Messiah and rejected Christ. There were some Jews who got saved; there were some Jews who found the Messiah, and that is the reference Paul is making, which we saw last week. Then, I believe I gave you one of the greatest keys you will ever get to your Bible for unlocking Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John with the stories in those Gospels. I showed you that every story and every event in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John—and I gave you a number of examples, even discussing some on Thursday night—represents a picture of Israel's spiritual condition at the time of Christ's first coming. If you learn that, you will never read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the same way again.

Today, we are going to look at another set of verses. Again, we will set the stage for examining how Israel became misguided in their actions, and then how we reached the point where we will see God preparing to restore them as we go through these passages. As I said yesterday, it is very important to see the correlation between what I am teaching you in the basic Bible classes and what we are studying on Sunday. I want you to see how to use this material. All right, Romans 9. Let us pick it up in our next set of verses, which will be 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

I. Understanding Romans 9:9-13: Jacob, Esau, and Election

Romans 9:9-13

For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

This passage, when you read it, can look confusing. We have a passage here that basically, at the end of the verse, says God loves one person and hates another. I thought God was love. I thought we were all the children of God. When you read down through here, it says, "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." I learned a long time ago, and I am going to read that. You know what I think that is really about? I think that is the reason why I started teaching the Bible. The reason why I started teaching the Bible was because I learned a very hard way, when the old boys were teaching me the Bible, the absolute importance of being exact when it comes to the Word of God. I have tried to do this in our Bible basic class; I have tried to do it when I preach on Sunday, and certainly on Thursday night Bible study. I told you that the real key to doing that is getting the right events and the right people in the right sequence in the course of the Bible. You stay exact with the Word of God.

I think one of the classic mistakes people make within the Bible is that they read things and make assumptions. I would like to tell you, years ago when I was in the military, my drill sergeant had a great definition for the word "assume." You do not read the Bible and then just make an assumption that because of what you are reading, and because it sounds logical, this must be what it means. You have to search the Scriptures. The Bible tells you itself, back in 2 Peter 1:19-20, that the Bible is of no private interpretation. I do not have a right to read the Bible and make up my own mind what this means. Many people do that, but I do not have a right, nor do you have a right, nor really does anybody have a right, because the Bible defines itself. I do not have to read something and then make a private interpretation of what it means. What I have to do is search the Scriptures. When you search the Scriptures, you will find the Bible defines itself, as it is going to do for us this morning when we look at this passage here, and certainly in the area of "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." You cannot come to the Bible with your mind; you have to come to the Bible and get God's mind. That is, of course, what we try to do.

If you just read the passage as you look at it, it basically looks like God says, "I like, I love this guy, but I hate this guy." Then you read on in the chapter, and it looks like God may have picked this guy and rejected this guy. A couple of months ago, when we were in Romans 8, I spent about three weeks teaching you about the damnable heresy called Calvinism. Calvinism, as far as I am

concerned, is a heresy concocted in hell to lead many people astray and send them to hell. I told you that Calvinism was the basic teaching—you do not have to understand or even remember it—but it started with John Calvin, one of the reformers. Calvinism is sometimes called predestination. It simply means that way back in Genesis 1:1, God looked down through eternity and saw some of you, saying, "I really love that person, so I am going to take them to heaven." Then He looked at other people and said, "Well, I really hate you, so I am going to send you to hell." Basically, the Calvinist position is that you have no choice in it.

If you ever go to a Calvinist church, I think they are the most dishonest people in the world. They sing the same songs we sing, but a Calvinist does not believe that. A Calvinist believes that some of you were chosen and some were not chosen; some of you will go to heaven whether you want to or not, and some of you will go to hell, and there is nothing you can do about it. They base much of this not only on what I gave you last time but on this verse right here: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." You know what? If I were a Calvinist, I would be an honest Calvinist. I would rewrite the hymn book. I would not sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." I would sing, "Jesus loves me, sorry about you, because you are not one of the chosen few." That is what I would sing; I would be honest about it. I have never understood their position because it is a goofy position. Most Calvinists are goofy. I have never met a Calvinist in my life who truly understood the Bible, because if he did, he would not be a Calvinist.

II. The Election of Nations: Israel as God's Elect

It is important to have the right definition. What a Calvinist does is he reads down here and says, like in Romans 9:11, "God according to election." Ah, that is a big word with Calvinists. Calvinists love the word "elect" and love the word "election." Of course, I have always looked at it pretty basically. I am not very much of a theological guy. If a Calvinist says that you have to be "elect" or "election," I just always go back to the Bible and search the Scripture. You are going to find that you have to get the right definition.

The word "elect" or "election" is a word that is never used for the church, never. Paul makes one reference in 1 Thessalonians 1:4, but in that passage, he is not talking about the election of an individual; he is talking about the election of the concept of the church. My point is this: when you come through the Bible—and again, I would tell you to search the Scriptures—you will find that if you want the definitive passage on the word "elect" and "election," it will be Isaiah 42:1 and Isaiah 45:4. You do not have to turn to those this morning, but if you did, you would find very clearly that God tells you Israel is His elect, not the church.

Then I will add another little bombshell that will help you put it all together: the word "elect" or "election" is never used in your Bible toward any individual, not even a Jew. The word "election" or "elect" will always deal with a nation.

- The word "elect" simply means special.
- It means set apart.
- It means chosen.

If you were in our Bible basic class and received those charts yesterday, we showed how, in the first week or month, we laid down the basic aspects, or you gained a context. Yesterday went a little deeper, and we laid all that stuff out. You now know how God formulated, called out, and separated the nation of Israel from the rest of the world, do you not? That is election; that is "elect." Israel was God's elect from the fact that He separated them out, made them special, and gave them things He gave no other nation. It is never individuals; it is always a nation. Yes, you could use the word "election" in reference to the church. Paul did so that one time. He did not dwell on it, but Paul used it in the sense of the body, not an individual.

Along with Isaiah 42:1 and 45:4, you will want to add Isaiah 65:9, Isaiah 65:22, Matthew 24:24, and Matthew 24:31. Of course, when you look up those verses, you will see that all of them teach very clearly to anyone searching the Scriptures that the word "elect" or "election" always deals with the nation of Israel, but never, in any sense, anywhere in your Bible, will it ever deal with an individual.

Of course, the reason why a Calvinist will get into Romans 9 and try to apply Romans 9 to the church regarding election is because a Calvinist could not explain the context of the Book of Romans if you put a gun to his head. A Calvinist could not sit down and lay out Romans 9, 10, and 11 if someone threatened to kill him. He cannot do it because he does not understand his Bible. If you do not have a context for the Bible, then you will never figure out anything in the Bible, and you certainly will not figure out "election" or the word "elect." You have to search the Scripture.

III. Sarah, Rebecca, and the Barren Women: Picturing Israel's Condition

Now, let us find out what Paul means when he says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." What you are about to get today is a little deeper Bible study, but I will tell you what, it is one of the greatest studies you will ever take in the Scriptures, and I will try to break it down as easily as I can for you. Let us look at Romans 9:9. Let us take this thing one step at a time.

Romans 9:9 says, "For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son." Oh, Sarah. This is biblical prophecy, Sarah. I do not know what to tell you. Maybe I better go out and get a reverse revision and see if they change the names. In the modern Bible, it is probably "Tom will have a son," knowing the way things are going in the world today. Sarah and Rebecca. Everybody for the next couple of months, keep your eye on Sarah and Rebecca.

What is Paul doing here? He is setting up the stage to show you and me the importance of the nation of Israel in God's plan. Then he is going to show us how they got off track. But he is going to show us, in spite of that, because the nation of Israel was God's elect, because the nation of Israel got the election of God, that they as a nation—not an individual—as a nation were special, set apart. The word for it in the church age is "sanctified." They were set apart; they were special. They were not to be part of the world.

Now look at Romans 9:9 again and the word of promise to Sarah. Remember last week, when we were going through all the different things in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, I gave you eight or nine examples. I told you how all the stories and events in the Bible picture some aspect of the nation of Israel in their spiritual condition. I told you about Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. When we looked at Elizabeth, I told you that there were seven women in the Old Testament who, when you read their stories, you find they could not have children; they were barren. I did a little study, and none of those women's names are found in our church, meaning we are going to keep on having babies. Elizabeth was the last one. She was barren, had no child, and then she had a child, and that child, John the Baptist, is a type of Christ.

Every one of those seven women, when you read their story in the Bible, starts out unable to have children; they are barren, unfruitful. They represent and picture the barrenness of the nation of Israel and Israel's inability to produce fruit. Then, every one of them, through a miraculous event, does at some point conceive and have a child. It is a male child, and that male child is one of the great types of Christ in the Bible. Remember I told you that Elizabeth is the last one? You know who the first one is right here: Sarah. Sarah is the first one. When it says "the word of promise to Sarah," Sarah is one of the seven. She is the first one, found in Genesis 16:1, where it says,

Genesis 16:1

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

Romans 9:9 says "the word of promise." The word of promise given to Sarah was that the line of Christ would come through her. Remember yesterday when I talked about Abraham being the beginning of the nation of Israel? The Jews to this day call him "Father Abraham." How many of you have been to camp and sung that goofy little song, "Father Abraham had many sons, many sons had Father Abraham, and I am one of them"? Remember that song? That is the stupidest song in the world. There is only one song dumber than that, and it is "Kumbaya." "Kumbaya" is the dumbest song in the world. My favorite song is called "Pine Tree." It does not mean anything. "Kumbaya, my Lord, Kumbaya." What is that, karate? Kumbaya.

The word of promise was the promise to Abraham. Father Abraham is the beginning of the Jews. From Abraham comes Isaac, from Isaac comes Jacob, and from Jacob come the twelve sons who become the twelve tribes. They go down into Egypt and then come out of Egypt strong, as I gave you yesterday. So, the promise to Sarah was that the line of Christ would come through her, through Abraham. That is why the Bible says that Abraham is the father of the Jews. In Luke 16, the rich man in hell cried out, "Father Abraham." There is a whole study on Abraham, how the whole thing changes when he dies. You realize that up to this point, before Abraham dies, when people died, they just died. But once Abraham dies, a new phrase enters your Bible that you have probably never caught: from that point on, every time somebody dies, it says they were "gathered to his people." That changes with the death of Abraham. Why? He is the head of the Jews. Sarah is one of the seven barren women, and the promise to her is that the seed line of Christ will come through Israel, from Abraham through her.

This material is not about the Gentile church in any way, shape, or form; it is about Israel. When you see how the seven barren women, when you have that piece of information, and then you read Romans 9 about Sarah, it all just sets the context for you. How in the world could you get the church out of here if you knew that the seven barren women throughout the Old Testament always represent the nation of Israel? You could not, unless you knew nothing about your Bible.

Now look at Romans 9:10: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac." Isaac was not my father; my father's name is Frank Holsworth Alexander. But whoever wrote this, or is talking about this, is referring to Isaac being *their* father, speaking about the nation of Israel, the Jews.

Now we have a reference to Rebecca, the wife of Isaac, and you know we have Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that comes on down through the line of Christ. But in Genesis 25:20-21, she is one of the seven barren women; she is the second one. I have given you three of them. I am just going to go ahead and give you all seven of them here so you can put them in your Bible. You need to cross-reference each one.

1. Sarah, Genesis 16:1
2. Rebecca, Genesis 25
3. Rachel, Genesis 29
4. Hannah, 1 Samuel 1
5. The Shunammite woman, 2 Kings 4
6. Manoah's wife, Judges 13
7. Elizabeth, Luke 1

These are the seven barren women. When you find the Holy Spirit of God making reference to them in a passage of Scripture, it is telling you to search the Scriptures; it is setting the context for you. If some Calvinist comes up and says, "Well, that is predestination right there," you are an idiot. That has nothing to do with any individual or anything in the Body of Christ. Search the Scriptures.

IV. Jacob and Esau: Nations, Birthright, and Blessing

Now Rebecca is vital because we have a problem here: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." We have to reconcile this, and this is truly the key to Romans 9:9-13. You can add this to the material we talked about yesterday.

Rebecca has twins: Esau and Jacob. Esau and Jacob are two of the greatest characters to study in the Bible; they will certainly solve our problem here when we put it in the right context. The two individuals we are reading about in Romans 9, where it says "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," are the same two individuals. But now that we have a context, and now that we know that the word "election" or "elect" never deals with individuals, we are going to find the verse here that puts it all in perspective for us, found in Genesis 25. This is what I mean when I say, "search the Scriptures."

Genesis 25:22-23

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

You know what you have there? You have a prophecy about two nations. Jacob and Esau represent two nations. That is why, when you know the word "elect" never deals with individuals, and when you see and read this for what it is, and when you put it into context, it is not remotely about God picking Jacob over Esau the individual, or loving one and not the other. The Bible has now told you that we are talking about two nations, and the prophecy in Genesis 25 is that those two nations are not going to get along. Then God gives another prophecy that goes completely outside the realm of Jewish culture. He says that the elder shall serve the younger. By the cultural standard of the day, the older brother was the one who ruled. The elder brother received most of the inheritance. The elder brother, when a father passed away, carried the family through; that was standard operating procedure in Jewish everyday culture. But here we find that this standardized process is now reversed, where the elder is going to serve the younger. This is what we have here, and it is a very great study that puts it all together.

Jacob represents for us the nation of Israel. You need to know that. In fact, there is a point in the Bible where God changes his name from Jacob to Israel. That is a very important study in the Bible, but we do not have time to get into it this morning. However, you will find in Genesis 32:28 that God changes his name from Jacob to Israel.

Genesis 32:28

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

Then He uses those words interchangeably whenever He is talking about the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. When you read and study that, you find out that Jacob represents the nation of Israel. Esau represents the Edomites, or the nation of Edom.

We know the story of Esau and Jacob. We know that by being the oldest, Esau had the birthright and the blessing. Let me explain that concept, because you need to put this somewhere in Genesis where it talks about the birthright and the blessing; it will help you avoid confusion. Let us talk about what the birthright is for a moment. The birthright is simply what it sounds: the right by birth. There were certain things that were the right by birth for the oldest one in the family. Here is what you got:

8. You were entitled to a double portion of the father's inheritance.
9. He is entitled to the Abrahamic blessing out of Genesis 12.
10. He was entitled to be in the line of Christ.
11. As head of the family, he is entitled to the gift of prophecy.

Now, the blessing is different from the birthright, but they are connected, and this is where people sometimes get confused. While the blessing is connected to the birthright, it is not the same as the birthright. The blessing is the blessing of God in their lives, throughout their life and their families, going hand in hand with the blessings of God as God's firstborn of the family. As he has all the rights by birth, he has the blessings of God. The only way someone could forfeit any of that was by sin. That is the only way they could get out from under that; the only way they could get out from under that was to forfeit it by sin.

Here are the firstborn, Esau, and the second born, Jacob. But what happens is, and you know the story, the Bible says Esau despised his birthright. Esau is a picture of an unsaved man. He is a picture of an unsaved man who hates the things of God; he despises them. The Bible says he is a "man of the field," a hairy man. The "field" in the Bible is a type of the world, so he is a man of the world. He is a picture of an unsaved man, and he cares nothing about the birthright.

I have always thought it was an incredible insight into unsaved human nature. Sometimes God's people get into the same mess because God's people can be quite worldly too. Esau was out hunting all day long and did not get anything. He comes in, and Jacob is making a good pot of chili. The aroma must have traveled down the trail. Esau sniffs that, comes in, and says, "Man, I need some of this chili." Jacob, being the Jew, was not going to give anything away. Jacob says, "What will you give me for this?"

Here is Esau; he has the birthright and the blessing. He has everything, by title of the firstborn, that a man could ever have in the Old Testament that God would want him to have. And you know what he says? He says, "What good is this birthright to me?" Then he says, "I am at the point to die." He missed one meal. He was not out hunting for weeks without food; he missed one meal. When he comes in, he is so hungry—picture your flesh—and he wants to satisfy that hunger—picture our flesh. He looks at the bowl of chili, and he looks at the blessings of God that God had for him, and he makes the conscious decision: "What good is this birthright to me? I am hungry." The Bible says he despised his birthright. When he despised his birthright, he forfeited that right by sin. When he lost the birthright, the blessing went with it, and he lost it. That is the whole concept.

That model is all through the Bible. Someone might ask, "Why did God intervene in a cultural situation within the structure of the nation of Israel, where the culture dictated that the firstborn, the elder, gets it all, and the second born has to serve him? Why did God take the second born and make him number one, and make the elder serve the younger?" Why is that? Because I already told you, Esau represents the unsaved man, which is your first birth. Jacob represents the saved man, which is your second birth. God's blessings will never go to anyone who is of the first birth. It was not Cain; it was Abel. It was not Saul; it was David. It was not Ishmael; it was Isaac. It will not be Esau; it will be Jacob. It was not John the Baptist; it was Christ. Because it was not your first birth that got you into heaven; it was your second birth. So God establishes that great principle by never letting the firstborn receive the blessing; the second one always gets it, because you must be born again. Nothing else works. That is why I love my Bible. The B-I-B-L-E, that is the book for me.

V. The Book of Obadiah: God's Judgment on Edom

The reason why the Bible says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," is clear now: He is not talking about an individual; He is talking about two nations. Let me talk to you about the nation of Israel for just a moment, and then the nation of Edom, or the Edomites. Turn, if you would, to the Book of Obadiah in your Bible; this is one we want to look at. I know that strikes terror into many of you because with Obadiah, I always get people saying, "Turn to Obadiah chapter 6," when there is only one chapter in Obadiah. For those of you who have our wide-margin Bibles, it is on page 1149. For those of you who do not, it is between Amos and Jonah. Just flip those pages, and it will fall open sooner or later.

Now, in Genesis 36:1, here is what it says. I do not know if you know this or not, but 11 times in the Book of Genesis, you find the phrase, "These are the generations of..." Sometimes it refers to an individual, sometimes to an event, but 11 times it says, "These are the generations of." The entire Book of Genesis is built around those 11 places because each one of those generations gives you another key to the individuals in the Bible, and it is very important. Here, you have the story of Esau and Edom, and in Genesis 36:1, here is what it says:

Genesis 36:1

Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom.

Do you see that? He uses them interchangeably. That is why God told you that two nations were in their womb back there, and that is why when Romans 9 is talking about "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," he is talking about two nations, and I am about to show you the reason why.

The Book of Obadiah is a unique book, and you need to put this header in your Bible about it: The Book of Obadiah is the only book in your Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, that is written **against** a nation of people. It is the only book in the Bible. It only has one chapter, but it is a very powerful chapter. Obadiah is the only book in your Bible that is written against a nation of people, and you want to know that.

Look at Obadiah. We are not going to read the whole thing, but I have some things here that I want you to see. I will give you another header for why the Book of Obadiah was written, and you will want to get this down because it will put the Book of Obadiah into context.

Obadiah 1:1-2

The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

Obadiah 1:4

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

I do not have time this morning to do this, and perhaps this is beyond most of you, but for someone like me who has been in the Book for a few years, when I look at Obadiah 1:4, it just screams. Everything in there—you take the word "exalt," you take the word "eagle," you take the word "nest," you take the word "stars"—it all points to Satan in some place in the Bible. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." You can go back into Isaiah and Ezekiel and find the devil likened to a great tree that the birds of the air, the demonic forces, made nests in their burrows. To someone who, in time, gets saturated with that, and those things just pop out at you, that is what you really call getting exact with the Word of God.

You know what the Bible is like? The Bible is like if you would come over my house tonight, and we would set up a telescope in the front driveway, and the moon would be out, and you would say to me, "I really want to look at the moon." You look at the moon, and it is beautiful, and it is right there, and it hangs up in the sky, and it is shiny and silvery, and it is really beautiful. But if you put a telescope to it, and you put an eyepiece in it that magnifies it, say, 75 times, bringing it 75 times closer, you will actually begin to see that it is not as beautiful and perfect as you think it is. You start to see mountains, huge craters—some of them 160 to 250 miles across. Then you take another eyepiece and put it in, bringing it down about 200 times, and you are looking down inside some of those craters. I can set the telescope up so that you can actually see craters on the moon that are a thousand yards in diameter. But you know what you see when you see that? You see a junkyard. What looked one way when I just looked at it, the more magnification I put to it, the more I saw detail that I could not see. Now I can actually look at the mountains and watch the shadows move on the surface through time. I am getting that much detail, and you know what gave me that detail? I kept changing the magnification and learning how to focus it. Every time you take an eyepiece out and put another one in, you have to refocus it, and that is just the way your Bible is.

Right now, you are looking at the Bible through about a 100-power eyepiece. In time, my goal is to get you to look at that thing through a 1000-power eyepiece, and through stages of putting in different eyepieces and looking and seeing more detail, what you do is you get closer, you see more, you understand more. Just like you do that with a telescope and the moon with eyepieces, you do that with your Bible. My job is to keep changing out your eyepieces. My job is not to have you going around looking at everything in the Bible through 50x. I want to get you to 500x. I want to get you to a place where you can see things like that. That is incredible detail, but it only comes by learning how to use the telescope—the Bible—and learning how not just to change the eyepieces, which is easy. Focus. I want to tell you something: the more power you put in, the more critical your focus becomes. I am telling you, the more you get into that Book and the closer you get to it, the more critical your focus becomes, and that is how it works. It is just that simple.

He says, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD." That sounds like Isaiah 14:13-14 and Ezekiel 28:13-17.

Look at Obadiah 1:1: "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom." Do you see that? Look at Obadiah 1:6: "How are the things of Esau searched out!" Do you see that? He uses them interchangeably. Look at Obadiah 1:8 again: "Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?" He is using them interchangeably. Look at Obadiah 1:15: "For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." All right, look at Obadiah 1:17: "But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." There are the Jews, once called Israel, now called Jacob. "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble." And he said down there, "there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it." We are not talking about "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" concerning the church. We are certainly not talking about individuals; we now know we are talking about two nations. Of course, if you know anything about the Edomites at all, you know that the prophecy said they would be the servants, and the Edomites come from Esau.

They always gave the nation of Israel problems. In fact, in that verse, Rebecca says, "Why am I having trouble? Why am I having struggle in my womb? Why are these two boys mixing it up when they are not even born yet?" And the Lord says, "You know why? Because they are two nations, and I am going to make a prophecy: the elder, who should rule it all, is going to take second seat, and the second born, who should be second seat, is going to be the ruler. The other guy is not going to like it, and they are going to have conflict all down through history, not only from their womb but in their womb." You will find that those two boys never got along. You will find that all through the Old Testament they hated each other. Esau always blamed Jacob and despised Jacob because he lost the birthright when he gave it up by his own choice.

As you go down through the history, our charts yesterday, through the development, the formulation, and the calling out of the nation of Israel, we came right down through it yesterday: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, right down the line. We had everything laid out yesterday to show you, and we even talked about Esau. Esau gave up his birthright; he despised it; he lost it in Genesis 27. To this day, when you look around the world, you get on CNN, Fox News, whatever you want to hear, and you start reading in your paper about the Middle East, what you have in the Middle East today is the continuation of that prophecy. The Pakistanis, the Iranians, the Iraqis—every Middle East nation situated around the nation of Israel—are all the descendants of the Edomites and the Ishmaelites. Through Abraham, those two boys were the thorn in Israel's flesh. Today, the reason why they do not get along is because they are still upset about the fact that the Jew is God's elect, and they are not. They are mad because the Jew has Jerusalem. For 1800-1900 years, Jerusalem was in Esau's and Ishmael's hands, and God just let that go because God knows in His plan and His timing He will turn that around. In 1948, He did, and they have it now, and they are not getting it back, and that is why they do not like it.

Let me take you back in your Bible history and show you how this works. As time went on, after Esau and Jacob, they began to grow and become two peoples, as you are told back in Genesis. These two peoples, two nations—never an individual. We find that when they get into 1 and 2

Samuel and establish the kingdom, the prophecy holds true, and the Edomites become subservient to the nation of Israel. They do their service work; they are under Israel's care and sovereignty, and they have to do what Israel tells them to do. But we learned yesterday that not only do we have a rise to power for the nation of Israel, but then we have a downward slant where they go into demise and finally into apostasy, and God finally has enough of them.

Here is what happens, and for this, this is the reason God wrote the Book of Obadiah. You need to know that. The Book of Obadiah is written during the time of the captivity, around that period, and this is why he wrote the book about Esau and Edom; he wrote one book against these people. While the nation of Israel was at their high point, Esau and the Edomites basically had to do whatever Israel said. But you know as well as I do, from our study yesterday and from our other studies, what happened: Israel began to go into apostasy. Israel began to forsake God, and like your life and my life, when we start to forsake God and the things of God and bring in other things into our world, what happens? We get weak, and Israel got weak. They got weak spiritually. They may have been a nation of four or five million people, but that was not where their strength was.

Zechariah 4:6

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Their national strength was not in their numbers; their national strength was in their spiritual relationship with God. Just like you and me, when we cease to have that spiritual relationship with God, we get weak. They got weak, and as time went on, and we come down that downhill chart, as time went on, they got weaker and weaker and weaker.

The Edomites, through Esau—a nation, not an individual—saw their chance to take revenge on Jacob, the nation of Israel. So what did they do? When Israel was at their weakest point, they led a revolt. You will find that revolt, if you want to mark it in your Bible, in 2 Kings 8:20 and 2 Chronicles 21:8. By the time Israel gets to the place where they are so weakened, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is ready to come down and take them into captivity, the Edomites from Esau—a nation, not an individual—joined league with Nebuchadnezzar to help destroy the nation of Israel. For that, they violated the great verse back in Genesis that carries all the way through the Bible, Genesis 12:2-3, where God simply said,

Genesis 12:2-3

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

They incurred God's wrath and curse for the next 4,000 years on the Edomites, and that is why He wrote the Book of Obadiah. The Book of Obadiah is against the Edomites because they

turned back on the nation of Israel and tried to rejoice and tried to destroy them. God says that is not going to happen.

That is historically. Now, I have to tell you this: every Scripture, every book of the Bible, has a historical application, an inspirational application, and a doctrinal application. I told you this last Thursday night when someone asked a question out of one of the minor prophets, and I told you that every minor prophet, every book of the minor prophets, doctrinally, will be a picture of the Second Coming of Christ. The same Esau and the Edomites, who went with Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC against the nation of Israel—Nebuchadnezzar being one of the types of the Antichrist—those same Edomites today, who make up the nations that surround the nation of Israel and hate them today, will also, in the near future, line up with the Antichrist against the nation of Israel. That is what you have in Obadiah. You have it historically, you have it doctrinally, and inspirationally, it is a picture of what happens to you and me. If you and I start losing our spiritual walk with God, we get weak, and the Edomites are going to come in and snap you up. They are going to snap you up.

VI. God's Glory in All Things: Vessels of Honor and Dishonor

So, you see in Romans 9:9-13, where it says, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," we are not talking about individuals. We are talking about nations. We are clearly clearing up the controversy here that has anything to do with God choosing one person and not choosing another, or God electing one and not electing another, taking one to heaven and the other to hell. It is not even in there; it is not even remotely in there. You have to really work at getting this one wrong, because I am telling you, it is so clear in the Bible that the word "election" and "elect" is never used in that context.

The purpose of election, by the Bible's definition—and you want to get this down—is simply this: The purpose of election and the purpose of the word "elect" is God calling out a nation, one chosen or set apart and sanctified from the rest of the nations. It is never an individual. God's purpose, what we studied through our Bible basic class, is revealed through the nation of Israel. The bottom line is that the Old Testament is connected with the component of Israel, and the New Testament is connected to the church, and that is exactly what you are dealing with.

Now look at Romans 9:11-13: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil... that the purpose of God according to election might stand." You need to mark that part of that verse in your Bible because that is exactly what we have been coming through in our Thursday night Bible studies and also on Sunday morning, but specifically in our Bible basic class. We have now seen that God's calling Israel as an elect nation is part of God's purpose. That is what we have done through this whole process of laying out the Bible in its most simple context of understanding: stepping back, looking at that whole Bible—66 books, 1,189 chapters, 31,176 verses—backing up and looking at that Bible and saying, "What is this thing? What is the plan? What is the purpose?" Well, now we know the purpose is that God wanted to call out a nation. That nation is Israel, and that nation is elect, and God set them apart, separated them from

every other nation on this planet. The Edomites, Esau, did not like it, and that is what He is saying: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Not talking about individuals, but talking about nations.

Romans 9:11-13 sets up the next section, which is probably the greatest single fundamental truth of God in all heaven and earth. It is no coincidence, I do not think, that we are into this right now while many of you—some 100 of you—are in this Bible basic thing, because you are beginning to see the parallels work very, very carefully. The bottom line is this: this is setting us up for probably the greatest single thing you will ever learn about God, and that is simply this: God is going to get honor and glory out of everything on planet Earth.

I do not care if it is the devil, I do not care if it is age, I do not care what it is. I do not care what sin you can imagine and tell me about. It is not just the good things, and this is our problem, because when we think that God gets the honor and glory out of the good things in our life and does not get the honor and glory out of the bad things in our lives, we get a skewed view of God. Let me tell you something: you ought to always do right in your life, and the first primary purpose for God is for you to do right and for God to get the honor and glory out of your life. But do not ever doubt for a second that the Bible says—and we are going to get into it next week—that God has vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor.

Do not ever think for a minute that because Esau went against the nation of Israel, lined up with Babylon, and in time is going to line up with the Antichrist—whose every purpose is going to one goal, and that is to destroy the nation of Israel—we look at that and say, "Oh, what a terrible thing! Oh boy, I wish it was not that way." God says, "It does not matter which way it is. I am God, and I am fundamentally going to get honor and glory out of everything in this life." The Bible says God has vessels of honor and God has vessels of dishonor, but either way, He will, at the end of the day, get the honor and glory out of it. That is the single greatest truth about God you will ever learn. I am telling you, it does not matter; you get to choose. You either give it to Him like Jacob did, or He will take it from you like He did with Esau. You either give it to Him and say, "God, use me," or you will say, "Up yours, God, I am doing what I want to do," and God will say, "Well, go ahead, and watch Me get the honor and glory out of that." He will, He will.

It may be at a funeral. I have preached funerals before where somebody got killed in a car wreck, and they were a child of God. That child of God was once on fire for God, once loved God, loved the Bible, but then got weakened, and the Edomites came in. Where once their body, their attitude, and their testimony were used for the honor and glory of God, now they are using it for the honor and glory of the devil. Now they are drinking, partying, smoking, doing all the things the world does, and yet they are a child of God. Then God, through the course of time, said, "That is enough," and then I get a phone call, "Would you preach my son's funeral? He really loved you." My answer to them was this—and this has happened several times in my life and ministry—my answer to them was this: "Hey, look, I love you, and I know you are going through great peril right now. Why do you not just do this: what if you can just pay another hundred dollars or another two hundred dollars? The funeral home has a wannabe preacher whose whole world is getting two hundred dollars to come in and preach your funeral, and he will tell in that funeral everything you want him to say. He will tell you and the world out there how good they

were, how wonderful they are, how they are with God, how they are at rest, how their whole life was just one great thing." Because it is not that I do not want to preach it, but just like the doctor has to be hypercritical and do certain things, I, as a pastor, have to do certain things, and I just cannot, in good conscience toward God, get up there and say a bunch of things that are not true that make everybody feel good. I love you to death, and I do not want to add any more pain to your pain, but the bottom line is this: your child knew better. Your child should have been with God, and I will tell you the truth: if he was killed on a Sunday night, if he would have been in church that Sunday night, we would not be having this conversation. They said to me, "We want you to tell the truth, Brother," and I did. For the grace of God, to the glory of God, we had about nine young men saved at that funeral because the truth had to be told.

The bottom line: God looks down at that kid in the casket who probably had great potential, who was somebody that I always thought, "Boy, he had everything going for him," but he got hooked up with the Edomites, and they destroyed him. He took these hands that God gave him, and he chugged down beer. He took these fingers that God gave him, and he smoked marijuana. He took this body that God gave him to preach the Gospel and carry the message, and he abused it; he fornicated with it, and he did everything in the world. And God said, "You know what? I have had it." But God said, "I will get the honor and glory out of it, in your life or your death, but I am getting the honor and glory." It could have gone the way that everybody in that funeral sat there and looked at that casket and said, "You know what? He was a great guy. He won me to Christ. He really helped me put my marriage back together. He really did this; he really did that. Boy, God be the glory!" But no, they sat there and they said, "Wow, he was a child of God. He knew better. He should have done what is right, and God came down and judged him for it." To God be the glory. God is going to get it either way. The greatest single fundamental truth about God that you better learn is that He is going to get the honor and glory out of everything, and you will either be a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor, but He is going to get it. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" is not about two individuals, nothing to do with the church; it is about two nations concerning Israel's downfall, in Romans 9, the prophetic section of the Book of Romans.

Now, let me just say this to you. I know that yesterday, and I felt bad for you, I really did, because at the end of our two-and-a-half-hour session yesterday, most of you looked like your brains had turned into sump pumps. I know there was a lot yesterday, but let me say something to you: I do not always say everything I am trying to do when I do it, because sometimes I just like to see what people do without any ulterior motive involved. Sometimes I just like to see if people will do what they have to do just because it is the right thing to do.

I know that you are all worried about all the information you got yesterday, and I know that. Let me just say this to you: all you have to do, if you want to know how you study for this—and I am just doing this now because I will not catch you all together again, though almost all of you hear this—you know how you study for this? Here is how you do it: you write out three charts, and you put on those charts the basic people and events information that I gave you. You do not have to get into all the superfluous stuff that I put in there. Right now, next week, write out your three charts. Then, throw your notes away, burn them, sell them, put them on eBay—throw your notes away, forget the notes. Study those three graphs. Forget the notes; get them out of your world.

Make your graph one, two, and three, just like I gave you, put the information on it that you need, and then throw those notes away. Study your graph, and when you come back next time, just use your graph. Do not get caught up in all the details of this thing; do not lose focus of what your goal is. Your goal is to learn those three graphs that put your Bible together on the foundational structure that we built the first month.

Now, I will tell you why this is important. I was not going to say this today, but it needs to be said because it is obvious to me now that you are taking this very seriously. Here is what I want to do: I never said this when I started because, as I said, I just do not want people to get into it for the wrong reason, so I just started to see who would come. Some of you people who have been around here and are in Bible Institute, and you have been in Institute since day one, and you have done really well, and you know what? I never made this class—I never said, "You know, this is..." I said this was all for the new people. Many of you, many of you who were the older people who were in Institute, you made it your priority to be there. Some gathered more, some gathered less; you will take every scrap I throw you, and I can appreciate that. But I never got up and said, "This is what I am going to do," because if I did, everybody on the planet would have signed up for this because they wanted to get some glory or recognition out of it, and I do not want that. I want it to be done by the ones who, without any prodding, without anything coercing you, any ulterior motive, you just simply became part of this class and you said, "I want to do this because I want to learn the Bible." Okay, now here comes my ulterior motive: I want you to learn this material.

Last night, I stayed up until one o'clock in the morning. I just could not put them down, and then you get excited, and you go to bed, and you cannot sleep, and I just kept going through it. I had a hundred of some of them, and I just had to read every one of them, and I cannot tell you how impressed I was. God said, "You know what? You need to cut these people some slack now. You need to let them know where you are going with this, because there is no question of this commitment." I am going to have 100 people who, when we are done, know their Bible, have their basics down, and we are going to build from there. But here is what I am going to do; here is my goal: after the next test, I am going to hand-pick about 15 key couples who basically, overall, show the best display. Then I am going to take maybe two couples and put three couples—six people—together: an older couple and two younger couples. Then what we are going to do is this: I have not talked to Joe yet, but I know he will do this. I went back to see him this morning; he was busy leading "Father Abraham," so I did not want to bother him. He is with the kids today. I am going to have Joe devise these into lessons, and what we are going to do is this: right now, we have Discipleship One. We are going to start what we would basically call Discipleship Two. In other words, once a person comes through Discipleship One, now we are going to have another set of lessons that you are going to bring them through. That will take and develop our little teams, and you will work together, and you will get yourselves all focused and ready to go, and get yourselves to the place where you get this material down. There will be an older couple in there from the Institute that basically knows how it works, but then there will be you younger couples that will be in there that you will be able to teach, be able to be part and help, and everything will work together. That will take all the new people coming in, and once they get through Discipleship Two... You know what? We have people that come in that need

Discipleship One, but at the end of Discipleship One, we need to have the next level for them, and up to this point, we have not done it; we have not been ready to do it. We are ready right now, and you people on Saturday morning—I told you, I did not tell you this, but in the back of my mind, this is where I was always going with this—now we are ready for that. Then we have people come in who do not need Discipleship One but need the next level of just putting the Bible together. You guys will be busy doing this until Jesus comes back with the way people come into our church and the needs that they have. I cannot do it all by myself. I go four or five days a week, start at five, done at nine every night, plus do my own studies. I have so many people coming in that I cannot do them every week; I have to do them every other week. I cannot keep doing it all by myself. It takes me hours to prepare what I give you, and it takes away from something else I am doing. I have now come to the point where I am legitimately reproducing myself in some of you out there, and now it is time for you to pick up the ball and carry it to that next level. That is where we are going.

I only tell you that because I want to add diligence to your studies, not that it has not been diligent already. I waited until after this test, and I have to say, I was impressed. You have all done an incredible job, and your attitude about the Word of God and the things of God is going to carry this church right up to the door until Jesus comes. It is something that does not matter how old you are, how young you are, or where you are at; you can get in and learn from the spot you are and then grow into it. It is the greatest single thing that we have ever done that includes the body as far as getting you ready to teach people the Bible, whatever level you are. So, I say all of that to tell you this: add diligence to your study. I commend you for what you have done without any prodding, but now I prod you and I commend you and I add diligence to your study: do it even better than you already would have done it. Do not get burned out. Take those three charts, study them out, lay them out, write them out the way you want them, and then throw your notes away. Do not—if I find you looking at them again, I am going to kick you out of church—do not study them again. Study your chart; it is all you need. You are the best people on planet Earth, and God has brought us together in this time and these last days to do a work for Him, and we must be about our Father's business. Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for the...