

A FAMILY FEUD

Family feuds – history is littered with examples... From European kings to Oriental emperors – families have squared off with families, and fought each other for generations. If you've read Shakespeare's "*Romeo and Juliet*" you know of the feud between the Capulets and Montagues.

American folklore made famous the feud between the Hatfields and McCoys.

In modern times, families square off each night on the TV show, "*Family Feud*".

The book of Obadiah is also all about a long-running family feud! Remember the feud that erupted between Jacob and Esau. Jacob stole his brother's birthright, and deceived their father. Esau became bitter. But the feud didn't end with

the two brothers. It continued with their descendants. The Edomites, or offspring of Esau, and the children of Jacob, or the Israelites, fought and feuded for centuries.

But this was one family feud that would be decided by a third party. God will *conclude the feud* – thus, He sends the prophet Obadiah to the Edomites to pronounce their judgment. Verse 1 reads, "The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord God concerning Edom." Obadiah's message is short and to the point – just one chapter. It records the why, how, and when of their judgment....

Verses 1-16 describe *the destruction of Edom*. Verses 17-21 depict *the deliverance of Israel*.

EDOM'S PRIDE

Verses 2-3 uncover Edom's problem. "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you..." Pride had blinded Edom to the truth. God judged her for her pride.

Understand the Philistines worshipped Dagon. The Canaanites bowed to Baal. The Ammonites served Molech. They all worshipped idols – false gods. But the Edomites worshipped no god. They trusted in themselves. Like the guy who called dial-a-prayer to check his messages, they were stuck on themselves. Edom had grown cocky, arrogant, and fiercely independent.

It reminds me of the conversation heard one night in the insane asylum. One of the patients shouted, "I am Napoleon Bonaparte!" The attendant asked, "How do you know you're Napoleon?" He answered, "God told me." But then another voice from down the hall spoke up, "I did not!" Hey, anyone who lives like their own god is a bit crazy. Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

Like modern-day Americans, the Edomites were guilty of idolizing their own ingenuity. They carved cities out of the rocks and cliffs around the Dead Sea. They believed they could defend themselves. They didn't need God.

Just like their father, Esau, who sold the blessing of God for a bowl of chili – the Edomites also failed to recognize their need for God's power and presence. In the days of Obadiah they put their trust in their fortresses and fortifications.

God tells 'em in verses 3-4, "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the

clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; you who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down..."

Edom thought he was high and mighty. But God tells him, "*You're going down!*" Edom sees himself as a soaring eagle. God sees him as a dying duck.

The territory of Edom was a swath of land southeast of the Dead Sea. It was an area about 30 miles wide by 100 miles long. The Edomites made their homes in the cliffs and caves of the rocky highlands. Their most famous city was Petra.

If you saw the movie "*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*" you've seen the rock façade of the city of Petra. In the movie, Petra was used as the cave that contained the holy grail. To invade the city an army had to climb down a gorge one mile deep. The entrance was so narrow the soldiers had to align single file. It made the city easy to defend. Petra was considered impregnable.

Edom's boast reminds me of Muhammad Ali in his boxing hey-day. Once he boarded an airplane, and was asked by the flight attendant to buckle his seat belt. Ali replied, "Superman don't need no seat belt." That's when the lady answered, "*Superman don't need no airplane.*" A humbler Ali buckled his seat belt. Edom thought he was superman. God will show him that he's super chicken.

"The only thing about the Edomites that bordered on Religious fervor was their concentrated, persistent, bitter hatred against Israel."

DON'T KICK A MAN WHEN HE'S DOWN

The indictment against Edom gets more specific in verses 12-14, "But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother in the day of his captivity; nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; nor should you have spoken proudly in the day of distress." Israel had been invaded and Edom took delight and advantage of her hardships.

I once had a supervisor named Ralph. We worked together at a Dupont distribution center. One Friday I was locking up when I found a hobo, who'd come in on a rail-car, lying in a drunken stupor on the dock of the warehouse. According to policy, Ralph should've run the man off the property. Instead, we made him a bed out of packing material, and laid crackers by the mat - so he'd have something to eat when he woke up.

I'll never forget what Ralph told me, "Sandy, never kick a man when he's down. You never know when you might be that man." Edom should've had mercy on his fallen brother. Instead he poured salt in the wound, and kicked him when he was down.

Devotion Box - Possessing Your Possessions

Obadiah 1:17 tells us, "the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." What does God mean by *possessing your possessions*? If they're your *possessions* don't you already *possess* them?

Once the wealthy tycoon and newspaper magnet, William Randolph Hearst, sent his assistants on a worldwide search for a beautiful painting he had seen in a magazine. Hearst was an avid art collector. After weeks of combing galleries all around the world his assistants returned and reported the results of their failed search. But Hearst wouldn't take no for an answer. He sent them out again. Finally, the painting was located in one of Hearst's own warehouses. He had owned the painting all along, but had failed to really possess his possession.

Sadly, there are Christians in the same situation. Ephesians 1:3 informs us we've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. We own infinite riches - spiritual treasures like peace, power, love, joy, patience, self-control, wisdom - yet how many of us have taken possession of our possessions?

We need faith. Faith is the grip - the tentacle - that reaches into the spiritual realm and enables us to pull out our possessions. Faith makes the things of the Spirit tangible and touchable - personal and applicable - powerful and prevalent.

J O N A H

The name "*Jonah*" means "*dove*", but by nature Jonah was more a hawk. Jonah was extremely nationalistic - very pro-Israeli. He believed strongly, and rightly, that the Hebrews were God's chosen, and destined to rule the world.

Jonah's first assignment had been a joy. 2 Kings 14:25 says of King Jeroboam, "He restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah..." Jonah was glad to predict victory for Israel, and expansion of her borders. Judgment on the gentiles - blessing on the Jews - was a *prophecy that fit his prejudice*. But now God's word comes to him a second time - with a different request. Jonah is told to go beyond the borders of Israel, and call Nineveh to repent.

The great city of Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian empire. And the Assyrians represented everything Jonah hated. They were a savage, barbarous people, bent on world conquest and domination. In addition, they were gentiles. Assyria was the nation Israel's main threat and most formidable foe. To ask Jonah to preach salvation to the Assyrians was like asking a Holocaust survivor to love a Nazi war criminal - or an African-American to share Christ to a white supremacist - or a *Bulldog booster to pray for a Yellow Jacket victory*. Jonah wanted to see the Assyrians slaughtered, not saved. He'd been praying for their destruction not their deliverance.

Understand, Jonah was a bigot. Yes, the nation Israel was God's chosen people - but that didn't mean there wasn't room in God's heart for other people as well. Jonah was *the prejudiced prophet*.

It reminds me of the Chinaman and Jew eating lunch at the same deli. Without any provocation, the Jew walks over and punches the Chinese man in the mouth. The Chinese fellow asks him, "What's that for?" The Jewish man answers, "That's for Pearl Harbor." The Chinaman can't believe it, "We had nothing to do with Pearl Harbor. That was the Japanese." The Jewish man shrugs, "Hey, it doesn't matter. Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese - they're all the same to me." And he sits down. Moments later the Chinese man walks over, and cold-cocks the Jew. He picks himself up off the ground and asks, "What in the world is that for?" The Chinaman answers, "The Titanic." The Jewish man scratches his head, "I don't get it. What did the Jews have to do with the sinking of the Titanic?" The Chinese man tells him, "Hey buddy - Goldberg, Feinberg, Iceberg - they're all the same to me."

All prejudice is just as irrational as the exchange in the deli. Bigotry is an affront to God. It narrows, and restricts, and puts limits on His love. It shrinks the heart of God to one group - my group. How awful? Prejudice is the pinnacle of pride. Because you're not just like me, you must be inferior - what blasphemy. It's a sin against God's love and creativity.

Jonah was called to go east to Nineveh. Instead he boards a ship for Tarshish - the equivalent of a slow boat to China. Tarshish was the western-most tip of the Mediterranean, perhaps Spain. God called Jonah to Assyria, but he headed as far as he could go in the other direction. *And I'm sure he purchased a one-way ticket.*

"Prejudice is not a *skin* problem, but a *sin* problem."

JONAH AND THE GREAT FISH

Chapter 1 starts with a “great city”, includes a “great wind”, and ends with a “great fish”. Verse 17, “Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

Now, this is where the story of Jonah gets a little *fishy*... How could a man be swallowed by a fish, and survive three days and three nights in its belly?

Let me give you four possibilities to ponder...

First, we usually think of *Jonah and the whale*, but the Bible doesn't say he was swallowed by a whale. Verse 17 says, “the LORD had prepared a great fish”. One of the Jewish rabbis taught that the fish who swallowed Jonah was a special fish prepared by God from creation for the very purpose of transporting Jonah. This fish could've been specially customized for Jonah... *A divine submarine*.

Second, it's not inconceivable to think a man could be swallowed by a whale and survive. A sperm whale has a mouth 20 feet long, 15 feet high, 9 feet wide – larger than most bedrooms. Whalers have found man-sized squid in the bellies of whales. It would be hot, 104-108 degrees. The gastric juices would bleach out a man's skin. But there would be some oxygen to breathe. It's not impossible.

Third, such a scenario is not without precedent. In 1891 a whaler named James Bartley was lost at sea off the coast of the Falkland Islands. The accident occurred as the sailors

with him harpooned a whale. A few hours later as they were harvesting the blubber from the whale they noticed activity in its stomach. When they cut open the whale's belly they found James Bartley – his skin was permanently discolored – but Bartley was alive and relatively unharmed.

The fourth possibility is found in 2:2. Notice, Jonah prays to the Lord from the belly of the fish, but look at what he says in the last line, “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice...” Sheol was an Old Testament name for Hades, the abode of the dead. It could be he's simply speaking metaphorically. *The fish was a hell on earth*.

But his words could be literal. Perhaps, Jonah repented from Hades, and God gave him a second chance. Remember, in Matthew 12:40, Jesus said, “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus literally died, went to Hades where He preached to the captives, then rose from the dead on the third day. And He compares his journey into the afterlife to Jonah's experience.

Perhaps Jonah actually died in the belly of the fish, and was resurrected from the dead when the whale spit him out on the shore. That's a fourth possibility.

Devotion Box - How Desperate Are You?

Chapter 2 records Jonah's prayer of repentance. Apparently, total darkness, and stifling heat, and boiling gastric juices, and slimy tissue, and a sea-weed body wrap – combine to create an excellent opportunity to think through the error of your ways, and plot a new course. It reminds me of the young man who approached the elder of the village, and said he wanted to know God. The older man took him to the river and held his head underwater for a long time. The young man fought and gasped for air. Finally, the old man let him up, then he told him, “Son, when you become as desperate for God as you were for air, then you will find Him.” In a state of desperation, Jonah breaks through his own prejudices and comes to a place of repentance.

Devotion Box - What's Your Nineveh?

The story of Jonah reminds me of Gary Tindle. He was on trial for robbery in the California courtroom of Judge Rodriguez. During a recess he asked to go to the restroom. While the guards waited, Tindle shimmied up the plumbing, and scurried down the crawl space. He made it 30 feet, until the panels under him collapsed and he fell through the ceiling, right back in Judge Rodriguez' courtroom.

Neither can you run from God. Jonah also comes full circle. He ends up right back where he started. Guys, you can't escape the calling and will of God. If you're on the run from God's will, trust me, He has a fish prepared for you.

Let me ask you, *what's your Nineveh?* The one thing you've said you just won't do? - the one place you just won't go? – the one mission you just won't accept? Here's my question: is your prejudice more important than God's will? I hope not.

Devotion Box - It's People That Matter

In Jonah 4, a palm grew overnight to provide Jonah supernatural shade. He didn't deserve the blessing, but Jonah was glad and grateful for it. Yet as quickly as God blessed Jonah, He removed the blessing. The next day God prepared a worm that ate the palm, and an east wind that blew on Jonah. The plant and prophet wilted from the elements. Again, Jonah despairs of life.

It's interesting to me how in the absence of human relationships some people get attached to a dog, or cat, or plant. I know a lady, who like Jonah, worships her plants. She lives for her lawn. She's alienated every kid in the neighborhood over them running through her yard. She doesn't want them to mat her grass.

Likewise, instead of caring about people Jonah became attached to his plant. God's point to the prophet was that Jonah cared more about his plant, than the souls of the people of Nineveh.

When Minnesota Twins slugger, Harmon Killebrew, was inducted into Major League Baseball's Hall of Fame, he told a story about his dad. The elder Killebrew would always play pitch with his two boys in the front yard. On occasion, Harmon's mom would complain about them wearing out the grass. Mr. Killebrew always answered, “Honey, we're raising boys, not grass.”

1 Peter 1:24 tells us, “The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.” Only two earthly items live for all eternity - the Bible and the souls of men and women, boys and girls. It's people that matter.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - May 13, 2001 - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year; Guys' Retreat, May 27-28, All Guys Age 8-80, FDR State Park; Preschool VBS, June 4-8; High School Youth Summer Kick-Off, June 6; Men's Golf Tournament for Missions, June 8th; High School Guys Overnight Camping Trip, June 8-9; Middle School Retreat to St. Simon's Island, June 18-22; High School Youth Mission Trip to Rosarita, Mexico, July 7-14.

Next Bible Scan - June 3 - Micah 1-7 and Nahum 1-3

"The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." - Obadiah 17

Bible Scan Memory Verse

ONE OF THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS IN HISTORY

Jonah's message to the Ninevites sparked one of the single greatest spiritual awakenings of all time. At Pentecost 3000 souls were saved. In Nineveh, a whole city repented and turned to God. And God did it through a reluctant, prejudiced prophet named Jonah! It again proves that "God uses us more in spite of us, than because of us."

I believe there are, though, four factors to Jonah's phenomenal success...

Factor # 1, *the time was right.*

The Assyrian king at the time was a man named Assur-dan III. His reign was colored by several natural disasters the people interpreted as signs or omens. An eclipse, an earthquake, a famine, and several military defeats primed the pump in the people's heart for Jonah's message to repent and turn to the one, true God.

Factor # 2, *the prophet was white.*

Imagine Jonah's appearance when he entered the gates of Nineveh. His skin was shriveled like a prune and bleached white. He looked like an elderly Jewish albino. And smell - He reeked. Something smelled fishy about Jonah. He definitely attracted a crowd. People flocked to see the puked-up prophet!

Factor # 3, *they heard of his flight.*

In Luke 11:30 Jesus says Jonah became "a sign to the Ninevites". Apparently, his story was well known among the Assyrians. They knew of Jonah's prejudice - that he didn't want to come to Nineveh - but God loved them enough to employ unusual means to overcome the prophet's reluctance. God loved them a lot!

It's also interesting to note, Assyria worshipped a fish-god named *Oannes*. That a fish threw him up on the shore, may've caused the Assyrians to think of Jonah as a messenger from *Oannes*. If so, it would've provided him an immediate platform from which he could preach about the true God named Jehovah.

And factor # 4, *the Spirit of God showed His might.*

This is the case with all spiritual awakenings. God may use a dramatic, exciting testimony, or desperate circumstances, or a fired-up and puked-out individual - but ultimately revival is a sovereign work of God's Holy Spirit.

In 2:9 Jonah said of his own conversion, "Salvation is of the LORD." No man comes to God, and embraces Jesus, unless the Spirit of God draws him. That's true of Jonah, Nineveh, and you and me. Every time a man is saved for eternity it is a demonstration of the power of God's Spirit.

Devotion Box - Are You A Plant Person Or A People Person?

Chapter 4 proves just what a stinker Jonah really was. When God forgave Nineveh, Jonah got angry. He complains in verses 2-3, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, One who relents from doing harm." Jonah is saying, "I knew this would happen. I wanted the Assyrians to fry in hell, but God is so good - give Him half a chance, and He'll mess everything up and forgive these rotten sinners!" Jonah was a sick pup - an evangelist with an attitude. Rather than rejoicing, Jonah becomes resentful. He's still prejudiced.

As Jonah waited for Nineveh to burn, God caused a plant to grow up over him and provide him shade. The next morning

God sent a worm to eat the plant. Jonah pouted over his plant. Every time things don't go his way, he curls up and wants to die.

Jonah had gotten attached to the plant, and didn't think it fair for God to destroy it - all the while caring nothing about the people of Nineveh. Jonah cared more about plants than people.

Guys, make sure you don't get attached to a plant - and miss the will of God. Your plant might be a talent, or career, or hobby, or home, or ambition - but never let it become more important than the people around you. God loves people, and He wants you to love them too. Some of us spend more of our money on dog food than supporting ministry - more of our time on plants than helping people.

Are you a plant person or a people person?