

# The Old Paths Monthly

“Ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein;  
And ye shall find rest for your souls.” - Jeremiah 6:16

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## Evidence for Faith in the Bible: The Disappearance of Edom

The nation of Edom was literally “wiped off the map”; so much so that skeptics of the Bible argued that they were a mythical people. Henry Morris, in his book, The Bible and Modern Science, relates the discovery of the Edomites and its significance, “Edom and Edomites are mentioned time and again in the Bible, but were completely forgotten in secular history until the nineteenth century, when references to them were found in Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. Thus the critics, who had maintained the Edomites to be legendary, were again routed” (p. 33).

As the Bible records and archaeology confirms, the Edomites, the descendants of Esau (Gen 36:9), lived high in the clefts of the rocks (Jer 49:16), southeast of the Dead Sea. George Davis describes Petra, the capital of Edom, this way, “Petra presents a stupendous sight with its rock-hewn buildings, carved out of the very mountainside

itself, of beautiful rose-red stone. It was practically impregnable from the assault of enemies. There was just one long canyon-like entrance, where a small force of soldiers could protect the city from being taken by a large army” (Bible Prophecies Fulfilled Today, pp. 50-52).

Though Edom lived high in the rocks, God said He would bring them down, even if they made their fortifications reach the stars (Obad 3-4). Not only did Obadiah predict the downfall of Edom, but so did Joel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Malachi- six Bible writers in all. And, these men not only predicted the defeat of Edom, but their disappearance- a disappearance so complete as to make the skeptics laugh about their very existence. May the study of the fulfillment of the predictions of these six men prove to you that these men had to be prophets- for what man knows the future? - and that the Bible must be God’s Word...

## Old Testament Prophecy Concerning Edom (by Eric Parker)

The Biblical writers identified both specific and general details in their prophecies concerning the downfall of Edom over the course of about 300 years (7<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.). Below is a cursory overview of these various accounts in canonical order.

**Isaiah:** In Isaiah 34:5-17, a vivid word picture is used to depict Edom's judgment. The LORD is pictured with a sword of judgment that would fall upon the inhabitants of Edom, a people devoted to destruction. This is described in verse 6 as "a great slaughter," in verse 8 as a "day of vengeance" and "a year of recompense for the cause of Zion [Israel]."

Isaiah continues the word picture by identifying Edom as pitch constantly consumed by the fires of destruction with its "smoke rising up forever." As if the picture were not clear enough already, he proceeds to identify the land as a desert wasteland in which none would live, "a haunt for jackals." Perhaps stated most succinctly, is his statement in verse 10: "from generation to generation [Edom] will be desolate."

**Jeremiah:** In Jeremiah 49:7-19, Jeremiah describes the utter destruction of Edom in terms of Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities decimated by fire and brimstone because of their wickedness. In verses 7-12, Jeremiah describes the loss of sobriety in Edom and the ensuing consequential punishment. He describes the mercy of thieves and grape gatherers in leaving behind a portion. However, God would not restrain their judgment and swore that Edom "would

become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin, and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins" (v. 13).

Jeremiah climaxes the prophecy by stating that everyone who would pass by its ruins would be horrified, and that no one would live there ever again (vv. 17-19).

**Ezekiel:** Ezekiel's discussion of God's judgment on Edom is much shorter, but carries the same force. He identifies the reasons for their judgment (25:12), the details of their judgment (25:13), and the extent of God's anger in their judgment (25:14).

**Joel:** Joel 3 involves a general prophecy of judgment upon the nations who sought to harm God's people. Within this oracle of judgment, Joel states, "Edom will become a desolate wilderness (vs. 19)."

**Obadiah:** The entire book is concerned with judgment on Edom. The most memorable statement from this book is where Obadiah states that judgment on Edom would be so severe that it would be as if Edom had never existed at all; all nations would drink until the Edomites were completely gone (v. 16).

**Malachi:** Malachi opens his book with an oracle of judgment against Edom. God identifies that He hates the descendents of Esau (Edom), has made their mountains desolate, and appointed Esau's inheritance for the jackals of the desert...

# Historical Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy (by Eric Parker)

## Desolation of the Edomites

Following the establishment of Babylonian superiority in the Ancient Near East at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC, Edom eagerly assisted in the destruction of Jerusalem. During the two-part besiegement of Jerusalem (597/586 BC), Edom aided Babylon in destroying the city, slaughtering and pillaging the rival nation of Judah.

For Edom's role in subjection and participation in Jerusalem, Babylon rewarded them with a portion of land just south of Judah that would later be known as Idumaea. This area included the entire plateau between southern Palestine and Egypt. Unfortunately though, Edom's hatred for Judah also came with a cost. While taking Jerusalem, Edom proper was exposed to invasion. The Nabateans took Edom proper and expelled the Edomites from their homeland. Having no home to return to, they settled in Idumaea, where they prospered for about 400 years.

After entering the land of Idumaea, the Esau/Jacob rivalry continued and would reach strain during the time of the blood-stained Maccabean revolt against Greece. The Israelites took revenge against the Edomites, slaughtering and subduing the peoples. The remnant of Edom was subsumed into the Jewish nation and the Edomites became the Idumaeans.

The Idumaeans continued to live in this area until the time of the Roman emperor Titus' invasion of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Immediately preceding the invasion, 20,000 Idumaeans were allowed into Jerusalem and

filled its walls with thievery and murder. The Romans then entered the city and destroyed everyone. The Edomites as a separate people ceased to exist at this point. The few stragglers that were left became dispersed amongst the Arab nations and were never again reestablished as a people.

## Destruction of the Land of Edom

After expelling the Edomites, the Nabateans rebuilt the decimated land and carved the great city of Petra in the rocks. Petra would burgeon and ultimately become one of the ancient wonders of the world.

The Nabateans flourished in Edom proper until 106 BC when the Romans utterly destroyed Petra. The Romans utilized the land well for a couple of centuries as a trade route, including the time of Christ. The trade route eventually became abandoned during the collapse of the Roman Empire until the time of the Moslem invaders of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. AD. Following the invasion, the land fell into disuse until about the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD.

During the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD, the crusaders attempted to revive the city by building a castle they named Sel. Even then though, the city did not revive, the castle was abandoned, the people moved on, and the land was forgotten.

After 600 years of utter barrenness, Edom was rediscovered by Johann Burckhardt in 1812. By this point, the city had been ravaged by scavengers and had become a place for wild beasts. The once prosperous and wonderful city of Petra and land of Edom were eternally desolate...

## The Land Speaks for Itself

Let the land that once was Edom speak for itself and announce its awesome conclusion:

“Today the land stands deserted, a mute testimony to the sure Word of the Lord. Petra is a remarkable example of the literal fulfillment of prophecy. This great ancient capital with its theatre seating 4,000, its temple, its altars and its monuments, is now silent and alone, decaying with the passage of time.” - David Higgins, “The Edomites Considered Historically and Prophetically”

“Scorpions and owls abound among its ruins. Burckhardt, one of the boldest and most daring of travellers, says he never knew what fear was until he came near Petra. At nightfall the jackal is heard from the top of the rocks, answered by another far up the Wadi.”- Herbert Stewart, The Stronghold of Prophecy, p. 71

“I would that the skeptic could stand as I did, among the ruins of this city among the rocks, and there open the sacred Book and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities in the world. I see the scoffer arrested, his cheek pale, his lip quivering, and his heart quaking with fear, as the ruined city cries out to him in a voice loud and powerful.”- Alexander Keith, Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 339

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Obadiah and Malachi are God's prophets!! The Bible is the Word of God!!

## Look, Listen, and Learn:

[www.southmarionchurchofchrist.org](http://www.southmarionchurchofchrist.org)

**\*Biblical articles**

**\*Sermons with Powerpoint Charts**

**\*Online Bible Course**

### South Marion church of Christ

3629 South Washington Street  
Marion, IN 46953

#### Schedule of Services:

##### Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM  
Worship 10:30 AM & 5:00 PM

##### Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 PM

##### Elders:

David Huber 998-7134  
Alan Jones 922-7602

##### Deacons:

Mike Huber 998-2520  
Gary Pickering 384-4347

##### Evangelists:

Alan Jones 922-7602  
Eric Parker 484-553-0916

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**Let us study with you in your**