



Judgment against Edom was declared earlier in the book in chapter 25 verses 12 to 14. Thus says the Lord God, Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them. Therefore thus says the Lord God, I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast and I will make it desolate from Timan even to Dedan.

They shall fall by the sword and I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel. They shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath and they shall know my vengeance declares the Lord God. Edom had not come to the aid of Judah in his day of distress.

What was worse however was the fact that they had rejoiced in the day of Israel's calamity, taken advantage of its brother's weakness and prayed upon it. As Psalm 137 verse 7 declares, Remember O Lord against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem how they said lay it bare, lay it bare down to its foundations. This betrayal of the bond of brotherhood is spoken of on several occasions in the scriptures, most notably perhaps in the book of Obadiah.

A similar message to Ezekiel chapter 35 and 6 is expressed in condensed form in Lamentations chapter 4 verses 21 to 22. Rejoice and be glad O daughter of Edom, you who dwell in the land of us, but to you also the cup shall pass. You shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.

The punishment of your iniquity O daughter of Zion is accomplished. He will keep you in exile no longer, but your iniquity O daughter of Edom he will punish, he will uncover your sins. Other condemnations of and declarations of judgement upon Edom for their behaviour at the time of Judah's downfall can be seen in Joel chapter 3 verse 19 and Malachi chapter 1 verses 2 to 5. For Edom's part in making Judah a waste and a desolation, they would themselves be rendered a waste and a desolation.

In this judgement God would demonstrate his justice and his sovereignty, proving that he is the Lord. They had rejoiced over Judah's downfall, gloating over their brother. Now they would suffer the same fate.

The Lord is against them. The cause of the Lord's firm opposition to Edom is unpacked in the verses that follow. Edom continues to cherish perpetual enmity, still nursing the rivalry that set Esau against his brother Jacob from the womb onwards and led him to seek to take his brother's life.

This deep hatred for their brother led them to take to light in giving Israel over to the sword. The rivalry between Edom and Israel will continue in history, also being expressed in the actions of Haman the Agagite and the Idumeans at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Edom had first received the name Edom in Genesis chapter 25 verse 30 when he had sought some of Jacob's red red stew from him.

He had received that name in connection with the colour of the stew. Some commentators have speculated that Esau thought that the stew was a forbidden blood stew, a position strengthened by various allusions back to the full narrative of Genesis chapter 3 in the passage. In addition to playing off the term for red, and likely the name Adam also, the name Edom was close to the word for blood, Dam.

Ezekiel's prophecy plays with this near homophone in verse 6, repeating the word blood four times. Edom had quite possibly received his name at first out of a hunger for forbidden blood and his bloodthirstiness continues. He would be judged accordingly.

He would be prepared for and pursued by blood. His territory would be littered with the bodies of the slain and his cities would suffer the same fate as the fate that caused him to rejoice over his brother. This would all demonstrate the Lord's identity, sovereignty and power.

With the deportation of Judah by the Babylonians, leaving only a small remnant of poor Israelites in the land, the Edomites had fancied that they would be able to possess the land of their brother Israel in addition to their own territory, not considering that the land was actually not the possession of Israel, but the inheritance of the Lord, with Israel dwelling there only on his sufferance. The time would come when Israel would be restored to the land and the Lord would not accept Edom exceeding the bounds of his own portion to seize the possession of his brother, continuing the rivalry over the blessing and the firstborn portion that had continued since the time of the patriarch Isaac, their father. According to Edom's hubris and hatred, the Lord would judge them, once again demonstrating his identity and power to them in the process.

The way that Edom had spoken concerning the mountains of Israel, to which Ezekiel will soon turn his address in a few verses time at the beginning of chapter 36, failed to consider the Lord. Indeed, it was a matter of magnifying themselves against the Lord in their pride, fancying that the Lord's own land was theirs to consume in their hatred and envy. While there would be a more general reversal of fortunes in the region, the Edomites would not benefit from this.

Indeed, they would be rendered desolate, suffering the fate that they had gloated over when it befell Israel. A question to consider, in what way ought the Edomites have related to Israel? What might a faithful Edomite have been like? Acts 15.36-16.5 Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to

accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.

So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. At the end of Acts chapter 15, Paul's second missionary journey begins. Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch after their Jerusalem visit.

Having ministered for a while in Antioch, they determined to go back to the churches that they had visited on their first missionary journey and to see how they were progressing in the faith. They were very young in their faith, and one can imagine that Paul and Barnabas would be anxious to hear that they were progressing. The fact that these churches would be facing persecution and there were potentially false teachers going around might also have increased their concern to engage in such a mission.

Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. John Mark was the son of Mary in whose house Jerusalem Christians had met for prayer in chapter 12. John Mark was Barnabas' cousin as we discover in Colossians chapter 4 verse 10.

John Mark has traditionally been identified with the author of the second gospel. Barnabas and Saul had a major falling out over the inclusion of John Mark. He had originally accompanied them on the first missionary journey, but he had abandoned the mission in chapter 13 verse 13.

The disagreement that they have is a very serious one. We are given the impression that it was very heated. It is so sharp a disagreement that they have to part ways at this point.

Reading through the book of Acts, in many respects we are seeing the highlights of a period stretched out over almost three decades in several different locations. We've just had a high point in the events of the Jerusalem Council which had followed a very troubling period as there had been a serious dispute between Peter and Paul themselves and Antioch and teachers from Jerusalem had threatened the entire mission to the uncircumcised. Now there is another setback with a falling out between two key people whose shared mission had been so pivotal in the last few chapters.

One can imagine that with such a young movement and with so much riding upon particular key relationships, relationships that would have constituted bonds between churches, we should remember that Barnabas is originally from Jerusalem and likely the strongest personal tie between the two most important churches, this would certainly have been a very serious discouragement and setback, potentially throwing much into uncertainty. As readers of the book of Acts in the 21st century we know how the story turns out, but we should try to enter something of the feelings of the early Christians and

to recognise just how vulnerable they might have felt at some of these junctures. Knowing of the incredible success that the church has experienced from the days of the apostles onwards, we don't feel the full blows of the discouragements in the text.

For those living through such history however, it might have felt like riding a rollercoaster at times. Barnabas took along John Mark with him to Cyprus. As we should recall from chapter 4 Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus, while Paul chose Silas to accompany him and goes throughout Syria and Cilicia to encourage and strengthen the churches.

These missions were incredibly important in forging a robust church. Much of the formation of the church at this stage was not merely about the development of lots of local churches, but about the development of a lively network between many otherwise isolated churches across Judea, Syria and at this point Asia Minor. Forging bonds of mutual love and trust would enable the movement to grow in ways that it could not if every church was isolated from the others.

Many of the new churches may not yet have had mature Christian ministers, but would have depended heavily upon visiting teachers, prophets and missionaries. Paul returns to Derbe and to Lystra. While at Lystra he encounters a disciple called Timothy who is held in high esteem by the Christians in the region.

Timothy's mother was a Jew and his father was a Greek, which would certainly have provoked severe disapproval in some more observant Jewish quarters, although some diaspora Jews may have been more relaxed about it. The problem was not chiefly an ethnic one, but a religious one. Intermarriage with people outside of the covenant was seen as a very serious matter in many parts of Old Testament.

From 2nd Timothy 1.5 we learn that both Timothy's mother and grandmother were faithful persons and that he was taught the scriptures from a young age. So we should not suppose that Timothy's mother was indifferent towards her Jewish faith. We can speculate over whether or not Timothy's father was a God-fearer associated with the synagogue.

However the fact that Timothy had not been circumcised raises the possibility that his mother's marriage was less than ideal, perhaps arranged by an unbelieving father. Timothy's religious status would have seemed rather ambiguous then and might perhaps have been a cause of scandal to some. Timothy himself though is a living example of a Jew and Gentile union.

He straddles these two worlds in his very person. Considering the obstacle that Timothy's ambiguous status might provide for the mission though, Paul determines that it would be best to circumcise him. A course of action that might seem surprising given how strongly Paul has recently opposed the circumcision of Gentiles.

Timothy however is not a Gentile but a Jew of ambiguous origins. Paul's concern is not circumcision but the cause of the mission. Circumcising Timothy will help them to accomplish this.

The principle that Paul is following here is that which he describes in 1 Corinthians 9 verses 19-23. For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.

To those under the law I became as one under the law, though not being myself under the law, that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law, not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. In circumcising Timothy, Paul plays the part of a father to him.

Timothy would come to be immensely important in Paul's later ministry, serving as Paul's personal representative. Timothy is Paul's shaliyach, the one who personally represents Paul where Paul himself cannot be. As such, Timothy would come to participate in the exercise of Paul's apostolic ministry.

He is the co-author of Epistles, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon. He acts as Paul's personal emissary in places like Acts 19 verse 22 and 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 3. He is the one who served Paul so that Paul could give himself to the primary task of preaching without any distraction, something that we maybe see in Acts chapter 18 verses 1 to 5. Timothy could participate directly in Paul's exercise of his apostolic power. Paul and Timothy are a pair.

They are bound together in a single apostolic mission. On occasions the distinction between them is made very plain. Only Paul is the apostle proper, while on other occasions their alignment is stressed.

Timothy is a co-worker, he is a helper and sharer in Paul's calling. Relative to the churches to which they were ministering, Timothy was to be treated as a bearer of Paul's own authority. However, relative to Paul, Timothy was a subordinate without an independent commission of his own, but rather a share in Paul's.

The relationship between Paul and Timothy is exceptionally close and Paul speaks of Timothy as his own son. The language here is not merely that of emotional closeness, but of representation. The son represents the father, his authority, his presence and his interests.

It also points to a relationship similar to that which pertained between Old Testament leaders and prophets and their shuliacs. In Numbers chapter 13 verse 16 we see that

Joshua's name was given to him by Moses, who also lays his hands on Joshua in Deuteronomy chapter 34 verse 9. A similar relationship exists between Elijah and Elisha. Elisha receives a double portion of Elijah's spirit, the inheritance appropriate to the firstborn, and as Elijah is taken into heaven, Elisha addresses him as his father.

Matthew Calvin observes that Timothy is a virtual copy of Paul is underlined by 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 16 to 17. I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

The charge to imitate Paul then is accompanied by the sending of Timothy toward the fulfilment of this end, as the son is the preeminent imitator and representation of his father. As a participant in his father's ministry and as Paul's right-hand man, Timothy would come to have immense authority to wield, even being given the commission to choose and appoint church officers as Paul's representative. As the apostolic ministry was temporary, upon Paul's death Timothy would cease to be the Apostle's apostle and would presumably become a bishop.

Timothy might not usually be in the foreground of the story in the book of Acts, but his importance for Paul's missionary work should not be understated. As Timothy accompanies Paul and Silas, they pass through the cities, giving them word of the judgment of the Jerusalem council, encouraging them and strengthening them in the faith, knitting them in with the wider body of the church that has been formed in various parts of the world. A question to consider.

Considering what we know of Paul and Barnabas's different characters, what might have been some of the factors influencing their falling out concerning John Mark?