

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #74

Genesis 34:1-31

As we come to Genesis 34, we find Jacob in the land of Canaan, in Shechem (33:18). He had purchased land (33:19), he had built an altar so that he could have a nice place of worship (33:20). It all appears to be a great family story. **The only problem is, Jacob is not where he is supposed to be.** God had told Jacob that he was to go to Bethel (31:3, 13; 35:1). Now one might say, “But Shechem is only 20 or 25 miles north of Bethel. It is real close so what does it matter?” **It matters greatly to God!**

We do not know what lured Jacob to Shechem. We may assume from the text that the land offered fertile grazing for Jacob’s cattle (33:17). We may assume that the people of the land appeared congenial, willing to sell Jacob land and allow him to worship in his own way (33:19-20). We may also assume that the people were nice looking and loose, something that probably promoted the curiosity of Dinah (34:1). From a worldly standpoint, this would have been one of the better places to live. It was the “class” neighborhood of the land of Canaan and even though this was not where God wanted Jacob to be, he “pitched his tent” there (33:19).

WHEN A BELIEVER DOES NOT COMPLETELY OBEY GOD EVEN THOUGH THERE MAY BE SEEMINGLY POSITIVE THINGS, THE END RESULT WILL BE A CHAOTIC MESS.

W. H. Griffith Thomas literally applied this text to believers who move to a new location. He said most of the time when a believer moves to a new residency the first questions asked are worldly questions: 1) Is the home nice? 2) Is the neighborhood nice? 3) Are the people nice? 4) Is the school system good? 5) Does the neighborhood feature sharp people? 6) Is there a good social climate? Thomas said he has rarely seen a believer first ask, “Is there a good church that teaches the Word of God? Is there a no nonsense place where the Bible is carefully and accurately expounded?” He went on to say the first and supreme factor of a new home should be “What will it do for my spiritual life?” (*Genesis*, pp. 319-320)

NARRATIVE REALITY #1 - One from God’s family desires to make friends with the world. 34:1-3

Nothing good ever comes to a believer who desires to see the world. Dinah, who was Jacob’s daughter born before Joseph (30:21-22), would have been 13 to 15 years old. She became infatuated with “the daughters of the land” (34:1), and wanted to go meet them and see them. Josephus claims that there was a festival in Shechem, in which all the daughters of the land participated, and it was to this festival that Dinah wanted to go (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 43). **She wanted to get to know the Canaanite women and it is because she was permitted to go to this that she will get raped.**

Shechem was a ruler, who was used to getting his own way. He was prosperous and powerful. He saw Dinah, took her and raped her. You will notice that the word is repeated many times in this chapter (34:5, 13, 27).

This particular word is one that means to be ceremonially unclean (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 322). What this word means is that God considers the rape of one of His daughters as a sacred defilement on the same level with defiling the Holy of Holies.

Dinah just wanted to have some friends from this world. She just wanted to go to the “Canaanite prom.” The real weight of this tragedy falls to Jacob and Leah who let their teen daughter go. John Calvin said it is the father’s responsibility to protect his daughter and keep her under strict discipline if he does not want her to be defiled (*Genesis*, Vol. 2, p. 218).

NARRATIVE REALITY #2 - One from the world wants to make a permanent alliance with one from God’s family. 34:4-12

Once the world has touched a believer, it will try to make some permanent allegiance or hold on that believer. Shechem did love Dinah (love does not rape someone) and did want to marry her (34:3-4). Apparently from verses **17 and 26**, Shechem did convince Dinah to live with him in his house. It was custom for a father to find a bride for his son, just as Abraham had found one for Isaac, so Shechem requested that Hamor, his father, go and negotiate for Dinah (34:4).

Now Jacob knew what had happened to Dinah (34:5) even before Hamor came to see him. But probably because of his own guilt, his own lack or his own shame, realizing had he obeyed God he wouldn’t have even been in this place, he “kept silent” (v. 5).

Hamor and Shechem came to meet with Jacob and requested that he allow his son Shechem to marry Dinah (34:8). In fact, he suggested that they intermarry (34:9), and that they share the land and do business and prosper (34:10). Shechem then told them to name the price of the dowry and he would pay it for Dinah (34:11-12). **The proposal of the godless world was simple - let’s unite and have the same goals and objectives and share the same prosperity and live happily ever after.** It would be a serious violation of God’s Word and God’s law for an Israelite to intermarry with a Canaanite (**Genesis 28:1; Deuteronomy 7:1-5**). **When one of God’s people starts dabbling around and negotiating with this world, they get nothing but headaches and heartaches.**

NARRATIVE REALITY #3 - God’s family does not let the world claim one of its own. 34:13-29

Jacob’s eleven sons were outraged when they learned what had happened to their sister (34:7). They came up with a simple proposal - every male was to be circumcised. Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and Shechem (34:18) so they quickly went back home and convinced all the men that the women and wealth were worth the act and every male consented (34:21, 23).

In the aftermath of this surgery, the men were very sore and three days later, Simeon and Levi boldly came to the city and killed all the males including Hamor and Shechem and took their sister back (34:25-26). Then the rest of Jacob’s sons looted the city, taking their animals, wealth, women and children (34:27-29).

What is interesting about this is that Jacob will never forgive Simeon and Levi for this and will actually pronounce a negative blessing on them (49:5-7). **However, Simeon will end up in the lineage of Jesus Christ (Luke 3:30); and Levi will be chosen by God to be the priestly family (Exodus 32:25-29; Deuteronomy 33:8-11). So both men who received a rebuke from Jacob received a blessing from God.**

This whole ugly mess occurred because Jacob had not obeyed God and had not gone to Bethel.

NARRATIVE REALITY #4 - God's family reacts to the worldly warfare. 34:30-31

This verse has to be one of the most pathetic of Jacob's life. Notice his pronoun emphasis: "you brought trouble on **ME**, by making **ME** odious among the inhabitants of the land ... they will gather together against **ME** and attack **ME** and **I** shall be destroyed, **I** and **MY** household."

Jacob is not thinking about his own disobedience that brought them to this place in the first place. He is not thinking about his own deceit which refused to allow his own brother Esau to protect him. He was not thinking about the promises of God to protect him and give him the land. He was not thinking about the fact that he just got his daughter back, who had been forcibly raped. All Jacob was thinking about was himself. That is all he ever thought about - himself. His world, his will, his goals, his ambitions. Not once do you see him truly zeroed in on consistently obeying God.

That is what happens to one not completely following God's Word and will, they end up all caught up with themselves and they end up in some disaster.

You may think nothing negative will happen to you as long as you partially obey God. As long as you go to church and do religious stuff everything will be okay. If any child of God does not fully obey God's Word, it will cost him and his family. Obey God and you get His blessings. Don't obey God and you'll get a big mess.