

The Dinah Disaster

HN 2/05/04 pm

Reading: Genesis 34, I John 2:15-3:3

Study: Genesis 34

Psalms: 73:1-8, 73:12-17, 73:23-26, 32:1-2

What a disaster. How sickening to read of the lusts of men – the lusts of the flesh. Vile acts are reported, and then comes the cover up. Nothing happened, everything is okay they say. The scene then turns to revenge – to law suits. And the media stories continue. How sickening it all is – I have had to turn the radio off at times in this past week. When will it end we say in exasperation. Will it ever end?

As we turn from the newspaper to this chapter in the Bible the answer must sadly be no – not in this world. For we turn here to a story almost 4000 years ago in which the same lust, the same cover up and the same revenge are portrayed. You can imagine what the headlines would have been back there in Canaan – 'Genocide follows rape of Dinah'. Would the press have delighted in reporting such wickedness back then as they do now?

The story is here in our Bible not for sensationalism or just for interest. It is here for our learning, for our edification. Some think such a passage not suitable to preach on, but why then is it in the Bible. It is certainly a low point in the life of Jacob and his family. We read what happened – can we ask why it happened.

Although Jacob was not directly responsible for the revenge killing of all the males in Shechem, it is nevertheless a story that centres upon him and his failures. To better understand the situation we need to back up a little in his life's story. The Lord delivered him from the greatest fear he had, that of his brother Esau. He had prayed and indeed wrestled with God in the lead up to that meeting. He was obedient to the word of the Lord in heading towards Canaan, *the land of your fathers*. He went to Succoth and built a house. He probably stayed there a few years. Then he went up into Canaan. But note where he settled. Before we do that let us back up a bit further and remember the family of Jacob.

Parental Responsibilities

Jacob had two wives. Remember the bickering and fighting between them at the time their sons were being born. And Jacob was caught up in that bitterness and anger also. He did of course get them to come with him when he left Haran but it seems he did not manage his family as well as he might. He does not appear as a strong leader of the family in this story.

How can I say that you ask? His daughter *Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land*. This was the thing that led to the whole disaster. In typical fashion Moses does not make judgment when writing this story- although he does later say that Jacob's sons spoke deceitfully (v.13). But young women at that time did not go out alone. She acted foolishly in going out alone. Now Jacob may not to be blamed for her foolishness but we can ask how well had she been taught.

In India and other places it is still not common for women to travel alone. A family member or

friend usually accompanies them. Missionary ladies traveling alone may be harassed – old trains had a separate women's compartment – as do the buses in Pakistan. One village project we had assisted people to build latrines near their house. The women appreciated this because some told about the danger of being raped if they had to go out to the field at night.

Dinah went out and this prince *saw her, took her and lay with her and violated her*. He was a pagan, a Hivite who lusted after her. Even if she made herself vulnerable his actions are not in any way to be justified. He did in fact love her, *he clung to her and spoke to her tenderly* and wanted to marry her – somewhat of a contrast to that other tragic story of Amnon and Tamar. Note that Dinah stayed on in Shechem's house (v.26) whether voluntarily or forcibly we do not know.

Now what was Jacob's response when he heard that his daughter had been violated? *He held his peace or kept silent until his sons came*. When his sons came *they were grieved and very angry*. When Hamor and Shechem came to ask for Dinah as a wife it was Jacob's sons who answered. Why did Jacob not express disgust at what they did to his daughter? Why did he not seek justice for his daughter? These are important questions don't you think. He was her father, he was head of the family, but he remained silent.

The sin of omission can be just as serious as the sin of commission. To fail to act when we have responsibility, or opportunity, is sin. Remember Ezekiel the watchman (Ezekiel 3:18) – if you fail *to speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way...he shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand*.

Should Jacob have not acted in this situation to at least condemn what was done to his daughter? His sons in fact appear more righteous than him as they condemn this *disgraceful thing in Israel...this thing that ought not to be done* (v.7). Should he not have sought justice rather than let his sons run off seeking revenge in their anger. He did speak up in the end but only to complain that they have made him obnoxious among the Canaanites (v.30).

As we point one finger at Jacob there are of course three pointing back to us. How easy it is to shirk our responsibilities in the family, in the church or in society. *Husbands love your wives* – meaning one wife (Ephesians 5). Jacob did not love Leah. He did not love her children and take proper responsibility for them. Fathers bring up your children in the *training and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6). Simple words, but solemn commands.

May the Lord forgive us our failures in this regard. May he stir us up by His Word and His Spirit to speak out against evil, to speak the truth in love, and warn the lost around us.

Place Settled

You were asked to note where Jacob settled. Do you notice anything vaguely familiar in the words of 33:18, 19? Jacob *pitched his tent before the city*, the city of Shechem, a Canaanite city. Remind you of anything. Turn back to Genesis 13:12 – *Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom. But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked*. Wasn't Jacob asking for trouble just like Lot before him?

And why was he settling here anyway. He should have been moving on to Bethel where he had set up a pillar to the Lord over 25 years before. See the next chapter – *Arise go up to Bethel and*

dwell there God told him. The Lord had brought him back safely to this promised-land. It was time to give thanks at Bethel, the house of God. He should have been moving on to visit his father in Hebron. Why did he delay and settle before this city of Shechem?

He even bought a parcel of land from the Canaanites. Abraham bought some land previously to bury his wife but Jacob bought this land to settle on. The Lord promised the whole land, as far as one could see in all directions, to him and his descendents. Had he forgotten this promise? It must have been great to have his own land after all his wandering and all the trouble he had been through. He was keen to settle but his was certainly not the place the Lord wanted him to be. Was he settling for so much less than the promise – this parcel in a nice spot near Shechem?

Abraham desired a better country, a *heavenly country*. He desired the city that God had prepared for him, the city *whose builder and maker is God* (Hebrews 11:10). Jacob inherited the promise given to Abraham. He also desired this better country that God had promised but at this point in his life he took his eye off the ball as it were. He thought the parcel of land near Shechem was just fine. Maybe he had grown weary in the journey, maybe distracted for a moment by Satan.

We face the same temptations don't we? Too often we settle for less than what the Lord has promised us in Christ. We look at those around us and start to think like them – we start to settle into life in this world and enjoy the little comforts that we have. But we have a heavenly home like Abraham, don't we? We have a place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us, don't we? Why then do we get so settled in our earthly abode?

Why do we see 100 cars outside Bunnings on Sunday morning and only ten outside the church? Because a whole generation in our land has settled for the comforts of this life. They have no hope in the future, they have no concern for where they will dwell after they die. They live on the doorstep of disaster.

Pagan Promises

Like Lot, Jacob got too close to the wicked. His father Isaac told him *you shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan* (28:1). Yet here he was entertaining these pagans who came to take his daughter in marriage, and who offered their daughters to his sons. He was actually putting the promise of God in jeopardy – for God had promised the whole land to his descendants. Israel was the father of the nation, the holy nation, separated unto God.

'Be in the world but not of the world' we are told. Jacob was getting dangerously close to being **of** the world, don't you think? And what do you think about yourself? Are you coveting the worldly wealth, security and comforts that the wicked enjoy? And remember, intermarriage with them is a sure way to lose sight of the promise of God in Christ Jesus – the heavenly country and eternal life in Him (I John 2:15).

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