

Genesis (2011) 34B

- Jacob's children are grown and living with their father in the land of Canaan
 - They are parties to a covenant with the living God, a covenant which promises they will inherit this land
 - When Israel leaves the land of Egypt and enters the promise land under Joshua, the nation will experience a degree of ownership in the land
 - But even that moment isn't the complete fulfillment of the Lord's promises, which await for the Kingdom's arrival upon the Second Coming of Christ
 - So in the meantime, the Lord is working to build a nation
 - To fulfill their purpose in God's eternal plan, the nation that comes from Jacob must remain separate from the world around them
 - They cannot lose the distinction God created by separating Abraham from his people
 - The seed promise of the Messiah will find its fulfillment in the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - But the family of Jacob are as sinful as any other family on earth
 - And should they be left to their own instincts, there would be no hope for this family to fulfill their mission
 - Making matters worse, Jacob is a flawed patriarch, incapable it seems of conquering his deceptive character
 - And those character flaws have trickled down to his sons
- So the story of Jacob includes moments like the one we're studying in Chapter 34
 - Low points in the family's history where their sin erupts into a crisis that threatens to undo God's work, by bringing an end to the family God requires for His divine mission
 - We're going to see a total of three such crises in Jacob's family history

- One occurs here in Chapter 34, another in Chapter 37 and the third in Chapter 38
 - Each of these crises follows a similar pattern
 - Jacob's sons acting in sin make foolish and destructive choices that place the future of the family at risk
 - Then Jacob is an absentee father, taking no meaningful action to correct his sons' behavior
 - But the Lord steps in to turn the circumstances to good thereby maintaining the integrity and sanctity of Jacob's family and ensuring His eternal purposes are met
 - All of these situations are important because they have an impact on the inheritance and the seed promise of the covenant
- Today we finish the first of those three crises
 - In the first half of Genesis 34 the daughter of Jacob has ventured into the local Canaanite culture in Shechem seeking friendship
 - Her poor judgment led to an opportunity for evil to take advantage of her
 - She was raped, kidnapped and now her captors are negotiating to keep her
 - Jacob allows his sons to conduct the negotiation
 - But the terms offered to the sons would result in an even greater tragedy for Jacob: intermarriage with the condemned world
 - While Jacob seems not to object at all, the sons say they will intermarry but only after the men of Shechem agree to be circumcised
 - But this was just a deception on their part

[Gen. 34:15](#) "Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,

[Gen. 34:16](#) then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.

[Gen. 34:17](#) "But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

[Gen. 34:18](#) Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son.

[Gen. 34:19](#) The young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter. Now he was more respected than all the household of his father.

[Gen. 34:20](#) So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city and spoke to the men of their city, saying,

[Gen. 34:21](#) "These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them.

[Gen. 34:22](#) "Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised.

[Gen. 34:23](#) "Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us."

[Gen. 34:24](#) All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

- (Jacob's) sons' deception is working
 - The city leaders say the words seemed reasonable
 - They return to the city, and Shechem is more than eager to submit to the procedure
 - And we're told he was the most respected member of his father's household
 - So the city was inclined to listen to his counsel
 - When the father and son stand in the city gate, they are holding an official meeting, soliciting the men to agree to this covenant with Jacob's family
 - The prince lists three advantages to this covenant
 - Jacob's family is friendly with the city
 - They will have opportunity to marry the daughters of Jacob's family
 - And they will gain control of their livestock and property
 - The only condition for the men would be circumcision
 - This was no small concession
 - In an age without anaesthetics or the sharpest of knives, the procedure would be very painful, both in the moment and over the course of several days

- Still it was a short term sacrifice for a long term benefit
- If we take a closer look at Shechem's arguments in favor of the relationship, we'll find a pattern that God's people encounter regularly
 - First, the opportunity for a relationship rests with the family of Jacob
 - They were showing a willingness to be "friendly" with the Canaanites
 - This word is *shalem*, which means devoted or complete
 - Only after God's people suggested a willingness to be devoted to the city and to become complete with them could the rest follow
 - Secondly, the men sought to intermarry so they could absorb the family of Jacob into the Canaanite culture
 - The added population would strengthen the city within the land
 - Remember, the family of Jacob was roughly equal in size and power as the city of Shechem
 - Yet no one is suggesting that Jacob would absorb Shechem
 - Instead, the family of Jacob will become part of the city
 - Finally, the end result for the world was earthly gain
 - They would benefit materially through the relationship
 - Meanwhile Jacob would have lost a far greater eternal reward
- Hamor and Shechem's statements perfectly summarize how God's children suffer when they compromise with the world
 - First, it begins when we make the choice to make friends with the world
 - And we're not talking about merely being neighborly,
 - We're talking about becoming devoted and committed to living our lives according to the world's rules, expectations and values
 - The world remains forever willing to accept us into their way of life
 - The choice is ours, not theirs

- And Scripture teaches us not to unite with the world, but rather we are to remain separate and distinct

[2Cor. 6:14](#) Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

[2Cor. 6:15](#) Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

[2Cor. 6:16](#) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

[2Cor. 6:17](#) “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.

- Secondly, if we make the mistake of such a union, be forewarned: we won't sanctify the world, the world will absorb us
 - God alone has the power to change hearts, and though He works through relationships to bring about faith, He's told us not to build relationships that compromise our walk
 - So we're only fooling ourselves when we establish worldly relationships
 - Those relationships won't bring spiritual fruit
 - Our sinful compromise can't create holiness in others, especially when we're living like they do
 - When our distinction is lost, so is our witness
- Finally, whatever earthly benefits we accrue by these relationships with the world, we stand to lose far more in the eternal
 - Time and time again we've all seen believers make this devil's bargain
 - They seek the approval and acceptance by a falling and ungodly world, and as they win that approval, they forfeit godliness and a sanctified life
 - On judgment day, when everything is made known, their loss will be evident

[James 4:4](#) You adulteresses, do you not know that **friendship** with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- As it turns out in Chapter 34, Israel's offer to unite with the city was not genuine
 - It was merely a deception, and the deception has worked
 - In v.24 we're told that the men of the city agree to become circumcised
 - The procedure was painful, like any cutting of skin would be
 - But given the sensitive location of the body, the pain intensifies for the next several days as the body tries to heal
 - At about the third day, the men would have been in great discomfort
 - They would probably be suffering mild fevers from infections
 - They were probably sleep deprived from several nights of little rest
 - And this situation was exactly what Jacob's sons expected

[Gen. 34:25](#) Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.

[Gen. 34:26](#) They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.

[Gen. 34:27](#) Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister.

[Gen. 34:28](#) They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field;

[Gen. 34:29](#) and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.

- Two of Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, entered the city on the third day and began to kill every male in the city
 - This was probably somewhere in the range of 50 to 100 men
 - As v.25 says, they had a tactical advantage in the fight because of the pain of the men

- The pain would have weakened them enough to ensure that Jacob's sons had the advantage in the battle
 - From their own experience in practicing circumcision, they must have known what to expect
 - So their deception has played out exactly as they expected
- When they reached the King's home, they killed both he and his son who had raped Dinah
 - Then they set their sister free
 - But freeing their sister wasn't enough
 - The sons then began to loot the entire city
 - The looting was payback, we're told, for the rape of Dinah
 - They took all the livestock of the city
 - They took all the children and all the wives of the city
 - The people of Shechem became servants of Jacob's family
- The brothers have essentially wiped Shechem off the map
 - The city was essentially gone and all that it contained was now part of Jacob's caravan
 - What caused the two sons to respond in this way?
 - The clue comes in their relationship to Dinah
 - Dinah is the daughter of Jacob and Leah
 - And Simeon and Levi are sons of Leah as well
 - They are the full brothers of Dinah
 - And they know their mother is the unloved woman in Jacob's life
 - Likewise, they remember that as the family met Esau, Jacob had demonstrated that Rachel and Joseph were most valuable
 - While Leah and her children were more expendable

- To top it off, when Dinah was kidnapped and raped, the best their father could do was agree to negotiate a price for her
 - Jacob gave no effort to defend her honor or his family's honor
 - He made no demands of Hamor
 - And he gave no thought to the covenant God had given him
 - Jacob seemed only concerned about how to avoid confrontation
- It's obvious that years of Jacob's favoritism for Rachel and her son has boiled over into this rage
 - While their actions were wrong, beginning with the deception, we might at least find some sympathy for how they felt
 - Still, they have stepped well beyond what was appropriate and reasonable
 - They have murdered an entire city of men
 - And they have brought an entire city of idolators and pagan worshippers into the family of Jacob
 - While they will be absorbed into the family of Jacob, they will bring trouble
 - Secondly, they have dealt treacherously with a city state in the land
 - Other city states are going to learn of this deception and defeat
 - And when the news gets around, the other city states are likely to take action to defend themselves
 - They might band together to wage war against Jacob
 - At the very least, they won't be willing to trade or work with Jacob
 - Jacob has exactly these concerns

Gen. 34:30 Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the

Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household.”

[Gen. 34:31](#) But they said, “Should he treat our sister as a harlot?”

- Jacob’s first and only concern in the entire matter is how he will be perceived in the land
 - He knows that his sons’ treachery will make his family a pariah from this point forward
 - And this is precisely the good outcome God is at work to establish
 - God has used the sin of Shechem, Simeon and Levi to address the wrongs against Israel and to ensure His plan is met
 - The injustice against Dinah has been paid out, albeit in excessive ways
 - The Lord’s promise to curse those who make themselves enemies of Israel has been kept
 - And God kept it by using the sin of two sons
 - God didn’t author their sin, but He made good use of it
 - Because in addition to avenging Dinah, this action will ensure the nation has strong incentive to remain separate and distinct in the land
 - Furthermore, the extreme nature of the city’s destruction ensures that no other city state will dare attack Jacob’s family
 - They will be a feared people, further ensuring their isolation
- After hearing their father’s protest, the sons respond with indignation
 - They ask if it would be better that their sister be treated as a harlot?
 - It’s important to notice they call Dinah “our sister” rather than addressing her as Jacob’s daughter
 - They defended her because they knew Jacob wouldn’t
 - These sons are guilty of their sinful actions, but the seeds for their evil fruit were planted by Jacob decades earlier

- When Jacob was practicing deception, he was teaching his sons to deceive
- When Jacob was treating his first wife unjustly, he was breeding malice and revenge in his sons' hearts
- When Jacob was sidestepping his responsibilities to settle the jealous disputes between his wives, he was teaching his sons that they had to take matters into their own hands
- When Jacob was fighting against God rather than resting in the Lord's promises, he taught his sons to live in their flesh rather than relying on God's power
- So Jacob's first crisis begins with his children's desire to make friends with the Canaanites and it ends with a city destroyed and his family alienated from the Canaanite people
 - God turns the crisis to good by ensuring His people remain separate
 - And yet he also holds the two sons accountable for their terrible sin
 - You may remember I said last week that the events of this chapter have an impact on the Messiah's arrival, which is why Dinah is recorded in the story of Jacob
 - Simeon and Levi are second and third in line to be the patriarch after Jacob
 - Because of this sin, Jacob will withhold a blessing on them upon his death bed
 - Later, we'll see Reuben, the first born, will also sin against his father and lose his blessing
 - Therefore, because Simeon and Levi were denied an inheritance in the family, they also forfeit the chance to be the family bringing the seed promise of the Messiah
 - That promise will eventually fall to the fourth son in line