

Introduction

Losing my focus and passion for Christ after a couple of years and being confronted by Dan

1. Initially, I wasn't too keen on Dan confronting, and even rebuking me, but ultimately it sunk in and I realized he was right
2. I needed that kick in the pants, and I believe we see something similar with Jacob in our passage today:
  - a. The Lord called on Jacob to return home, but he stopped short of completing the goal and seemed to become complacent living in the Canaanite city of Shechem
  - b. However, there were significant consequences for that decision, and we'll look at five of them today
  - c. But, God being God, intervened once again in Jacob's life to set him back on course in accordance with His purpose and plan

A. The LORD called on Jacob to return home, but he stopped short of the goal and became complacent living in the Canaanite city of Shechem

1. God's plan to return Jacob to his home in southern Canaan, and His call for Jacob to go back home, have been repeated throughout Jacob's story:
  - a. We see this when Jacob first left home (READ Genesis 28:10-22):
    - 1) You will notice that Jacob set out from Beersheba which was his home and where his family lived
    - 2) Even though Jacob was in Bethel (about 50 miles north of Beersheba) when God appeared to him, Jacob understood God's promise not to simply mean he would bring him back to the land of Canaan, but specifically to his family home: **"and I return to my father's house in safety"** (28:21)
  - b. We see this again in Genesis 31: After 20 years living in Paddan-aram with Laban, God called on Jacob to return home to his family:
    - 1) READ Genesis 31:3, 16-18
    - 2) Notice that these verses refer to returning to his **"fathers"** and his **"relatives"**, and specifically **"to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac"**
  - c. Finally, we see the same thing in Genesis 32 when Jacob prayed to God for deliverance from Esau:
    - 1) READ Genesis 32:9
    - 2) Notice that this verse also refers to returning not just to the land of Canaan, but specifically **"to your relatives"**

2. Now, if you remember, last week in chapter 33 Jacob finally crossed over into the land of Canaan, but then he stopped:
  - a. He first stopped at Succoth, just over the river, and built a house there and setup booths for his livestock: we don't know how long he stayed there but apparently it wasn't long
  - b. From there he journeyed just a few miles to Shechem where he stopped once again—except this time more permanently:
    - 1) The general consensus is that Jacob lived in Shechem for 10 years
    - 2) Shechem was on a major trade route and must have been of a significant size because it was surrounded by a wall and had a city gate
    - 3) Population estimates range between a few hundred to a few thousand inhabitants
    - 4) 33:18 informs us that Jacob bought land just outside the city which implies he intended to stay and make it his home
3. It's not clear why Jacob stopped at Shechem for such a long time:
  - a. What is clear, however, is that it wasn't home; it wasn't Beersheba where his family, his relatives, and his father were
  - b. I want to be careful here because the Bible never states specifically that stopping at Shechem for a decade was disobedient or sinful, but God's command was to return home to where Jacob's family was...and that was at least 75 miles further to the south
  - c. I would suggest that at a minimum, Jacob had become complacent—maybe even comfortable—while living in Shechem for nearly a decade
  - d. And, as we'll see next, there were substantial consequences for stopping short and making Shechem home for his family

B. There were significant consequences for living in Shechem instead of returning home as God commanded

1. The first consequence of living in Shechem was the violation of Jacob's daughter, Dinah (READ 34:1-4):
  - a. It's not exactly certain what is meant by Dinah going "**out to see the daughters of the land**", but most agree that it reflects a curiosity or a desire to see how the women of Canaan lived:
    - 1) This in no way suggests that she was responsible or to blame for what happened to her, especially because estimates are that she was no more than 13 years old at this point (Joseph was born after her but he was only 17 when he was sold into slavery later)
    - 2) However, it suggests that there was something about the Canaanite women and their culture that sparked her curiosity and caused her to leave the comfort and safety of her home to wander out into the city

- b. While she was out wandering about the city, she caught the eye of a very prominent man named Shechem who **“saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.”**
      - 1) Other translations say he **“violated her”, “sexually assaulted her”, “humiliated her”** and even **“raped her”**
      - 2) He was so infatuated with her that after raping her he tried to win her affection: the phrase **“spoke tenderly to her”** is more literally **“he spoke to her heart”** which is used in Hosea (2:14) and Judges (19:3) to refer to speaking tenderly to a spouse to win her back, and in 2 Samuel (19:7) to refer to comforting someone
      - 3) Finally, he demanded of his father, **“Get me this girl as my wife.”** (4)
  2. The second consequence of living in Shechem was Jacob’s reticence (READ 34:4-12):
    - a. Reticence refers to being inclined to be silent and that certainly describes Jacob here
    - b. In fact, Jacob’s silence after learning of Dinah’s rape is both deafening and shocking:
      - 1) V. 5 tells us that when he learned of the rape of his daughter, he **“kept silent until”** his sons came in from the field
      - 2) This is quite the contrast to the reaction of Jacob’s sons that we see in v. 7 (READ)
      - 3) Jacob even appeared to remain silent
    - c. What happened to Jacob while living in Shechem that so deadened his sense of justice that he didn’t speak or act after his daughter was raped?
      - 1) He didn’t keep silent when Laban deceived him over Leah and Rachel
      - 2) He didn’t keep silent when Rachel unfairly accused him of not giving her a child
      - 3) He didn’t keep silent when Laban’s sons accused him of wrong doing or when he confronted Laban over changing his wages ten times and trying to rip him off
      - 4) He didn’t keep quiet when Laban chased him down after leaving and accused him of stealing his idols
      - 5) But when his daughter was raped by one of the most prominent men in the city...he stayed silent?
  3. The third consequence of living in Shechem was Jacob’s compromise on intermarriage with the Canaanites (READ 34:8-12):
    - a. All of the speaking in these verses was done by Hamor and Shechem, and what they proposed was not just giving Dinah to Shechem as a wife, but intermarriage between the clans of Jacob and Hamor
    - b. Hamor, Shechem, and the inhabitants of the city were Hivites which means they were Canaanites; so immediately our radar should go off:
      - 1) Abraham prohibited Isaac taking a wife from among the Canaanites
      - 2) Isaac prohibited Jacob from doing the same
      - 3) He and Rebecca even saw firsthand the issues it created when Esau married TWO Canaanite women
      - 4) But, when Hamor and Shechem proposed the direct opposite to Jacob, once again HE REMAINED SILENT:
        - a) But, this wasn’t all that Hamor was proposing; he was proposing that Jacob fully embrace becoming part of their culture and society: **“thus you shall live**

**with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it and take possession of property in it” (10)**

- b) Jacob’s complete silence, not just in these five verses but all the way through the rest of the passage until the very end, suggests he didn’t share the same convictions that Abraham and Isaac did against intermarriage with the Canaanites
4. The fourth consequence of living in Shechem was the deceit of Jacob’s sons (READ 34:13-24):
- a. It’s hard not to see the irony here with the word deceit
  - b. It’s made clear in the verses that follow this section that Jacob’s sons never intended to accept Hamon’s and Shechem’s proposal; it was all a ruse, and we’ll get to that in a moment
  - c. If I’m being honest, in some respects I want to praise Jacob’s sons for their brilliant plan and standing up for their sister when Jacob didn’t, and many commentators and pastors do (in fact, one pastor referred to their actions and righteous and holy, including their slaughter of all the men in the city)
  - d. However, v. 13 refers to what they did as **“deceit”** and EVERY time this word is used in the OT it is presented as sin which means we should interpret it this way here:
    - 1) Instead of just rejecting Hamon’s and Shechem’s proposal and confronting them directly over the rape of their sister, they came up with a deceptive scheme to extract not justice, but vengeance
    - 2) And, their plan worked perfectly because Hamor and Shechem were so well respected that every male in the city agreed to get circumcised so they could intermarry with Jacob’s family
5. The fifth consequence of living in Shechem was the violence and vengeance of Jacob’s sons (READ 34:25-31):
- a. A few minutes ago, I referred to what Jacob’s sons did as vengeance, not justice, because that’s exactly what it was:
    - 1) Justice would have been holding Shechem accountable for raping Dinah
    - 2) Vengeance was incapacitating every male in the city so they could slaughter them, and then plundering the city, the flocks, and the women and children
  - b. Initially, Jacob’s response suggests he was only concerned about how his sons’ actions affected him and the family (REREAD 34:30)
  - c. However, his statement to Simeon and Levi at the end of his life sums up their actions more directly (READ 49:5-7):
    - 1) He called their actions **“violence”**; said they slew the men in **“their anger”**, said they were **“self-willed”** and their **“wrath”** was **“cruel”**
    - 2) He prayed that his soul would not enter into their council, or his glory be united with their assembly
    - 3) He even cursed them by saying that their descendants would be dispersed and scattered among Israel because of their actions (this was fulfilled with Levi not

being given their own territory in the land of Canaan and Simeon ultimately being incorporated into Judah)

C. God intervened once again in Jacob's life to set him back on course in accordance with His purpose and plan

1. It's unfortunate that there's a chapter break after the last verse in chapter 34 because I believe the first eight verses of chapter 25 provide the conclusion to this episode in Jacob's life:
  - a. We began our teaching today with a reminder of God's plan and his command to Jacob to return to his family in southern Canaan
  - b. However, along the way, Jacob stopped short of that goal, got side-tracked, and decided to make his home in the Canaanite city of Shechem, just inside the border
  - c. This decision appears to have had significant consequences for Jacob and his family, and it appeared as if he'd become complacent and forgotten about God's purpose and plan for his life
  - d. So, what we have in the first 8 verses of chapter 25 is God intervening in his life once again and setting him back on course
2. God called on Jacob to go back to Bethel (READ 35:1-8):
  1. Bethel was about 25 miles south of Shechem and was on the route Jacob would have taken back home to his family; but he wasn't just telling Jacob to continue the journey home
  2. The reason God sent him to Bethel was to **"make an altar there to God"**:
    - a. Building an altar had one purpose, worship, and that's a core theme in these eight verses:
      - 1) Verse one begins with the command to go to Bethel and make an altar to God
      - 2) In verse 35:3, Jacob acknowledged that he was going to Bethel to make an altar to God
      - 3) And in 35:7 when he arrived at Bethel, Jacob built the altar to God
      - 4) All three of these references to the altar imply God was calling on Jacob to go back to Bethel and worship him
    - b. So why Bethel and this emphasis on worship?
      - 1) One reason was because Bethel is where Jacob first met God:
        - a) God first appeared to him there (RE-READ 1b & 7b)
        - b) It's where God made his promises to Jacob and where Jacob made his vow to God (Genesis 28)
        - c) It's also significant because Abraham worshipped God (Genesis 12:8)
      - 2) A second reason was because Jacob's household was involved with idolatry (RE-READ 35:2-3): the text doesn't tell us whether Jacob himself was involved but at a minimum he had become complacent and permitted it

- 3) A third reason, and we won't see this until next week, was that God would appear to Jacob in person at Bethel (35:9ff)
3. God's call for Jacob to go back to Bethel was an intervention of sorts—to provide a reset for Jacob and his household, to remind Jacob of when and where he first met God, remind him of God's promises and the vow he made, to purge his household of their idol worship and set their hearts back on Him in worship before returning to the land of promise

D. Takeaways (3):
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1. The first takeaway is that it's easy to become comfortable living in and among the world when we forget God's purpose and plan, and His call on our lives:
  - a. Jacob initially set out to obey God and head back home, but somewhere along the way stopped short of completing that goal and apparently became comfortable living among the pagans in Shechem
  - b. In the same way, when we stop seeking or pursuing God—when we stop short of that goal—we too become comfortable, even satisfied, living in this world
2. The second takeaway is that there are consequences, sometimes significant consequences, when we become comfortable or satisfied living in and among this world—we become complacent, we become more interested in earthly treasures than spiritual and heavenly ones, we begin to look like and act like the world instead of standing out as beacons of light in the world, we grieve the Holy Spirit and ultimately bring shame to our Savior
3. The third takeaway is that like Jacob we sometimes need God to intervene, wake us up, and call us back to Bethel so-to-speak to worship Him, get rid of the idols in our lives, and remind us of His promises to us and our commitment to Him