**Be Careful What You Sow, for You Will Reap It Later; You Can Count on That! (JD 08)**

C:\Users\cryun2\Documents\Imagenes 1\Body Parts\Finger Pointing 2.tifUpon hearing about a believer who was angry and showed no mercy toward this brother for being negligent with his responsibility, I said, “That man needs to be careful in condemning others like that because what goes around comes around.” Someone heard this and commented, “Hey, that’s karma,” implying that I was adding some Hindu concept to the Christian faith! I was merely paraphrasing one of the most foundational laws that govern events that occur in our everyday living. It is called, “You reap what you sow,” and when this principle is properly understood and sensibly applied to our lives, it can be a powerful motivator for doing what is right and just.

**Q:** Have you ever said, *Whatever goes round comes around* or something similar? What prompted you?

**A. Do you feel nervous when other religions teach something that is found in the Bible?**

1. If you are a religious pluralist, then such a discovery really bolsters your postmodern belief.

But if you’re an exclusivist, believing that Christ is the only way to God (Jn. 14:6) & strongly committed to the doctrine of Total Depravity (the fallen man is incapable of doing any spiritual good, and therefore also unable to make the least advance toward this recovery), then you may feel uneasy.

2. But you shouldn’t feel that way since the Bible doesn’t endorse a view that the religions of the

world are devoid of any moral & ethical truth. Examine the law of Hammurabi of the Babylo- nian Empire (a worshipper of Marduk), which was formulated three centuries before Moses.

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| 8. If a citizen has stolen an ox, or a sheep,. . . he shall give 30-fold. | Ex 22:1: If a man steals an ox or a sheep . . .,  he must pay back 5 head of cattle for the ox . . . |
| 157. If a citizen after (the death of) his father lies in the bosom of his mother, they shall burn them both | Lv 18:7: Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. (Must be cut off.) |
| 195. If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand. | Ex 21:15: He who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death. |

**Q:** The similarity is obvious! Moses wrote these laws after receiving a direct revelation from God; how then did Hammurabi manage to ascertain similar truths? (Rom. 2:14-15).

**R:** Based on Rom 2:14-15 (When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they don’t have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, & their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them), it can be said: People of other religions “have neither the light of the law nor the light of the gospel; but they do have the light of conscience,” which “is by no means a perfect instrument and it can be abused to the point where it fails to function properly; but it still remains the divine monitor” in the human heart (Kane 1982:134).

**B. The Hindu concept of karma isn’t entire wrong! Some of it is right on!**

1. Karma in Hinduism means action and it refers to the law of cause and effect, which is a critical component of reincarnation (i.e., the unending cycle or birth, death and rebirth).

**Q:** What then is “bad karma” in Hinduism? In general, what does this term imply?

**R:** Bad karma is like a debt one brings into this life from negative actions done in his previous life as another person. It must be paid off by suffering during this lifetime (sowing) in order to come back as a better endowed individual in the next life on earth (reaping). That’s why some Hindus wouldn’t want their suffering alleviated. Is this biblical? Part of it is; the other isn’t!

2. Several verses in the NT highlight this law of cause and effect. Gal. 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” Mat. 7:1 says, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with

the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

**Q1:** To what extent is the karma of Hinduism similar to the concept found in Gal 6:7 & Mat. 7:1?

**R:** Both agree that human actions generate or put in motion certain “effect” (influence, law or

dynamics) that will produce corresponding consequences at some point later.

**Q2:** From the Scriptural standpoint, why is karma not acceptable? (Heb. 9:27).

**R:** Karma works “trans-incarnationally,” meaning, what you do in this lifetime will affect you as a

different person in the next (and on and on). The Christian faith does not agree with this since

Heb 9:27 states: “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” What awaits

after death is not unlimited opportunities to return to earth as a different person but the judgment before God. We only get one crack at life; are you making the best of it?

**C. In what sense is the biblical principle of sowing & reaping different from karma?**

For that, we will examine the life of Judge Abimelech (son of Jerbu-Baal, or Gideon) and the people of Shechem. (Note that Abimelech acted more as a ruler of his people than a judge.)

1. Read 9:1-6, 22. Observe the role that the people of Shechem, many of them being Abimelech’s relatives on his mother’s side (referred to as his brothers in 9:3a), played in his rise to power.

**Q1:** What did Abimelech do to become the judge of his people? What did he sow?

**R:** He sowed the seed of violence by killing his 69 brothers (with what must been a huge rock) as

a way to get rid of competition; only the youngest brother Jotham, managed to escape.

**Q2:** Read 9:16-20. Here, in rebuking the citizens of Shechem, Jotham pointed out their error & what might happen to them in the future. What did they sow? How will they reap?

**R:** I don’t think their decision to follow Abimelech (9:3-4), empowering him with financial

donations that led to hiring reckless men who implemented the murder (which the citizens of

Shechem probably didn’t know about), was necessarily bad; they were his relative after all.

Jotham’s main problem was that they still made Abimelech the judge even after the bloodshed

(9:6). Jotham called this “acting dishonorably” & “not in good faith” toward his brothers who

were murdered by the man whom they kept supporting. For this reason, Jotham saw them as

accomplices to the murder (9:18, 24), who, in this way, sowed the seed of violence as well.

2. In 9:20, Jotham wished that the citizens of Shechem be punished by their *brother* Abimelech

in the future. **Q:** Why was that so ironic?

**R:** The people of Shechem were accomplices to Abimelech’s murder of his own brothers. Jotham,

thus, wished that the same fate awaited the people of Shechem: to be killed by their own kin,

namely, Abimelech, of whom they had said, “He is our brother” (9:3b).

**D. Did Abimelech and the people of Shechem end up reaping what they had sown? If so, how?**

1. First, let’s examine what eventually happened to the people of Shechem. Read 9:22-25.

**Q:** Did the good time between Abimelech & the people of Shechem last? Who then got involved?

**R:** The alliance lasted merely 3 years. The discussion on God sending an evil spirit (1 Ki. 22:19-

22; 2 Thess. 2:11-12) is for another time; here the God of justice actively involved himself in

repaying the evil. Is 3 years a short or long time? Depends, I suppose. But soon or later, God

will address every injustice done on earth, sometimes in a way that make sense to us (e.g.,

Osama Bin-Laden and Moammar Gadhafi who died a violent death) and sometimes in a way

that doesn’t (e.g., Kim Jong Il who seemed to have died in peace). Ultimately, every deed will

be judged in the final judgment (2 Cor.5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,

that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”).

2. You can read about the exact circumstance that led to the war between Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem (led by Gaal) in 9:26-39, but that battle ended very badly for the latter.

Read their tragic end in 9:39-49; then think on Gal 6:7, “A man reaps what he sows” in view

of 9:57. **Q:** What happened? (Rom. 12:19). How did what Jotham say come true?

**R:** Their end was quite gruesome: the entire city destroyed (9:45) & the last of the citizens of

Shechem burnt to death on top of their temple (9:49) by their “brother” Abimelech!

The seed of violence sown earlier in one’s lifetime was reaped not in the next life, as karma

asserts, but later in the same life. Is it some force that makes this happen? Reaping in many

cases is a matter of natural consequences (e.g., smoking and drinking heavily now may lead to

lung and liver cancer later) but in this case, it was the LORD, for 9:57 says, “God also made

the men of Shechem pay for all their wickedness.” In view of Rom. 12:17, 19a, it is God who

ensures that unrepentant sins do not go unpunished (administered in varying degrees—Lk.

12:47-48). Those people who are committed to doing evil (harmful things to others) will be

repaid by God. (Rom. 12:19:Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s revenge, my friends,

but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.)

3. What happened to the vile Abimelech, a killer of his own brother and an entire citizenry?

**Q:** Read 9:50-55. In what sense did God “repay the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his

father by murdering his 69 brothers?” (9:56). Note how and what killed this man.

**R:** In the antiquity, being killed or outdone (Barak) by a woman must’ve been a very shameful thing. With his skull cracked open in half by a millstone dropped by a woman on the tower roof, this judge met a violent death (finished off by his own servant). There’re several symme- tries: Abimelech killed his brothers with a stone, so he was killed by a stone; he burned people to death those who were trapped in the tower of Shechem, so he was killed by a stone dropped from another tower; Abimelech killed others, so he was killed. Yes, a man reaps what he sows!

**E. Conclusion: What are the two biblical principles of sowing & reaping?**

1. First: What one does earlier in life can affect later in the same life correspondingly. In view of Mat. 7:1, if you show no mercy now, then you won’t be shown mercy later in this lifetime.

2. For the second concept, read the Gal. 6:7-10. **Q**:What is the second aspect of this principle?

**R:** Our actions & conducts in this lifetime can have consequences after death. The entire Gal. 6:7-

10 says: “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please

his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Pleasing the Lord implies having trusted Jesus for salvation (also bearing fruits

for Him—Col 1:10), thus eventually reaping eternal life. Pleasing his sinful nature implies not

having trusted the Lord for salvation because one was so preoccupied with pleasing the sinful

nature (Rom. 8:8, 9b: “Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. . . . And if anyone does not have

the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ”).

**F. Application:** A sensible understanding of the law of sowing & reaping can motivate us to do

what is right & just at the present moment.

**Q1:** Share some things that you ended up reaping (good or bad) from that which was sown earlier.

**Bad**: I wish I hadn’t been temperamental with my children when they were young.

**Good**: Many course materials I produced in English to disciple my congregation in the 1990s

(sowing) became the prototype for more substantial & extensive courses (2,500+ pages) that I

developed in Spanish (reaping) in the 2000s. Moreover, the discipline of writing that I deve- loped during this period (sowing) gave me the discipline I needed to produce them (reaping).

**Q2**: What are some things that you’ve been sowing that should be stopped at once in healthy

fear of reaping its consequences in the future?