

Exegetical Notes – 2 Samuel 13:1-22

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen for Cornerstone Fellowship
101 Kylies Road, Coatesville, PA 19320
610-384-1375
charleshjensen@aol.com

2 Samuel 13:1-22

Verses 1-2

¹ *In the course of time, Amnon son of David fell in love with Tamar, the beautiful sister of Absalom son of David.*

² *Amnon became so obsessed with his sister Tamar that he made himself ill. She was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything to her.*

- Amnon was David's first-born son (see 2 Samuel 3:2), Israel's apparent heir. His mother was Ahinoam.
- Absalom was also David's son. He was David's third son. His mother's name was Maacah (see 2 Samuel 3:3).
- Tamar was Absalom's sister and Amnon's half-sister.
- Amnon has "fallen in love" with his half-sister and wants to have a sexual relationship with her. Sex outside of marriage is forbidden by the law of Moses. The Law of Moses forbids marriage between a man and his half-sister (see Leviticus 18:11). Therefore, Amnon is "frustrated." He cannot have what he wants. He is prevented from it by the Law of Moses.
- Amnon's obsession with Tamar is sick. He wants her because he cannot have her. This is the definition of greed and covetousness. He made himself physically sick over this.
- This story must be read in light of God's judgment on David for the sin of polygamy and coveting Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 12:1-25). David's house was out of order in these matters. His son saw in him a bad example in this. The truth here is that Amnon is following the bad example set for him by his father.

Verses 3-4

³ *Now Amnon had an adviser named Jonadab son of Shimeah, David's brother. Jonadab was a very shrewd man.* ⁴ *He asked Amnon, "Why do you, the king's son, look so haggard morning after morning? Won't you tell me?"*

Amnon said to him, "I'm in love with Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister."

- Amnon's cousin, Jonadab, was his advisor. But Jonadab really only looked out for his own best interest. He was shrewd. Realizing that Amnon was the crown prince, in theory if not in fact, he believed it would be in his own best interest to get Amnon anything Amnon wanted. He acted in his best interest, not Amnon's.
- When Jonadab saw that something was bothering Amnon, he convinced Amnon to tell him what was the matter. Amnon told him his secret, that he wanted Tamar.

Verse 5

⁵ “Go to bed and pretend to be ill,” Jonadab said. “When your father comes to see you, say to him, ‘I would like my sister Tamar to come and give me something to eat. Let her prepare the food in my sight so I may watch her and then eat it from her hand.’”

- Instantly, Jonadab had a plan to get Amnon what he wanted.
- He told Amnon to go to bed and pretend to be sick. When David came to visit, Jonadab told Amnon to ask his father to send Tamar to him so she could prepare him something to eat while he watched her and then to feed it to him from her hand.

Verses 6-9a

⁶ So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When the king came to see him, Amnon said to him, “I would like my sister Tamar to come and make some special bread in my sight, so I may eat from her hand.”

⁷ David sent word to Tamar at the palace: “Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare some food for him.” ⁸ So Tamar went to the house of her brother Amnon, who was lying down. She took some dough, kneaded it, made the bread in his sight and baked it. ⁹ Then she took the pan and served him the bread, but he refused to eat.

- Amnon followed Jonadab's plan to the letter. David ordered Tamar to do exactly what Amnon requested. Tamar did as David had ordered. But when she tried to feed Amnon, he refused to eat the bread she had made for him.

Verses 9b-11

“Send everyone out of here,” Amnon said. So everyone left him. ¹⁰ Then Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the food here into my bedroom so I may eat from your hand.” And Tamar took the bread she had prepared and brought it to her

brother Amnon in his bedroom. ¹¹ But when she took it to him to eat, he grabbed her and said, “Come to bed with me, my sister.”

- Amnon ordered everyone present to leave him and Tamar alone.
- When everyone had gone Amnon took Tamar into his bedroom, grabbed his sister, and invited her to have sex with him.

Verses 12-14

¹² “No, my brother!” she said to him. “Don’t force me! Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don’t do this wicked thing. ¹³ What about me? Where could I get rid of my disgrace? And what about you? You would be like one of the wicked fools in Israel. Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you.” ¹⁴ But he refused to listen to her, and since he was stronger than she, he raped her.

- Tamar refused him. She pleaded with him not to take her by force. She suggested that he ask David to allow him to marry her. But Amnon would not listen to her. Instead, he took what he wanted. He raped his sister!

Verses 15-19

¹⁵ Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her. Amnon said to her, “Get up and get out!”

¹⁶ “No!” she said to him. “Sending me away would be a greater wrong than what you have already done to me.”

But he refused to listen to her. ¹⁷ He called his personal servant and said, “Get this woman out of my sight and bolt the door after her.” ¹⁸ So his servant put her out and bolted the door after her. She was wearing an ornate robe, for this was the kind of garment the virgin daughters of the king wore. ¹⁹ Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the ornate robe she was wearing. She put her hands on her head and went away, weeping aloud as she went.

- After he raped her, Amnon no longer wanted Tamar. In fact, he detested her. He was disgusted by her. He had her thrown out of his presence.
- She went into mourning. She tore her royal robes, smeared ashes on her forehead, and began to weep. Everyone who saw her knew that something wrong had happened to her.

Verse 20

20 Her brother Absalom said to her, “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother. Don’t take this thing to heart.” And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s house, a desolate woman.

- When Absalom saw Tamar, he knew what had happened from the first moment he saw her. He knew that Amnon had taken her sexually.
- He took her to his house and told her to let him resolve the problem.

Verses 21-22

21 When King David heard all this, he was furious. 22 And Absalom never said a word to Amnon, either good or bad; he hated Amnon because he had disgraced his sister Tamar.

- King David heard what had happened between Amnon and Tamar. The Law of Moses required that Amnon be executed for what he had done (see Leviticus 20:17). But David did nothing. He did not even confront Amnon about this.
- Absalom waited. Perhaps he waited to see what his father would do. Absalom did not speak to his father about the matter and he did not speak to Amnon. He hated his brother and waited for the moment to take revenge.

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