

“Judah and Tamar and Jesus”

Genesis 38:1-30

CONTEXT OF GENESIS CHAPTER 38

- The story of Joseph seems to be “interrupted” by Genesis 38—but it is intentional on Moses’ part.
- Joseph’s dreams prompted envy and hatred by his brothers. Gen. 37:1-11
- Joseph’s brothers conspire to kill him. Gen. 37:18f
- Judah: ‘What profit is it if we kill him? Let’s sell him as a slave instead!’ Gen. 37:26-27

JUDAH’S SIN. v.1-23

1. Judah “turned aside” from the Lord’s plan and intermarried with the Canaanites. v.1-5

- Heb. “turn aside” = to deviate from the path of loyalty or righteousness. Ref. Ex 23:2; Judges 9:3; 1 Ki 2:28
- Judah befriended Hirah, from the royal Canaanite city of Adullam. **v.1**
- Judah married and started a family with a Canaanite woman. **v.2-5** Ref. 1 Chron. 2:3

2. Judah did not raise his sons to follow the LORD. v.6-11

- Judah’s oldest son (Er) also intermarried with a woman named Tamar. **v.6**
- The LORD took the life of Er, Tamar’s first husband, because he was wicked. **v.7**

→ Levirate marriage = When a married man died with no children, his brother was expected to marry his widow and provide children. The first son was considered offspring & heir of the deceased man. Ref. Dt. 25:5-10; Mt. 22:24-28

- The LORD took the life of Onan, Tamar’s second husband, because he was wicked. **v.8-10**
- Fearing the death of his third (& last) son, Judah deceitfully promised him to Tamar when he grew up. **v.11**

3. Judah had relations with a prostitute—who was his daughter-in-law in disguise. v.12-23

→ Proverbs 14:12: There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

JUDAH’S REPENTANCE. v.24-26

1. When Judah hears Tamar is pregnant by prostitution, he calls for her to be put to death. v.24

2. Tamar provides the evidence of Judah’s sin. v.25

3. Judah begins to see the sober truth: “She is more righteous than I....” v.26

- “I did not give her to my son Shelah.” I.e., I was failing to fulfill my responsibility before the LORD.

→ Acts 3:19: Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

→ Luke 15:16-17: And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’ ...and he went back to his father.

THE LORD CONTINUED HIS SOVEREIGN PLAN FOR A COMING MESSIAH. v.27-30

1. The unusual births of Judah and Tamar’s twins: Perez and Zerah.

- Tamar was pregnant with twin boys. **v.27**
- Zerah put his hand out first. **v.28** “this one came out first”
- Then Perez was born (technically the younger son). **v.29**
- Then Zerah was born (officially the firstborn). **v.30**

2. Once again, God chose to work through the younger son.

- Ishmael (older son) → but God chose and worked through Isaac.
- Esau (older son) → but God chose and worked through Jacob.
- Jacob’s sons (the older brothers) sold their younger brother Joseph into slavery → but God usurped their rebellion and worked through Joseph.

3. Perez (younger brother) is next in the genealogical line which leads to King Jesus, the Messiah. Mt. 1:1-7

- Judah’s sinful, twisted union with Tamar produced Perez... King David... King Jesus!
- God will carry out his purpose to raise up One who will crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15).
-God’s plan for Joseph could not be set aside as easily as Judah and his brothers thought.
- While Judah was coming up with a plan to thwart God’s plan, God was thwarting Judah’s plan—all while using Judah’s sinful lineage to birth the coming Messiah.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10: If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶ And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷ And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her,' ⁹ then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.'

Matthew 22:24-28: The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, ²⁴ saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.' ²⁵ Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. ²⁶ So too the second and third, down to the seventh. ²⁷ After them all, the woman died. ²⁸ In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."

Matthew 1:1-7: The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king.

And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph...