

Holy Moments

Week 1: Tamar

Scripture

Matthew 1 & Genesis 38

Week 1 - Tamar

Week 2 - Rahab

Week 3 - Ruth

Week 4 - Bathsheba

Week 5 - Mary

Motivation

The holidays are filled with a lot of activity. For the next 5 weeks, we are going to slow down and take a different look at Jesus. We are going to look through the lens of His genealogy in the gospel of Matthew. More specifically, why in a masculine culture would 5 women be included in the genealogy of the Messiah? These 5 women show us the beauty of the gospel of grace and the work of God's perfect redemptive plan through His imperfect people.

So, please join us as we look at some lesser known moments filled with sordid scandal, brokenness, shame, difficult choices, and ultimately redemption.

Information

Lineage is a popular topic. Death of the pope. Who will be next. Queen Elizabeth dies? What next? Charles King?

Matthew 1:1-6 (ESV) 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,

Four of our 5 women are mentioned in the first 6 verses of the opening of Matthew's gospel. Over the next several weeks we will be taking a look at each of these amazing women.

This is a fore-warning. These stories are not your typical Sunday school fare. Many of these stories are sordid, dark, and filled with sin and brokenness.

We are going to spend most of our time in Genesis 38 this morning. But let's step back one chapter (37) to establish context before we look at Judah and ultimately, Tamar. Joseph was a young annoying little brother who was favored by his father (and so was his mother) in a very difficult messed up polygamist situation. We talked about this previously on our journey through Jacob but it bears repeating. The inclusion of Jacob's polygamist family in the Bible (and others like it) in no way is prescriptive or shows God's approval. If you are paying attention as you read, you will find that these polygamist family relationships were very messed up and broken as you would expect from humanity moving from God's original intent of one man for one woman.

In Chapter 37, the brothers hate and mistreat their young brother. They planned to kill him. His oldest brother, Reuben was going to try and secretly rescue him and return Joseph to his father in order to turn on his brothers and make up for his treachery (chapter 35) of sleeping with his father, Jacob's concubine Bilhah. Judah also not wanting to deal with killing his brother and explaining the situation suggested that

they sell their brother into slavery. So, they sold Joseph to Midianite traders for the price of a slave. Then they faked his death and lied to their father. How much hatred must these brothers have to do this to their brother and their father?

Chapter 38 opens after the brothers sold Joseph and told their father that Joseph was dead. All of the family strife takes its toll on Judah and he leaves the homestead.

Judah - A Man Apart

Apart from his family, morals, and God

Genesis 38:1-5 (ESV) It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. **2** There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, **3** and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. **4** She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. **5** Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.

This small chapter may seem out of place in the midst of Joseph's story. Many are unaware of its existence and its value to the greater part of God's narrative with humanity. As we open chapter 38 several terms should catch our attention and give us clarity on Judah.

It happened at that time - Timing - Reference that this is what was happening as we continue to read Joseph's story (which takes about 23 years).

Turned aside - Reference to moving away in multiple ways - physically getting away from his brothers and walking away from his families faith (more importantly - His Father's faith) - Turning aside or away from God

is no small deal in the Old Testament - Deuteronomy 5:32-33, Proverbs 4:27 - As we are about to see this is Judah's intent. He is associating with the wrong people and looking for the wrong women.

Saw, Took, and even Went in to - This is familiar wording with great purpose in the Old Testament. The first time we see it is the idea of seeing and taking in Genesis 3:6 when Eve saw the tree with forbidden fruit, that it was a delight to the eyes and could make someone wise when she TOOK it and ate it.

This is a similar pattern we see over and over - **Genesis 6:2** - Son's of God saw the daughters or men and took them, **Genesis 12:15** - Pharaoh saw Sarai's beauty and took her, Achan - **Joshua 7:20-21** - saw, coveted and took, **Judges 14:2** - Samson saw the daughter of the Philistines and wanted/demanded them, **II Samuel 11:2** - King David as we will see in a few weeks saw Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) and he assaulted her. **Matthew 4:8-9** - Satan tempting Jesus in the wilderness to see and take (but Jesus refuses)

For Judah this is not love but lust at first sight. We already know what his great grandfather and grandfather think of intermarrying with Canaanite women (**24:1-3, 27:46, 28:12, 8-9**) Intermarriage with Canaanites was an unacceptable thing. But at this point Judah did not care. Judah's wife is never named and as we will see he seemingly moved further and further from her. And make some interesting choices after she dies.

Judah's first son. The one that only seems to matter to him because he was named by him and was called. Er (perhaps all the good names were already taken). So, Judah seems to be present at the birth and naming of his heir/first son. But with each subsequent son there seems to be a growing distance. His 2nd Son, Onan was born and either Judah choose not to name him or was not present. And with his third son Shelah, mom also named him and Judah was away at Chezlib. The name Chizlib is

associated with Failure and deception. It is said by commentators that Judah was at the City of Lies when Shelah was born.

Judah's two eldest sons grow up and Judah find Er a wife. This is where we meet Tamar.

Genesis 38:6-11 (ESV) And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. **7** But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. **8** Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." **9** But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother. **10** And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. **11** Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house.

Judah turning from his family and their faith is not going well. We find his sons are by God's standards so wicked that they are dealt with swiftly. Similar wording used for Sodom and humanity before the flood. We do not know exactly what was so bad but we know that God does not do this kind of thing arbitrarily. This had to be very serious. It would seem that Yahweh is absent from Judah's life at this point. His sons were raised in the Canaanite ways. And Judah pulls Tamar into his family's mess. Not much is known about her other than her name. It is assumed that she is a Canaanite since he lives in the midst and is married to one of them.

After Er dies Judah practices the ancient concept of Leverite Marriage where the next son in line marries and has relations with his brother's wife in order to bring and heir in his brother's name. Onan was on board with everything but producing and heir in his brother's name. Because that son

would be heir over Onan. He wanted it all for himself. So, he took matters into his own hands. Outwardly it looked like he was being the good son and honoring his father and brother. But privately he was acting dispicably. Tamar is caught up in the middle of this craziness.

Tamar - A Woman Alone and Abandoned

Judah wrongly assumes that the problem is Tamar. He feels that she is the reason for the his lack of an heir and his son's death. Yes, he as a father is overwhelmed as any parent would be with the death of his sons. He has no intention of having Shelah marry Tamar. So, Tamar retreats home. Twice a widow. Rejected and scorned by her in-laws. As the years tick by Tamar clearly sees that Judah did not intend for his youngest to marry her. Judah's unnamed wife dies and Tamar devises a plan. Judah went off with his buddy Hirah the Adullamite again (the one who led him to his wife). So, Tamar took off her widow's robes and she covered herself (face especially) with a veil. She went and waited for Judah to pass by because she knew the kind of man he was. Judah would see her and think she was a cult prostitute (something common in Canaan).

Genesis 38: 16-19 (ESV) He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" **17** He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" **18** He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. **19** Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

Judah and Hirah made plans to take the prostitute her goat. But she was no longer there and no one had heard of her. So they gave up. The one encounter with Judah led to her pregnancy. And after three months in their

little town Judah found out (Yes, that the daughter-in-law he forced back to her home and out of his family. That he had broken his promise and married off Sheleh to some other woman.). And Judah demanded her to be burned for her fornication. Thankfully Tamar wisely kept Judah's items because she knew how he would respond and call for her death (even after breaking his promise).

Genesis 38:24-26 (ESV) And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." **25** As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." **26** Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again.

Seeing his signet, cord, and staff awakened Judah. No negotiation needed. All he needed to see was his ID and his authority that he willingly gave to the prostitute. 20+ years he lived apart from his family, his morals, and Yahweh. But the actions of Tamar awakened Judah

Tamar was not going to sit and play the victim. She knew her society as well as her father-in-law and his family. Tamar operated out of resolve to stay committed to this messed up family. She takes matters into her own hands. All she had to lose was her life. So, Tamar takes some bold, questionable, controversial steps in an attempt to secure her future. So, is this story about how we can take things into our own hands and fix everything? Is Tamar this phenomenal hero? No!

Application

God - A God of Amazing Grace Toward the Broken

This is a really ugly messy story with a lot of awful things done by both sides. Before we started the Journey several years ago we warned about

setting and finding heros all over the Bible. The Bible is not about finding and emulating heros. Because apart from Jesus there are none. It is just men and women struggling, failing, trying to follow a perfect God. So, why is this woman and her story part of the genealogy of Jesus? Because the whole story of the Bible is about God's unexpected, undeserved grace toward and unlikely people.

These women have an important place in the genealogy of Jesus to demonstrate that Jesus Christ was not royalty according to human perception in the sense that He did not come from a pure aristocratic background.

And these stories show us the lengths that God will go to in order to see his promises fulfilled. God used situations bathed in deceit, pain, broken promises to bring about his greater ultimate purpose...our redemption. Every person in the genealogy of Jesus needs the salvation Jesus came to freely give. God's plans are never thwarted by our sins. This whole Bible is the story of a gracious God and his broken people. He is faithful when we are not. He keeps his promises when we break ours. He made a way when because of SIN the way seemed impossible.

“Jesus is heir of a line in which flows the blood of the harlot Rahab, and of the rustic Ruth; he is akin to the fallen and to the lowly, and he will show his love even to the poorest and most obscure.” (Spurgeon)

God sees you. In your broken sinful mess. Do you feel abandoned? Alone? Lost? Beyond Hope and Help? Beyond Forgiveness?

Guess what? You are not. Your story. Mine are just like these unlikely men and women listed in Jesus genealogy.

And these four women have an important place in the genealogy of Jesus to show that there is a new place for women under the New Covenant. In

both the pagan and the Jewish culture of that day, men often had little regard for women. In that era, some Jewish men prayed every morning thanking God that they were not Gentiles, slaves or women. Despite that, women were regarded more highly among the Jews than they were among the pagans.

All of the people in the Bible are messes. And yes, especially in the genealogies. As you will see in the coming weeks. All of them.

God can take unlikely people and use them in great ways.