

Sermon Notes 6/20/21

“Judah and Tamar”

How should we respond to Genesis chapter 38?

1. Beware of all kinds of _____.

Genesis 38:8-10

Luke 12:13-15

1 Timothy 6:10

2. Flee from _____.

Genesis 38:15-16

Proverbs 6:25-29

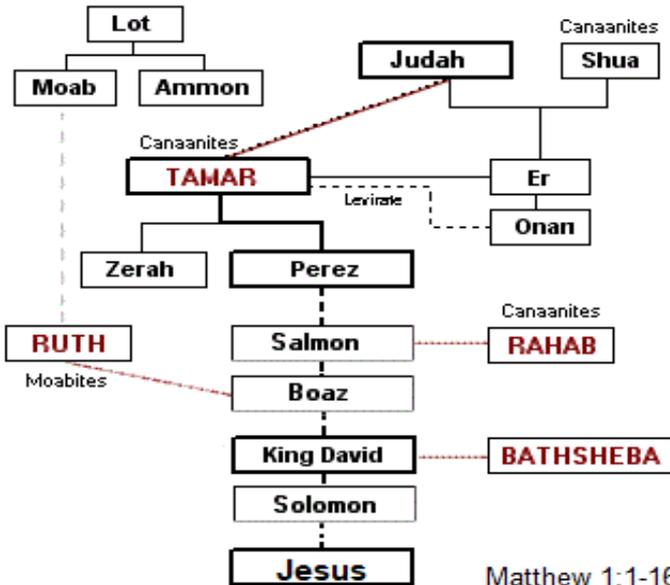
1 Corinthians 6:18-20

3. Be honest and humble about _____.

Genesis 38:26

1 John 1:8-10

Galatians 6:1-2



Tamar is one of the five women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus.

Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 38: June 20-27

Genesis 38

At first glance, chapter 38 may seem out of place. Chapter 37 tells the story of how Joseph was sold into slavery and taken to Egypt. But chapter 38 doesn't say anything about Joseph. It feels like an abrupt detour into the life of Judah. Then chapters 39 through 50 tell the rest of Joseph's story. However, there are two important reasons God chose to include the events from Judah's life at this point in the Joseph narrative. First, there is a deliberate contrast between the moral character of Joseph and the moral failure of Judah. Second, God is leading Judah on a journey of spiritual growth. While Joseph is Jacob's favorite son, Judah will be the son through whom God will bring the Messiah into the world.

Read Genesis 38:1-11

1. Where did Judah go in verse 1?

Some critics claim that the placement of Judah's story after the introduction to Joseph is a sign of disunity and changes that people have made to the book of Genesis over the course of time. However, Paul Kissling explains how the two stories are designed to fit together.

The same verb (יָרַד, *yārad*) is used of Joseph who was "forced to go down" to Egypt (39:1) and of Judah who voluntarily "went down" from his brothers (38:1). The same verbal construction (הִקְרַנָּה, *hakkerna*) is used of the brothers who ask Jacob to please identify Joseph's bloodied robe (37:32) and of Tamar who asks Judah to please identify Judah's personal items (38:25b). The same verb is used to confirm that they did identify the items requested. Jacob refused to be "consoled" at the death of Joseph (37:35) while Judah, by contrast, was "consoled" over the death of his wife (38:12). Joseph's response to the temptation of a sexual liaison with a foreign woman is in marked contrast to Judah's. Joseph refuses to be seduced after repeated attempts by a superior while Judah initiates a relationship with a prostitute.¹

2. Who did Judah marry in verse 2?

¹ Paul Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2009), 438.

God told His people not to intermarry with the Canaanites because He did not want them to be seduced and corrupted by the sins of the culture. Abraham went to great lengths to make sure his son Isaac did not marry a Canaanite woman (Gen. 24:3). Isaac and Rebekah were disappointed when Esau chose to marry Canaanite women (Gen. 26:34-35). Here, Judah leaves his father's camp and falls into the seduction of the Canaanite culture. Kissling notes,

The rapid pace of "saw," "took," and "went into" is a warning of how easily Israelite men could be attracted to Canaanite women by their physical lusts. The fact that Judah's wife is not named may also reflect this. For him she is more an object of his sexual attraction than a person.²

3. What were the names of Judah's three sons? (38:3-5)
4. Whom did Er marry? Why did God kill Er? (38:6-7)
5. What did Judah tell Onan to do? What did he do instead? (38:8-9)

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 gives specific instructions about this practice known as a "levirate" marriage. If a husband died before he had any children, the next eligible brother was to marry the widow and raise up children in the name of the deceased brother. This was to give the widow a secure future and to carry on the name and inheritance of the deceased brother. However, if the deceased brother was the oldest son (as in this case) there would be a temptation for the next oldest son to not carry out this duty. If the deceased brother has no children, the next oldest son will receive a double portion for his inheritance. But if the next oldest son carries out his responsibility and gives the widow a son, the double portion goes to the widow's son. Onan wanted to have sex with his brother's widow while keeping his brother's inheritance for himself.

6. Why did God put Onan death? (38:10)
7. Why did Judah tell Tamar go to live in her father's house? (38:11)

Read Genesis 38:12-30

8. What happened after a long time in verse 12?

² Kissling, 440.

9. What did Tamar do when she heard that Judah had gone to Timnah? (38:13-14)

10. What did Judah offer to Tamar when he thought that she was a prostitute? (38:15-17)

11. What did Tamar ask Judah to give her as a pledge? (38:18)

12. How did Judah lose the things he gave as a pledge? (38:19-23)

13. How did Judah respond to the news about Tamar being pregnant? (38:24)

14. How did Judah respond when he found out that he was the father? (38:25-26)

Kent Hughes observes,

People do change. And this was the first hint of a change taking place in Judah as he publicly admitted his moral failure. Judah's admission to Tamar suggests that he had learned something. In fact, Judah would develop remarkably during the years leading up to chapter 44, where Judah would act as a righteous man before Joseph, pleading for the welfare of Benjamin and offering his life as a pledge to save his little half-brother.³

15. What happened when Tamar gave birth? (38:27-30)

16. In what ways was Judah inconsistent in his morals?

17. What are some of the consequences of sexual immorality?

18. How should we confront the sins we see in others especially when we have committed similar sins?

19. What is one area of your life in which you need to be more consistent?

20. What can you do this week to avoid or guard against sexual temptation?

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 454-455.