

Women in the Lineage of Christ

Week 1 - TAMAR - Genesis 38

Prepare...

As you begin, take a moment to pray and focus on the Lord as you come into his presence and study his word.

You may want to use this prayer, based on Hebrews 4:12

God, your Word is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing my soul and spirit, my joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of my heart. I want to hear you through your word now.

Begin...

Read through the text twice. First read to gain a general understanding of the passage. Read a second time slowly, looking at each verse in detail.

To make sure you have understood the story in Genesis, answer the following questions (in your head or on paper)

1. Judah left his brothers and married a Canaanite woman. How many sons did they have?
2. Who was Tamar?
3. Why was she widowed?
4. Why did she have no children by her brother-in-law, and what was the result for him?
5. After this, where did Tamar go to live, and what was she waiting for?
6. When her mother-in-law died, what did she do?
7. What did she get as a pledge for payment for giving sexual favors to her father-in-law?
8. What was Judah's reaction when he heard that Tamar had got pregnant through prostitution?
9. When he realized that he was the father, how did his attitude change?
10. How many children did Tamar have, and what were their names?

Memory Verse for the Week...

Isaiah 53:6 "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Historical context

Who was Judah?

The fourth son of the twelve sons of Jacob (the Patriarchs), through whom God would eventually bring the Messiah.

He was the cunning brother who decided to sell his brother Joseph into slavery for a profit, instead of killing him (See Genesis 37:23-27). He also failed to keep his promise to his daughter-in-law Tamar, who should have been given to his third son, Shelah.

He does recognize his mistakes however, as we see in this week's story; and also in the way he offers to substitute his life for Benjamin's when Joseph puts his brothers to the test. (See Genesis 44:30-34).

For laws pertaining to widows, see Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

Some scriptures for contemplation...

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

1 Samuel 15:29

He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

Revelation 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Romans 3:23

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...

Isaiah 53:6

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Study Questions

1. Genesis 38:1-5

Judah deliberately moved away from his family and took his wife from among the pagan nations. The problem with this was that their pantheistic religions and practices (for example, child sacrifice and sexual acts as part of worship) were abhorrent to God.

Although the Law (the set of commandments God gave the Israelites in the Old Testament) had not yet been written, it's clear that God's people had already been made aware of many of its basic principles, and one of these was that intermarriage with Canaanites was to be avoided.

Go to Genesis 24:1-4 to find out what matter was of great concern to Abraham in his old age

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Now look at **Genesis 26:34-35**. How did Esau upset his parents?

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2. Genesis 38:6-10; 15-16

Cite three instances of the wicked behavior and immorality that seem to be endemic in Judah's family.

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What was God's response to this?

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3. You may have heard the expression "the God of the Old Testament" and the "God of the New Testament". But does God really change? (See James 1:17; 1 Samuel 15:29; Revelation 1:8 from the side bar). Is he more tolerant of sin now?

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To what extent do you think the state of Judah's family is reflected in your family, your society, the whole of the human race? (See Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6)

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4. **Genesis 38:6-12**

Tamar had a hard time and was treated badly. When her first husband died, she was given to his brother, but he prevented her from getting the child she wanted. Then she was promised that she would be married to the third brother when he was old enough, but that never happened, and she was left waiting “.....” (complete from verse 12).

Can you sympathize with Tamar?

Is there anything for which you (or someone you know) have been waiting a very long time, or something which you have been promised but which you feel has been withheld from you?

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5. **Genesis 38:13-19**

Tamar took the situation into her own hands. She wasn't getting what she wanted, needed or deserved, so when she saw her chance she made her move. How did Tamar benefit from disguising herself as a prostitute and sleeping with her father-in-law?

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What was the cost?

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What should Tamar have done? (See Isaiah 40:27-31, Ps 37:7 and 1 Peter 3:6 from the side bar)

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Have you, like Tamar, ever felt you have been driven to sin by a particular set of circumstances? Do you try to justify your wrong thoughts or actions by blaming others, or by citing ways in which you have been wronged? Does fear of what might happen prevent you from holding on to what is right? (See 1John 4:16-18 from the side bar)

Record your reflections below:

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More scriptures:

Isaiah 40:27-31

Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Psalm 37:7

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

1 John 4:16-18

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Psalm 103:11-12

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Personal Application

From your study of the story of Tamar, and related scriptures, what principles or commands from God can you find to apply to your own life?

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Copy 2 Peter 3:9 below. Be encouraged – God's grace is enough for you!

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