

Midweek Study

Dr. Josh Franklin • Senior Pastor



TRUSTING GOD IN THE DARKNESS

Genesis 37-50

God's Tapestry of Grace

(Genesis 38:1-30)

This story is part of Jacob's story. **Gen. 37:2** says this section of Genesis is about Jacob, not Joseph. Joseph is part of Jacob's story, but so is Judah. Eugenia Price once wrote that Old Testament stories are not "little 'morality plays.' We are not to try to be like them or not to be like them. **We are to look for what God did in all they did.**"¹

The story of Judah and Tamar includes:

1. God's **Warning** and our Rebellion

- Abraham and Isaac had warned their sons about marrying Canaanites (Abraham in **Genesis 24:3**; Isaac in **Genesis 28:1**). However, there is no record of Jacob warning his sons. This looks like another example of his apathy with regards to raising his sons. Judah knows he shouldn't marry a Canaanite.
- "The initial trouble lay in Judah going out of his way to associate himself with the people of Canaan. If he had remembered his father's and grandfather's experiences he would have saved himself and others from these unhappy and awful ones."²
- Judah's misconduct in **Genesis 38** will contrast Joseph's righteous conduct in **Genesis 39**.

2. God's **Providence** and our Choices

- "This chapter shows why the period of Egyptian slavery was necessary for the chosen people. In Canaan the descendants of Abraham were intermarrying with the people of the land and were therefore in danger of being entirely swallowed up by Canaan's culture. The Jews would be preserved as a separate people in Egypt, since the Egyptians disliked foreigners, particularly shepherds (**Gen. 46:34**)."³

¹ Eugenia Price, *The Unique World of Women...in Bible Times and Now* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1969), 51.

² W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1953), 365.

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 893.

- G. Campbell Morgan said, “Had there been no divine over-ruling and had these people been left to themselves, the chosen seed would have inevitably been utterly corrupted and the purposes of God defeated.”⁴
- (v.2) The Canaanite woman named Shua bore to Judah three sons—Er, Onan, and Shelah. Both Er and Onan (in time) were given a Canaanite wife named Tamar. Both died due to their own sin. Shelah was promised to Tamar when he was old enough to marry. **Judah’s lineage would have been totally consumed with the Canaanites had this happened.** Yet, because Judah refused to give Shelah to Tamar, no seed at all would be produced.

3. God’s **Justice** and our Consequences

- The levirate marriage (Latin word “levir” means “brother-in-law”) obligated the brother of the deceased to marry the widow in order to provide a child and maintain the family line. Moses mentions this in **Deuteronomy 25:5-10** (see also **Matthew 22:23-28**).

4. God’s **Mercy** and our Destiny

- “[I]t is evident that God also worked in the situation for good, since from this incest came Perez, one of the ancestors of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Is it not strange that Christ should trace his ancestry through this illicit son of Judah** rather than through Joseph, who is so much like Christ and is so dominant in the final portions of the Book of Genesis?”⁵

Applications:

- 1) **God can often use us in spite of our sin.** Tamar sinned, but her motive was to secure an offspring. Through her determination, Judah’s lineage continued. Perez would become the ancestor of David and ultimately Jesus Christ (see **Matthew 1:3**). **“Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (Rom. 5:20).**
- 2) **Application: Jesus saves sinners.** Tamar became a prostitute, but **“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you’” (Matthew 21:31).** **“Shall we then sin that grace may about? God forbid” (Rom. 6:1-2a).**
- 3) **Application: God mends broken lives.** “While it is eternally true that what is done can never be undone, it is equally true that what has been broken can be mended, and the glory of grace is its power to heal broken hearts and mend broken lives.”⁶

⁴ G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1959), 28.

⁵ Boice, 897–898.

⁶ Thomas, 367.