

## TAMAR, ANCESTRESS OF CHRIST

### Genesis 38

#### INTRODUCTION.

--- This study has to do with the genealogy of Christ. **Matthew 1:1-3**, "The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judah and his brothers. 3 Judah begat from Tamar to Perez and Zarah..."

--- **Hebrews 7:14**, "For it is manifest that our Lord came from the tribe of Judah."

--- It also has to do with descendants. **Deut. 25:5**, "When brethren dwell together, and one of them dies, and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not marry a stranger outside; her brother-in-law will come to her, and take her for his wife, and make a relationship with her."

--- This law takes into account the promise of Genesis 12:1-3, not only with regard to blessings for the people of Israel, but also with the blessing of being of Christ's lineage (being an ancestor).

--- This text (Gen. 38:24) also quotes the Law of Moses regarding the punishment of harlots.

--- **Above all, we must emphasize God's plan and purpose.** Some facts are discussed by some as if they were judges of God's plan and purpose. It is up to us to study such texts without judging the people involved in the story. It is never wise to question what God does or allows to accomplish His purpose. We must leave Judah, Onan, Tamar, and Rahab in God's hands.

This chapter gives us an account of Judah and his family, and such is the account that one would marvel that, of all the sons of Jacob, our Lord came out of Judah, Hebrews 7:14.

Judah's marriage and the death of his two eldest sons.

Judah's incest with his daughter-in-law Tamar, unbeknown to him (vv. 12-23). Their confusion, when it was discovered (vv. 24-26). The birth of his twin sons, on whom his family was built (v. 27, etc.).

**38:1, Judah's friendship with a Canaanite man.** He descended from among his brothers, and withdrew for a time from his society and from his father's family, and became intimately acquainted with one Hirah. Those who are descended from their brethren, those who despise and forsake the seed society of Israel, and take the Canaanites as companions, are coming down from the mountain. It is of great importance for young people to choose appropriate partners. His foolish marriage to a Canaanite woman, a marriage made, not by his father, who, it seems, was not

consulted, but by his new friend Hirah. Many have been dragged into marriages scandalous and pernicious to themselves and their families by having bad company, and becoming acquainted with evil people: one evil league entangles men in another. Let young men be admonished for this to take their good parents as their best friends, and to be counseled by them, and not by flatterers, who flatter them, to make a prey of them.

**38:6** "Judah took a wife for his firstborn Er, whose name was Tamar.

(1.) His firstborn, *Er*, was a wicked man; he was wicked *in the sight of the Lord*, that is, in defiance of God and his law; God cut him off instantly (v. 7): *The Lord killed him*. Notice that sometimes God does quick work with sinners, and carries them away in His wrath, when they are just beginning a wicked course of life.

(2.) The next son, *Onan*, was, according to ancient custom, married to the widow, in order to preserve the name of his deceased brother who died childless. Although God had taken his life for his wickedness, yet they were concerned to preserve his memory; and his disappointment in it, because of Onan's sin, was an additional punishment for his wickedness.

**Marrying one's brother's widow was one of the laws of Moses, this law is found in Deuteronomy 25 and it's very interesting.** "When brethren dwell together, and one of them dies, and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not marry a stranger outside; Her brother-in-law will come to her, and take her for his wife, and make a relationship with her. **6 And the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed in the name of her dead brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 And if a man will not take his sister-in-law, then his sister-in-law shall go to the gate to the elders and say, My brother-in-law will not raise up a name in Israel for his brother; he will not be related to me. 8**Then the elders of that city shall bring him and speak with him. And if he shall arise and say, **9 Then his sister-in-law will come to him in the presence of the elders, and take off his footwear and spit in his face, and speak and say, 'This is how it will be done to a man who will not build his brother's house.'** **10**And this name will be given to Israel, the house of the barefooted."

Although Onan consented to marry the widow, he refused to raise offspring to his brother, as he was obliged to do so. **This was all the worse because the Messiah was to be descended from Judah, and if he had not been guilty of this wickedness, he might have had the honor of being one of his forefathers.**

(3.) *Shelah*, the third son, was reserved for the widow (v. 11)

### **38:12-23**

This is a story that is told here about Judah. He had buried his wife; and widowers need to keep themselves on their guard with the greatest caution and

resolution against all carnal concupiscence. He was unfair to his daughter-in-law, either by negligence or by design, by not giving her surviving son, and this exposed her to temptation.

Tamar prostituted herself as a harlot to Judah, so that if the son could not, the father would raise up seed for the deceased.

Tamar is one of four women particularly named in Christ's genealogy, Matthew 1:3. She took the opportunity to do so, when Judah had a time of joy and feasting with his sheep shearers. The time of frivolity often turns out to be a time of temptation.

She exposed herself as a harlot *in an open place*, v. 14.

Judah was caught in the snare, and though he was unaware that he was guilty of incest with his daughter-in-law (not knowing who she was), yet he was willfully guilty of fornication: whoever it was, he knew that she was not his wife and therefore should not be touched.

Judah's sin began in the eye (v. 15): *He saw it*. His eyes, and also his heart, were full of adultery (2 Peter 2:14). We need to make a covenant with our eyes, and turn them away from the contemplation of vanity, lest the eye infect the heart.

He added to the scandal that the hire of a harlot was demanded, offered, and accepted—a *young goat from the flock*, a good price at which its chastity and honor were valued! If the price had been thousands of sheep and ten thousand rivers of oil, it would not have been the right price.

The favor of God, the purity of the soul, the peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven, are too precious to be exposed for sale at such prices; what are the beneficiaries who lose their souls to gain the world? He became the reproach of Judah because he had pawned his jewels for a goat.

He lost his jewels in the deal; He sent the goat, according to this promise, but the supposed harlot could not be found. He sent it through his friend, who returned without the security. Judah is content to lose his seal and his bracelets and forbids his friend to make any more news of them, giving this reason, *so that we may not be ashamed*, v. 23. **He doesn't express any concern for sin, for that to be forgiven, only for shame, to avoid that. Notice that there are many who are more solicitous in preserving their reputation among men than in securing God's favor and a good conscience**

### 38:24-30

The severity of Judah against Tamar, when he heard that she was an adulteress. considered an injury and a reproach to the family of Judah: "*Bring her out, therefore, Judah, lord of the household, and let her be burned*"; Verse 24. Notice

that it is a common thing for men to be severe against those same sins in others in which they are nevertheless permitted; and so, in judging others, they condemn themselves, Rom. 2:1; 14:22. If he intended that she should be burned to death, perhaps, under the pretext of zeal against sin, he would have to do so. Notice that it is a common, but very bad, thing to cover the malice against the persons of men with a show of zeal against their vices.

The shame of Judah, when it was made clear that he was the adulterer. She presented *the ring and bracelets*, which justified the paternity of the child in Judah, v. 25, 26. Notice that the wickedness which has been most secretly committed, and which has been most diligently concealed, is nevertheless sometimes brought to light in a strange manner, to the shame and confusion of the guilty, wherefore it was now said to him, "Behold, are these thy seal and thy bracelets?" Judah, convinced by his own conscience. He confessed his sin: *She has been more righteous than I am*. He acknowledges that a perpetual mark of infamy should rather be placed upon him, who had been so complicit in it. He never came back to her: He never *knew her again*. Notice that those who do not forsake them do not truly repent of their sins.

The edification of the family of Judah by this, however, in the birth of Perez and Zarah, from whom descended the most considerable families of the illustrious tribe of Judah. Apparently, the birth was hard for the mother, so she was corrected for her sin. The sons, too, like Jacob and Esau, fought for the birthright, and it was obtained by Perez, who is always named first, and from him Christ descended. His name was because he had introduced himself to his brother.

Both sons are named in our Savior's genealogy (Matthew 1:3)

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