

In The Beginning...God: Judah & Tamar

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Let me show you something here

I wonder if you've ever noticed this

OK – let me back up

We're in week 6

Of our series "In the Beginning God..."

Where we've been going through

The beginning people of our faith

The founding fathers

If you will

Of Judeo-Christian heritage

Throughout the book of Genesis

So, let me ask you

Who wrote Genesis?

It was inspired by the Spirit of God

But who was the human author?

Moses – right

How do we know that?

Well, the Bible tells us

In Exodus 17

Right after they crossed the Red Sea

Right after they had their first meal of manna & quail

Water from a rock

Right before they get the 10 commandments

Right there, in Exodus 17

Exodus 17:14a - Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered."

God is beginning the process

In Exodus 17

Of giving Moses these 5 books

The Pentateuch

The Law

And later

Other parts of the Bible refer to them

As the "Law of Moses"

1 Kings 2:3a - Observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in obedience to Him, and keep His decrees and commands, His laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses.

Or sometimes it's called the "book of Moses"

Joshua 8:30-31a - Then Joshua built on Mount Ebal an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the Israelites. He built it according to what is written in the *Book of the Law of Moses*

Nehemiah 13:1a - On that day the *Book of Moses* was read aloud in the hearing of the people...

God gave Moses words

Instructions

To lead the people

It's the first example we see

Of God inspiring the Bible

Jesus even calls it that:

Mark 12:26b - Have you not read in the *Book of Moses*, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'

The account of the burning bush

Is in Exodus

Jesus doesn't call it Exodus here

He calls it the Book of Moses

OK – that was a rabbit trail

So, I want to show you something here

That I bet you've never noticed before

Moses – who likely wrote the book of Genesis

Wrote in 10 road signs

Benchmarks, so to speak

To guide this historical book

He uses the phrase

Repeatedly

“This is the account of”

Let me show you

(Adam) Genesis 5:1 - This is the written account of Adam's family line.

(Noah) Genesis 6:9a - This is the account of Noah and his family.

(Noah's sons) Genesis 10:1 - This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

(Shem) Genesis 11:10a - This is the account of Shem's family line.

(Terah) Genesis 11:27 - This is the account of Terah's family line. Terah became the father of Abram...

(Ishmael) Genesis 25:12a - This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael

(Isaac) Genesis 25:19a - This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

(Esau) Genesis 36:1a - This is the account of the family line of Esau

(Jacob) Genesis 37:2a - This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph...

Let me throw out a little bit of trivia

I'm not going to spend much time here

Just throwing it out

Some have suggested that Genesis was written

In a historically minded way

But the first 11 chapters are distinct from that

They say the first 11 chapters are written

With a different purpose in mind

If you've heard that

I want you to consider that

The first 5 references on this screen

In the historical pattern that Moses laid out

The first 5 references on this screen

Are in those first 11 chapters

And that's actually not true

Because I left out the first one {Show Genesis 2:4a}

Just something to think about

10 road signs

To guide us in our reading
Of this historical book

Now – why is this interesting?

You may be saying, “It’s not”

Sorry about that

One reason is because I’m a dork

And I find this stuff cool

But catch this

The Bible is a thoughtful book

Moses didn’t right this willy-nilly

Willy-nilly - that’s ancient Hebrew

It’s thoughtful

It’s intentional

These are like chapters in a modern book

Giving us headings of where he’s taking us

So, the Bible is thoughtful

But the second reason this is important

Especially for today

Comes in chapter 38

Chapter 38 is a story about Judah & Tamar

It's odd

Messy

Sinful & a little scandalous

And it doesn't fit here

We have Adam – Noah

Abraham, Isaac & Jacob

And then we get to Joseph

Joseph, whose 2nd in command

Of the most powerful nation in the world

That's the story

I mean, if you look at your family line

If it's like most of ours

You've got some real winners in there

But if your family line has a vice president

Or a supreme court justice or something

That's the story

Joseph is the 2nd in command

Of the most powerful nation in the world

That's the story

So, we get Joseph *to* Egypt in Genesis 37

And then he's in Potiphar's house in Genesis 39

And chapter 38 doesn't fit

Do you see that?

When you see an anomaly

In the flow of the narrative

You have to ask yourself

Why is that there?

The Bible is a thoughtful book

It's not willy-nilly

Why does Genesis 38 exist?

So, to help us answer that question

Let's get a bird's eye view of Judah's life

He's one of Leah's boys (Genesis 29)

That's a bad start

Humanly speaking

Remember – she was the unloved one

But God often pulls for the underdog

We see that he's brutal and deceptive (Genesis 34)

He and a couple of his brothers kill some guys

And take their stuff

He's not ready for the church social at this point

He rallied his brothers into selling Joseph into slavery (Genesis 37)

That puts you in rare territory

He's a murderer

A thief

A liar

And he talked his brothers into selling his other brother into slavery

Show of hands – how many have done all of those things

So, Judah is the worst person in this room

So why does Moses

Take a full chapter

An interruption from Joseph's life

To talk about Judah

And quite possibly *his* worst moment

Let's look at *that* story

I won't read it

For time's sake

But also, because it's racy

Honest & raw

It's not PG-13

So, you can read it later

Judah has three sons

The oldest marries a girl named Tamar

But he is wicked enough

That God "puts him to death"

One of the only times in history

We see someone sink *that low*

For comparison

His dad's the worst guy in this room

And God didn't put *him* to death

So, the tradition in those days

When a guy died without an heir

Was for their brother

To step in and provide their deceased brother

An heir

So, Judah's second son does that

With Tamar

Sort of

Genesis 38 is very... descriptive

So, God puts him to death also

I don't know of another time in history

Where God strikes down two brothers

In separate judgments

Because they were *each* so wicked

So, Judah has a third son

But he's afraid to give her to Tamar

Because he's afraid he'll die

This is a colossal case of missing the point

They died because of their wickedness

Not because of their wife
But his superstitious response
Is to keep him away from Tamar
Instead of keeping him away from evil

Fast forward

We don't know how long
But it seems like years

During this time

Tamar couldn't remarry
She was committed to be wed to Judah's third son
She couldn't have children
She couldn't be in a relationship
She was stuck
Because of Judah's lack of caring
Because of Judah's selfishness and fear

So, she

This is so messed up
She hears that he's coming to her town
To bring some sheep for sheering
She dresses up like a prostitute
And puts a veil over her face

And Judah doesn't recognize her

Partially because of the veil

Partially because he wasn't that concerned with her

Partially because it had been a long time since he'd seen her

Judah doesn't recognize her

He hires her

And she becomes pregnant

If you've never tried to teach a rated-R story

In a rated-PG fashion

You should check out Genesis 38!

When Judah finds out she's pregnant

He thinks his problems are over

The law says she should die

Because she was guilty of prostitution

Which is an ironic thing

For him to be offended by

So, he loudly proclaims

Genesis 38:24b - Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"

One little detail I left out

When he hired her

He left some personal items with her

When he went back home

So, Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death"

Genesis 38:25-26a - As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are."

Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I..."

So, Judah's there

Do you see that

He came for the fireworks

He came to see her burned alive

And as she's being drug out to her execution

She calmly says, "See if you recognize these..."

Let me ask you again:

Why does Genesis 38 exist?

Truth be told:

That's the exact question I was asking myself

While I was writing this thing this week

But I'm glad I stuck with it

Don't let me lose you

Some scholars consider this interaction with Tamar

As a turning point for Judah

Because the next time we read about Judah

He's standing in front of Joseph

In Egypt

Unaware that it's his brother

And Joseph is declaring

He's going to keep Benjamin

As a slave

Forever

And Judah volunteers instead

Judah says keep me

Judah is selfless & sacrificial

He's come a long way from:

Genesis 37:27a – "Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites"

To:

Genesis 44:33a - "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy."

And 17 years later

At Jacob's deathbed

Judah receives the kindest words

Judah receives the greatest blessing

And it was through Judah

That King David's line was born

And it was through Judah

That Jesus the Messiah was born

That's why Genesis 38 mattered to Moses

So why should it matter to us?

Repentance is powerful

Judah was a lying, stealing murdering

Who slept with his daughter-in-law

Because he thought she was a prostitute

Judah was as bad as it comes

And yet look how the Gospel of Matthew

The first biography of Jesus' life

Begins:

Matthew 1:1-3a - This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar

Judah was highlighted

In the first words

In the first chapter

Of Matthew's Gospel

Not only was *he* mentioned

But his sinful relationship with Tamar

The low point of his life

Was included there as well

What changed?

Judah

Judah changed

Judah repented

"She is more righteous than I", he said

Can you imagine how Judah must've felt?

I'm not aware of any of us

Having that exact situation

But he had shame

Layered on top of embarrassment

Layered on top of regret

And all of us have had that *same* cocktail

And it feels terrible

The feelings of regret and shame and embarrassment

Are powerful

They're debilitating

So, what do you do?

Because some of us are there right now

Look at these words from Peter

Peter, who denied Jesus at his point of greatest need

**Acts 3:19 - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,
that times of refreshing may come from the Lord**

Stop fighting God

Stop pushing back

Stop trying so hard to be right

And enough

Paul

Who also lived a horrible life before he met Jesus

Paul said,

Titus 3:5a – God “saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”

So, there's no need to hide from God

Judah's proof

Peter's proof

Paul's proof

God's seen worse than you

So, stop hiding

He didn't save you because of you

He saved you because of His mercy

Repent

Turn to God

So that your sins maybe forgiven

And times of refreshing may come from the Lord

Repentance is powerful

Try it

God is way ahead of you

Trust Him

I started this message asking the question

Why was Genesis 38 even written?

The answer is because of Jesus, right?

God inspired Moses to write it

Because it was through Judah

That the Messiah came

But Moses would have written Genesis

Almost 1500 years before Jesus was born

So, he would have had no natural way to see that coming

Quick – tell me something that’s going to happen in the year 3522?

In fact, if you could predict ANYTHING about the year 3522

I’d be impressed

God said

When my son comes

You’re going to want to know Judah’s story

God’s way ahead of you

You can trust Him

So, what’s this mean for you?

1. Nothing you’ve ever done

Is too much for God to work through

Is too much for God to love

Nothing

So, you don't need to hide

From God

2. We are a community of people

Who are trying to follow after God

So, nothing you ever do should be

Too much for us to love

And work through

So, you don't need to hide here

It's safe... here

3. If God knows what needs to happen 1500 years from now

Hiding's kinda silly anyway

Isn't it?