

HAUNTED BY THE PAST

Haunted by Past Sins

Genesis 38

The Sins of Judah

Genesis 38:1-5 (KJV) **1** *And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2 And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. 3 And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. 4 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. 5 And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.*

- Genesis 38 seems out of place because it seems to interrupt the story of Joseph
- But it's not out of place, it's a powerful chapter in Joseph's story
- Genesis 38 is about one of Joseph's brothers, Judah
- Joseph's brothers planned to kill him, but Judah said, let's *sell him* instead for 20 pieces of silver
- Judah gave no thought about God's promises He made to Abram and repeated to his father, Jacob that He would make them a great nation
- Instead, Judah and his brothers killed a goat and dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in blood and told their father that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal
- Judah compounds his sin by leaving the godly influences of his father and building relationships with an ungodly man named Hira of Adullam
- When we have sinned the answer is not to *run away* from friends, family and God, the answer is to *turn back* to God and to those that can help us
- While in Adullam, Judah saw and married a Canaanite woman named Shuah
- Judah's marriage produced three sons Er, Onan, and Shelah
- Judah didn't bother seeking God and His will
- When we are out of God's will and the community of faith, we are out of the *protection, fellowship, and blessings* of God

Judah's Sons vs. 6-10

Genesis 38:7 (KJV) **7** *And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.... 10 And the thing which he (Onan) did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.*

- Judah raised his sons in the ungodly environment of Adullam
- After Judah's sons grow up, Judah chose a wife for Er and her name is Tamar
- Unfortunately, Tamar had no children because her husband Er died
- Er died because he was wicked in the sight of God and God destroyed him
- According to the laws of those days, Judah gave Tamar to be the wife of his oldest living son Onan
- The *levirate custom* that stated if a man died without children, the next oldest brother would marry his wife and bear a son
- The son would then legally be the 1st born son *and* heir of the deceased husband

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- But Judah doesn't care about Tamar's welfare, all he wants is *an heir* for his dead son
- Onan doesn't mind *the pleasure* of sleeping with Tamar, but he refused to consummate the act because it would mean that if a son is born, *that son* would be the 1st born son and receive a double portion inheritance from Judah
- Onan wanted his father's inheritance for himself with the least number of heirs as possible
- Onan's rebellion would hinder God's promises of expansion for Israel that He gave to Abraham and Isaac
- Onan was so wicked in the sight of God and put him to death, too
- It appears the greed, selfishness and rebellion of Er and Onan seem to be ungodly character traits they got from their father Judah
- Judah's sons "inherited" his evil ways and they took it even further
- If we as parents live ungodly lives before our children, our actions will influence them to live ungodly lives

Judah's Blindness vs. 11

Genesis 38:11 (KJV) 11 Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

- Judah as one son left, Shelah
- Judah tells Tamar to go home to her father's house and remain a widow until Shelah is old enough to marry her
- There's a problem with what Judah said, he *never intended* to allow his son Shelah to marry Tamar because he's afraid that Shelah would die like his Er and Onan
- Judah is blind to the true cause of the problem – his sins; he thinks Tamar is *the cause* of the deaths of his sons
- Judah is also blind to the hand of God at work in all of this
- God sometimes uses the sins and troubles in our lives to get our attention that something is wrong

Judah's Immorality vs. 12-19

Genesis 38:15 (KJV) 15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.

- A few years later, Judah's wife, Shuah dies and that eliminates the possibility of Judah having any more children with his wife
- After the time of grieving is over, Judah takes a trip with "his friend" Hirah to the place where his sheep are being sheared
- Someone told Tamar where Judah was

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- Judah's son Shelah is now a grown man, but Judah *has not* arranged for him to marry Tamar
- So, Tamar takes matters into her own hands and takes a bold risk of changing out of her widow's clothing and disguises herself with a veil over her face and she was dressed as a temple prostitute on the roadside where the temple prostitutes sat outside of a village called *Enaim*
- If this plan fails, it could cost Tamar her life
- Judah saw Tamar and thought she was a prostitute and propositioned her, not realizing it's *his own daughter in law*
- Judah has become as worldly as anyone living in Canaan
- Tamar asked Judah *how much* he will pay to have relations with her
- Judah says I'll pay you a young goat from my flock
- Tamar says what will you give me now to guarantee you'll return with the goat?
- Tamar said leave me your seal and its cord and your walking stick
- Judah and Tamar had sexual relations and she became pregnant
- Tamar went home, took off her veil and put on her widow's clothes again and continued living as a widow
- This sexual encounter takes place in Enaim, *the opening of the eyes*, but sin still has Judah blind
- Sin has a way of keeping us blind to the *danger* and *consequences* of sin

Judah's Self-righteousness vs. 20-25

Genesis 38:24 (KJV) 24 And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom. And Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.

- Judah sends his friend Hirah with the goat as payment for the prostitute so that he can get his property back
- Judah is not even ashamed that his friends know what he has done
- But at the same time Judah wants to maintain his "respectability" in Canaan by sending "his friend" with the payment and to get his ID's back
- Judah didn't care about breaking God's laws, but he did care about "his image" in the community
- Judah's values are obviously misplaced
- Hirah goes to Enaim, but can't find the prostitute and the men of the city said that no temple prostitute had *ever* been in Enaim
- About three months later, Judah learned that Tamar disguised herself as a temple prostitute and she's pregnant right now
- Judah says go get Tamar and let her be burned to death for "her sins"

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- As they were dragging Tamar to Judah, she presented Judah's ID's; his seal, his cord and his walking stick and she asked a powerful question, "who's property is this?"
- Whatever is done in the dark will come to light **Numbers 32:23 (KJV) 23 "... behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out."**
- Suddenly Judah's *eyes are opened*, what Judah didn't see in Enaim, he clearly sees it now, Tamar was the prostitute, and he is the father of her child
- It doesn't matter if *others* discover your sin, your sin will eventually discover *you*
- Judah is confronted with his life of sin
- God confronts our sins all the time, but many times we ignore it
- All of Judah's past sins have come back to haunt him

Judah's Repentance vs. 26

Genesis 38:26 (KJV) ²⁶ And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.

- Judah's life of sin has been exposed what is he going to do?
- Judah *immediately* acknowledged that the seal, the cord and the walking stick were his
- Judah said Tamar was *more righteous* than he was because he *refused* to arrange for Tamar to marry his son Shelah
- What Judah was doing was repenting of his wrong
- This is the beginning of Judah's transformation
- The exposure of Judah's sin eventually leads him *back* to God
- Genesis 38 ends with Tamar giving birth to twins and she named them Perez and Zarah
- That's the end of the chapter, but it's *not* the end of the story
- God used *and* overruled the sins of Judah and Tamar to accomplish His plans for Judah's entire family *including* Tamar
- In God's providence, Tamar becomes an ancestor and part of the family tree of Jesus Christ
- Perez was ancestor of David which means he too, is directly linked to the promised seed, Jesus Christ
- In Genesis 44 Judah and *all* his brothers were forced to face their sinful lives, they repented to God and became *true* followers of God
- True repentance of your *past* opens your life to the *future* God always intended for you to have
- We don't have sin to the level of Judah to repent, we can repent *now*