

Genesis Chapter 38 Commentary

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.

We understand from scripture that Israel had removed the status of first-born from Reuben to Joseph, which change is scripturally founded, seen in: **1Ch 5:1-2; 1 "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)"**

However, with Joseph being sold into slavery, Israel believing Joseph was dead, the right of first-born son was temporarily placed upon Judah. We see this verified in scripture by Israel in: **1Ch 5:2 "For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)"** "Judah prevailed above his brethren" tells us that Judah took the temporary place of firstborn status in the natural family. "the chief ruler" is a prophetic reference to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Judah is the one through whom the lineage of Christ is to come, seen in: **Mt 1:1-3; 1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;"** Judas is a varied form of Judah. As we shall see in this chapter, this will come to pass by an incestuous act by deceit, through Judah's daughter-in-law. What we see described in this chapter is the Adamic nature of man to sinfulness.

We point out: Judah left his family and went and dwelt in the Adullamites, who were not a God-fearing people, but idolaters. Some commentators believe that Judah was very young, maybe 14 to 17 years old, when he left his father's house. Whether this is true or not, it shows that Judah is not respecting his family, and especially he is dishonoring his parents. This action will lead to many sorrows in the life of Judah.

How many headstrong children have fled, from their godly parents, seeking what the world has to offer them, much to their own sorrow, and to the grief and distress of the parents. How often, do we become reprobate by leaving the known way of God, desiring to have the way of our own will, desiring to have the things that the world at large has, and thus we demonstrate to the world; we do not wish to be known as chosen children of God.

We point out: many commentators give scriptural reasons, that this chapter is not in actual chronological order, and give their reasoning for this belief. However, I point out that it is not the chronological order that is the lesson of scripture, but the revealing of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, of whom scripture is a testimony. Therefore, we point out: Judah is the one who is mentioned in the lineage to Christ. This chapter reminds us; God only has stubborn sinners to work with here in time, and God will keep his prophetic promises despite the actions of sinful man.

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. 6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. 7 And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him.

We see that Judah is dishonoring his father, who would normally choose the wife of his sons, and dishonoring God by marrying outside of the family of Israel. Judah further dishonors his father, and God, by choosing for his own sons' wives of the Canaanites, who are all idolators, currently. These events are long before the land of Canaan becomes the property of the Israelites.

Scripture doesn't tell us what Er's wickedness was but remember; Er's mother was a Canaanite, not an Israelite. There are several instances in scripture where God slew people who were wicked and defiant of his commandments. He has already destroyed the whole earth's population, save Noah and his family, for sin and wickedness.

There is a lesson here for us: we should be obedient to scripture teachings and honor our earthly fathers and mothers. Being born again: We have the figure of the father and husband man married to the church in Jesus Christ. We have the figure of the wife and mother in the church on earth. Thus: we should be following the commandments of our heavenly Father, for as we see here: God may suddenly destroy us, from off the face of the earth, in his judicial wrath.

8 And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. 9 And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. 10 And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.

This is the first mention of, what shall later be a written law in De 25:5-6, raising up the seed of thy brother. Apparently, this was an already established practice among the Israelites. Remember, these sons of Judah were also very young. We see this demonstrated in the life of Shelah, as he had to grow up to be old enough to marry.

Why was God displeased with Onan? I believe this action of Onan was an act of covetousness, as well as disobedience to his father. How do you get covetousness from this? With the death of Er, Onan becomes the firstborn son, who is living. This puts him in position to inherit the right of firstborn son with all its wealth and honor. However, if he raised up seed to his brother; then his brother's family would retain the firstborn status, and he would forfeit that wealth and honor. This act of covetousness, now revealed, is the cause of Onan's disobedience and defiance of his father, and of God.

Not only is Onan defying his father, but he is also defying a principle of God, which will later be written down for God's people, seen in: **Ex 20:12**. As we see here: God shortened Onan's life by immediate death for disobedience. We know and understand, from scripture teaching, God does not always act suddenly in judicial wrath, but rest assured, judicial wrath, and judgment, shall come at the time of God's choosing. We shall see later in scripture commandments given about the sins above mentioned, seen in:

- Commandment 5: ***Ex 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*** "Onan's life was shortened immediately.
- Commandment 10: ***Ex 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*** "One of the causes of Onan's shortened life span.
- ***De 25:5-6; 5 "If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. 6 And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel."*** This is a commandment given by God, for the preservation of the names of the tribes of Israel, and their God given possessions of property.

It is easy to see the life lessons we can draw from this chapter so far. Honor our parents, and natural families, by keeping up our family relationships. In our spiritual lives: do not abandon our church family and return to the world of sin and ungodliness. Remember, God, our Father in heaven, has the power, and authority, to shorten our lives here on earth for disobedience to him. Remember, in our spiritual lives, we can not lose our eternal salvation, but we can lose the joy of our salvation here in time. Through our rejection of God: we turn our backs to God, and God, in retribution, turns his back to us and leaves us bereft of his communion, thus our joy of salvation is departed from us.

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. 12 And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

We point out again: the youthfulness of Judah and his sons when they were married. As we see here, the youngest son of Judah, Shelah, had to grow up before he could marry.

Hirah is from the Hebrew word Chiyrah (pronounced; kee-row') and first means: *splendor*; and secondly means: *to pale or was cold*. We see from the definitions of Hirah, Judah's friend, that Judah is truly enamored with the wealth and riches of the world and sin.

The lesson for us: the world of sin, as presented by satan, is a life of splendor, and it makes the way of God look pale, and wax cold. If we fall into the allurements thereof, and yield to its temptation, we shall become apostates in our Christian lives. If the splendors of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, mean more to us than our salvation in Christ Jesus, we have become idolators. Oh God! please help us to keep our focus and delight in Christ, our risen and exalted Saviour and King.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. 14 And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

Tamar sees that Judah does not intend for her to marry his last son Shelah, as promised by Judah. Therefore, Tamar takes actions of her own to remedy the sin against herself. As we see often in

scripture; God often lets people attempt to solve the situations of life in their own mind and strength, even though they use deceitfulness to attain the purposed end. The correct way for Tamar to handle this situation would have been to approach Judah and remind him of his promise.

Another reminder to us of how to live our Christian lives as seen in: ***Php 2:14-16; 14 "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; 16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."***

15 When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. **16** And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? **17** And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? **18** And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. **19** And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood.

Tamar deceives Judah by acting as a harlot. God blessed her to conceive seed of Judah and preserve her right and privilege of being in the family. It is from thence the lineage that leads to Christ is born as we saw in ***Mt 1:1-3; 1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;"***

Knowing she can be put to death for what she is doing by deceit, instead of reminding Judah of his promise and doing it the right way, Tamar asks for surety from Judah, which surety will preserve her life.

It is always best to do all things open, honestly, and above board, in our lives as Christians. We remember, God sees the intents of our hearts and minds, and we are not hiding anything from him, though we may deceive one another.

20 And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand: but he found her not. **21** Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the wayside? And they said, There was no harlot in this place. **22** And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. **23** And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

Judah tries to fulfill his promised bargain to get his pledges back. Now, he is the one being deceived because Tamar was not a harlot, and she is no longer playing the part of a harlot and has taken up her life of widowhood again. There is an old saying: everyone's chickens come home to roost, and scripture teaches that our sins will find us out.

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.

Seeing Tamar is pregnant; she is accused of playing the part of an harlot and of whoredoom. This is the message delivered to Judah. Judah misses the part of the message "***Tamar thy daughter in law hath played the harlot***" This phrase should have alerted him of his adultery, and of the harlot he could not find to make payment to receive his pledge back from her. Had he remembered; he may not have been so hasty in making his judgement upon her.

Judah commanded her to be burnt for her harlotry and whoredoom. However, Tamar shall bring forth her tokens, Judah's pledge that he had given until he made the required payment. These tokens will save her life.

Each child of God, saved by the grace of God, has the pledge of Christ's work of salvation. Christ did his work honestly and in the open and fulfilled his promise of the redemption of God's people from their sins on the cross. Because we have the pledge of Christ, we shall be spared of death and burning in the eternal lake of fire.

25 When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. 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 acknowledges that she is not to be condemned for her actions, because he is the cause of the sin committed. Had Judah kept his promise to Tamar, to give her to his son Shelah when he was grown, this act of sin would never have been committed. Judah rightly understood, he could not continue the incestuous relationship with his daughter-in-law, and therefore he did not continue a marital relationship with her.

27 And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. 28 And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29 And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. 30 And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

Pharez is the one through whom the lineage of Christ is to come, seen in: ***Mt 1:1-3; 1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;"*** Judas is Judah, and Phares is his son by Tamar his daughter-in-law.

As we look at the testimonies, of the people in the lineage that leads us to Christ, we should see a picture that fills us with hope and joy. How? Do you see how God used people, who were sinners indeed, in the lineage that leads us to Christ? In this chapter alone, we have the exposure of

dishonoring parents and God, the love of money or covetousness, lying, deceitfulness, adultery, harlotry, and incestuous people. All are included in the lineage to Christ. Later in scripture we shall see liars, harlots, murderers, and many other sinful people, who are included in this continued lineage. After all, God only has sinners to put to his use on earth, having declared that all are under sin.

Why did Christ come into the world? To save sinners. Therefore, we look at the lineage that leads to Christ, and we have great joy and hope for ourselves, that we too can be saved no matter what sins we have committed. Being saved by God's marvelous grace, as born-again sinners; we can be used of God in bringing salvation by grace to a visible image on earth. Praise ye the Lord! Hallelujah! Amen.