

Introduction

Call with Kimberly regarding the messy evangelism attempt at Mexican restaurant, worried that her “rambling” flub up might have interfered with God’s work

1. Contrary to what we sometimes think, God’s redemptive plan is not dependent on our faithfulness—He obviously wants to use us, and expects us to be faithful, but He is not beholden to us
2. God can use anyone and any situation, even bad or evil ones, to accomplish His purpose
3. Today we have an example of that:
  - a. There was nothing about Judah that would suggest the role he would play in God’s redemptive plan
  - b. Likewise there was nothing about Tamar that would suggest the role she would play in God’s redemptive plan
  - c. But despite what we learn about Judah and Tamar, we discover that God did indeed use them to further His redemptive plan

A. There is nothing about Judah that would suggest the role he would play in God’s redemptive plan (Genesis 38:1-11)

1. We got our first look at Judah’s character back in chapter 37: he was the one who came up with the plan to sell his younger brother, Joseph, into slavery (READ Genesis 37:25-28):
2. We get a further picture of his character in chapter 38 and it’s not all that flattering:
  - a. The first thing we see is that he left his family and moved to a Canaanite city (1):
    - 1) We learn that Judah “**departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah**”
    - 2) The NASB translation uses the word “**visited**” which suggests Judah simply on a trip to visit a friend named Hirah, but the Hebrew word has a wide range of uses which is reflected in other translations:
      - a) The NASB says he “**visited**” Hiran
      - b) The LSB says he “**turned aside**” to Hiran
      - c) The NET and NIV say he “**stayed with**” Hiran
      - d) The CSB says he “**settled near**” Hiran and I believe this translation captures more accurately what Judah did—he didn’t visit Hirah, he settled near him
    - 3) The text tells us that Hirah was an Adullamite which means he was from Adullam, a Canaanite city approximately 15 to 20 miles northwest of Hebron where Jacob and his sons lived
    - 4) Now we know that Judah didn’t just “**visit**” Hiran there at Adullam, but settled in the area because according to v. 5 he was still living in the region after getting

married and fathering three sons (Chezib was a small Canaanite village 4-5 miles north of Adullam)

- b. Something else we learn about Judah is that he was close personal friends with Hiran, a Canaanite:
  - 1) Twice in the upcoming verses he is referred to as Judah's "**friend**" (READ 38:12, 20)
  - 2) These verses suggest they were more than just acquaintances, but rather close personal friends, maybe even best friends
  - 3) Hiran was someone who traveled with Judah and even performed tasks for him (like retrieving his personal items)
- c. A third thing we learn about Judah is that he married a Canaanite woman (READ 38:2-5):
  - 1) This should set off some red flags for us because of what we've already learned in prior passages about marrying Canaanite women:
  - 2) Abraham forbid his servant from finding a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites
  - 3) Isaac forbid Jacob from taking a wife from among the Canaanites
  - 4) Esau, on the other hand, married multiple Canaanite women and it made life miserable and unbearable for Isaac and Rebekah
  - 5) The problem with marrying Canaanite's is that they were pagans who worshipped false gods, and engaged in wicked cultic practices involving sex and child sacrifice
  - 6) This was diametrically opposed to what God intended for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
  - 7) However, instead of following in the footsteps of Isaac and Jacob and finding a wife among his relatives, Judah followed in the footsteps of Esau and married a Canaanite woman and started a family
- d. A fourth thing we learn about Judah is that his sons were so wicked that God killed them: (READ 38:6-10):
  - 1) His first son was named Er and all the text tells us about him is that "**he was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.**" (7)
  - 2) His second son was named Onan and didn't fare much better (8-10)
    - a) After Er died, Judah gave Onan to Tamar in a practice known as levirate marriage
      - It was an ANE cultural custom that was ultimately incorporated later into the Mosaic Law
      - When a man died without a son to carry on the family name and lineage, his brother or nearest relative was expected to marry the widow
      - This not only provided for her needs, but the firstborn son would be considered the heir of the dead brother and carry on his lineage and family name

- b) However, while Onan was willing to engage in sexual relations with Tamar, he refused to fulfill his obligation and give her a child
  - c) This displeased the LORD so He put Onan to death just like his brother
- e. A fifth thing we learn at Judah is that, like Onan, he also refused to fulfill His obligation to his son and his daughter-in-law, Tamar (RE-READ 38:11):
  - 1) We don't know how old Shelah was at this point—he may have indeed been too young to marry
  - 2) However, that wasn't Judah's true motives in telling his daughter-in-law to go back to her father's house and wait
  - 3) We learn here that he was afraid that if he gave Shelah to Tamar as a husband he might die just like his brothers, and we learn later than he never intended to fulfill his obligation
- f. There are a couple more things we'll see regarding Judah's character in the upcoming verses, including sexual immorality and self-righteousness

B. Just as there was nothing in Judah's character that would suggest the role he'd plan in God's redemptive plan, the same can be said of Tamar (Genesis 38:12-30)

- 1. When Judah failed to fulfill his duty and promise to Tamar, she came up with her own cunning plan (READ Genesis 38:12-14):
  - a. At some point, it became obvious to Tamar that Judah wasn't going to make good on his duty or promise
  - b. So, when she learned that Judah and his friend Hirah went up to Timnah to check on his sheepshearers she swapped out her widows clothes for those of a prostitute and camped at the entrance to Enaim, a village on the road to Timnah
- 2. She must have known Judah all too well because upon seeing her he propositioned her for sex (READ Genesis 38:15-19):
  - a. Her face was covered with a veil so he didn't recognize her and simply assumed she was a "**harlot**" (prostitute)—later we learn it was assumed she was a cult prostitute
  - b. They agreed on a payment—a young goat from his flock—but since he obviously wasn't traveling with a goat in his wallet Tamar asked him for a "**pledge**" (essentially collateral):
    - 1) The signet was either a ring or a metal or stone seal
    - 2) The cord would have been attached to the ring or seal to secure it round the neck
    - 3) And the staff was a walking stick
  - c. After Judah agreed and gave her the items, he went into her and lo and behold she conceived, and Judah remained completely clueless (READ Genesis 38:19-23)

3. What we discover next, is that Tamar was exceptionally cunning and knew all along what she was doing when asking for Judah's signet, cord, and staff (READ Genesis 38:25-26):
  - a. There would be no way to hide a pregnancy and a widow becoming pregnant would be especially scandalous
  - b. And sure enough, when Tamar's pregnancy was discovered, it was reported to Judah who demanded her execution by burning
  - c. But Tamar was cunning; she had an ace up her sleeve...or rather three aces: Judah's signet, cord and staff which would prove he was the father and protect her from the repercussions of her actions
  - d. Judah's response is actually a bit surprising and reminds me of David's response when he was confronted by Nathan over his sin (26):
    - 1) He seemed to express remorse and recognize his unrighteous actions
    - 2) He refrained from committing further immorality with her
    - 3) Some believe this was a turning point for Judah because future chapters suggest a different, more responsible and righteous Judah

C. Despite what we've learned about Judah and Tamar, we discover next that God did indeed use them to further His redemptive plan (READ Genesis 38:27-30):

1. We learn here that Tamar was carrying twins and had an unusual birth
2. As she was giving birth, one of the children stuck his hand out first which the midwife then tied with a scarlet thread—this identified him as the first born
3. However, he pulled his hand back in and his brother actually came out first
4. So, she named him "**Perez**" meaning "**breach**" and then when his brother with the scarlet ribbon came out she named him "**Zerah**" meaning "**dawning**" or "**brightness**"
5. Now, here's why this is important and how it fits into God's redemptive plan—both Matthew and Luke reveal that God's plan was that David, Solomon, and ultimately Jesus, would descend from the line of Judah and Tamar through Perez (Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33)

D. Takeaways

1. One lesson we can learn from Judah is that when God intends to use us for His purpose, and we disregard this and pursue our own agenda instead, we are in danger of being corrected by Him:
  - a. God intended to use Judah to further His redemptive plan, but Judah pursued his own agenda—moving to a Canaanite city, becoming best buds with a Canaanite, marrying a Canaanite wife, doing the same for his son Er, and then failing to fulfill his duty to Tamar
  - b. As a result, God used Tamar's actions to correct him—and it appears in this passage and future ones that he got the message
  - c. Likewise, God chastises us when we fail to obey Him and pursue our own agenda (READ Hebrews 12:1-12)

- d. We see this repeated in 1 Corinthians 11:32 and Revelation 3:19:
  - 1) 1 Corinthians 11:32: **“but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world”**
  - 2) Revelation 3:19: **“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent.”**
- 2. One lesson we can learn from Tamar is that God uses not only the righteous but the unrighteous to accomplish His plan:
  - a. While Judah declares that Tamar was more righteous than he was, that’s a declaration regarding the depths to which she was willing to go to accomplish justice for herself and her dead husband, Er
  - b. That is certainly a righteous cause, but it doesn’t make her actions in and of themselves righteous: after all, she used deception to seduce her father-in-law into an incestuous sexual encounter to conceive a child and essentially blackmailed him to protect herself
  - c. But, God used her actions to preserve His redemptive plan and continue it through the line of Judah—even when Judah nearly buggered it all up <grin>
  - d. Sometimes we lose sign of God’s sovereignty, especially when we look around and see what’s happening in our world
  - e. But, God uses the righteous and the unrighteous, the good and the bad, to accomplish His plan, and He will accomplish it