
Life application of its truths...

1. How is the hope for the fulfilment of God's promise nearly dashed because of God's judgement? What's this reveal about His attitude to wickedness?
2. What proves that God's intervention is absolutely necessary because of the continuous sinfulness of humanity? How do you deal with your sinfulness?
3. What important lesson can be learnt from Judah's blatant contravention of God's instructions for marriage? Do you follow God's directive in this regard?
4. Judah tried to hide his sin. How do you do likewise when you engage in illicit behaviour? What should you do about your sinfulness (1 John 1:9)?
5. Judah fails to keep his promise to Tamar; this is starkly contrasted with God who never fails to keep His promise. How does God's reliability affect you?

The end...

The future prospects don't look too bright with Judah's sinfulness exposed. Yet even this isn't a barrier to God fulfilling His promise. However, it's quite clear that the solution to human sinfulness doesn't lie in human hands – divine intervention is absolutely necessary. The focus then shifts back to Joseph, for God is in the process of fulfilling His promises. And Joseph is key to their survival.

study	OLD TESTAMENT: <i>Genesis 37-50</i>	
2	THE LIFE OF JACOB'S SONS	
	Judah's sinfulness exposed	

Genesis 38: 1–30

The story so far...

Joseph had arrogantly shared his God-given dreams with his family, incurring their indignation and hatred. This tragically resulted in Joseph being “fake-killed” at the hands of his brothers to make sure his dreams aren't fulfilled. However, these dreams predicted the future God had mapped out for these descendants of Abraham. Joseph's father, Jacob, is devastated about his “death”; he grieves like one does for a favourite son, making family matters even worse. Joseph's brothers sold him; he is traded as a slave twice, eventually landing up in Egypt.

The story unfolds...

1. The central character thus far is Jacob's favourite son, Joseph. So why is there this detour about Judah at this point of the story (see 35:23; 49:10)?
2. Judah separated from his family appears not to be a good thing (1).
 - a. Why does Judah's marriage raise a red flag (2 [see 24:3-4; 28:1-5])?
 - b. What's the significance of sons born to Judah (3-5 [compare 35:23-26])?

c. Why is Tamar's childlessness such an issue (6-7)?

d. How does God's dealing with Judah's sons reflect on him (7 & 10)?

3. Why does Onan, the second born, also incur God's judgement (8-10)?

Do you realize that if Judah has no sons as his descendants - with the eldest two already struck down dead in God's judgement - that this poses a significant threat to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham?

4. How does Judah propose to resolve Tamar's childlessness (11)? However, what's the problem (14 [see 26])?

5. Why does Tamar deliberately seek to trick her father-in-law, Jacob (12-19)?

6. How does Tamar shame Judah for his sin (16-18)?

7. What does Judah's anger towards Tamar reveal about him (24)?

8. What does Judah concede when his sin is exposed (26 [Deut. 22:22])?

9. How does the birth of Judah's twins play off in the Bible's storyline (27-30 [see 25:23-26; Matthew 1:3 & 16])?

10. Despite Tamar being a Canaanite woman, her desperation to continue the family line while unconventional is commendable. How is she an example of the fulfilment of God's promise?

Towards its fulfilment...

How does this episode show the fulfillment of God's promises regarding:

1. The promised land?

2. The promised descendants?

3. The promised blessing?

4. God's promised rule?