

Text: Genesis 38:1-30

Title: Why Chapter 38?

Truth: Genesis 38 clarifies some immoral behaviors and shows a need to get Israel's family out of the pagan promised land for a while.

Date/Location: Sunday June 11, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

I am not going to “exegete” the whole chapter. The content is too immoral to delve into the details in mixed company! I will point out a few things below.

I. The Ugly Situation

- A. God disposed of Er because he was wicked.
- B. This necessitated Onan, Judah's son, to marry the widow of his deceased brother to “raise up an heir to your brother.” This was a cultural duty and later became encoded into the law called Levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10, exemplified in Ruth 4:5-11). He did not want to do that, thus dishonoring his brother's memory, mistreating the widow, and disobeying his father. God got rid of him too.
- C. Judah had no intention of marrying off the younger Shelah to Tamar because he figured his only surviving male heir would die like his brothers. Perhaps so, if Shelah was evil like his older brothers!
- D. Tamar then schemed to get Judah to give her offspring instead of her prior husbands. This was basically prostitution and incest all in one—and both are terribly sinful.
- E. She bore twins: Perez and Zerah. Perez ended up in the Messianic line. His parents' sinful behavior did not prevent the Lord from having him in the Messianic genealogy. The Lord only had sinners to work with anyway.

II. Why is Chapter 38 in the Bible?

- A. The chapter serves to alert us to the origin of Perez. See Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:3; Luke 3:33.

- B. The events happened in this time period, after Joseph had left, so it fits chronologically.
- C. Judah seemed to be a pretty good fellow a few chapters back. But after the sale of Joseph and this immorality, it is evident that the fourth in birth order is no better than Reuben, Simeon, or Levi.
- D. The men of the family were content to blend into the society even though they understood that they could not do that. How do we know? The Hamor/Shechem/Dinah incident and their insistence upon circumcision means that they knew of God's desire for them to be separated from the nations around them. In that incident I believe they were *using* the matter of separation as an excuse, not in a holy way but in a conniving way. Good principle, but bad use of the principle. The point is that the principle was clearly known, godliness was incumbent upon them, and they were OK with violating it in situations like this.
- E. God saw to it that the nascent nation would be removed from the evil of the promised land by means of a famine. Then, he kept them together and they suffered the persecution that we know about from the book of Exodus. This forged the nation into a separated people. Note that God used trial (famine and persecution) to propagate His plan. This was not pleasant for His people, to be sure, but far better than going down into idolatry. What would have been better is if the sons of Jacob would have walked with God thoroughly and God did not have to chasten them so. Of course, God chooses to chasten even His godly people to prune them and help them to bear even more fruit. Those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, but as I have often said, let's not give God *more* reasons to chasten us than are absolutely necessary 😊.
- F. Notice the contrast with Joseph. He is sold, and a slave, and a man of integrity, and suffering in prison, while Judah is running around like a fool.

MAP