

Introduction

We have been going through the Mark Virkler course on hearing God. Earlier this week, I was praying, and I asked the Lord why He had called me. As I reflect on my life before Christ, I was selfish, had selfish ambition, and had no desire to have anything to do with religion or God. So, I was interested in why God chose me. The answer that I got was, “I called you because I love you. I did not call you because of who you were, but because of who I created you to be. You are a chosen instrument of mine.”

I asked the Lord, “What did you call me to do?” Earlier in my life the Lord had spoken to me out of Ezra 7:10. He said that this was my life verse. God called me to study, practice, and teach His word to people. So, that is what I have given my life to doing. But, I asked the Lord the question anyway. He said to me, “I have called you to lead My people to equip my people, to bring My church to maturity, and to raise up and release leaders.” I think it is important for people to know that God called us because He loved us. It is important to know why God called us and what purposes He has for our lives.

Our text today is a difficult passage. It is difficult for several different reasons. First, scholars struggle with the timeline. Joseph was six when they left Laban and he was seventeen when they sold him. Judah is three years older than Joseph, so he was nine when they left Laban. That puts Judah twenty when they sold Joseph. Joseph is thirty when he appeared before Pharaoh and he was thirty-nine when Israel appeared before Pharaoh. That makes Judah forty-two years old. Judah’s two sons with Tamar, Perez and Zerah, are with him when they went to Egypt. So, in a time span of about twenty-two years, he gets married, has three sons, and his sons get married, and then he has twins with Tamar. Some scholars think that the chapter is out of chronological order, and that Judah got married to Tamar prior to this. I see it entirely possible for everything to have happened as recorded. I think this passage is difficult, not because of the timeline, but because of the content. It is difficult to deal with because this is not a men’s meeting, but a congregational setting with both children and adults. The issues discussed are more adult oriented. This passage is not one that I looked forward to talking about. I was curious about why all this detail was given about Judah and his offspring. Last Sunday night I felt like the Lord gave me some insight about significance of this chapter is in the Bible.

One of the keys to this chapter was given in Genesis 37:1-2a. *“Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. These are the records of the generations of Jacob....”* The rest of Genesis 37 was about the story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, who were full of hate and jealousy. The chapter ended with Joseph being sold in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh’s officer, the captain of the bodyguard. Next week, we will be in Genesis 39, and we pick up the story of Joseph at Potiphar’s house. But Genesis 38 sticks out because it is not a continuation of the story of Joseph, but it is about Judah and his descendants.

I was sharing with someone what I had to cover this week and the person told me to skip the chapter, tell the adults to read it and ask in private any questions they had about the chapter. I am committed to teaching the whole counsel of God. I also hold the conviction that *“all Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”* (2 Tim 3:16-17) So, my question to the Lord was why did you include this chapter? What is the significance of this chapter? How are we to profit and benefit from this chapter in Your Word to us?

There are four sections in this account of Judah. In the first section, Judah gets married and has three sons. In the second section, Judah takes Tamar for his oldest son to marry. The Lord took the lives of Judah's two oldest sons, and Judah makes an agreement with Tamar to give her his third son. In the third section, Judah has not honored the first agreement, and makes another agreement with Tamar. In the final section, Tamar has a child by Judah. I will go through the account of Judah and then spend some time talking about the significance of the account.

1. The Account Of Judah

a. Judah's Wife And Sons (Gen 38:1-5)

(Gen 38:1-5) "And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. {2} Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her. {3} So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. {4} Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. {5} She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him."

Depending on when you believe this account happened, your understanding of the passage changes. I believe that this happened after Joseph was sold into slavery. Scholars that say that Judah was not happy with his brothers about their desire to kill Joseph, and I agree with them. We saw last week in Genesis 37:26-27 that Judah said to his brothers, "*What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him for he is our brother, our own flesh.*" Judah and Reuben wanted to spare Joseph's life, and selling him to the Midianites was the better alternative. In any case, Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite named Hirah.

Adullam was a Canaanite town north of Hebron and south of Jerusalem. (See map.) There is a famous cave at Adullam, and it is where David hid when he fled from Saul. Discontented men gathered to him and he became a captain over them. David wrote Psalm 142 while he was in that cave. In Joshua 12:15, when Israel was going into the Promised Land, the king of Adullam was one of the many kings that Joshua defeated. In Joshua 15:35, we find that Adullam was part of the inheritance that was given to the tribe of Judah.

(1 Sam 22:1-2) "So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard *of it*, they went down there to him. {2} Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him."

It appears from the text that Judah had become friends with this Canaanite named Hirah. He left his brothers and went to visit Hirah. While visiting Hirah, he saw a Canaanite woman named Shua (delivered), and took her as his wife. She conceived three times, giving him three sons: Er (to awake), Onan (vigor, wealth) and Shelah (to be at ease). By taking a Canaanite wife, he was going against what God had clearly commanded his fathers. They were not to marry Canaanite women so that their hearts would not be led astray to serve other gods. That principle is still valid today. We are not to be unequally yoked. Our marriages should help us draw nearer to God, rather than distracting us or leading us away from God. As a husband, I am constantly encouraging Karen in her walk with God, and I desire to see her fulfill the calling on her life.

b. Judah's First Agreement With Tamar (Gen 38:6-11)

(Gen 38:6-11) "Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. {7} But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life. {8} Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." {9} Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother. {10} But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also. {11} Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house."

We quickly move forward in time, and Judah takes a wife for Er, his firstborn. He takes Tamar, who is a Canaanite woman. Her name means palm tree. The English name, Tamara, comes from it, and it also means palm tree. The palm tree stood for an upright person. You remember the town named Luz that Israel renamed as Bethel. Luz mean almond tree, but is used for someone who was crooked. The almond tree branches are crooked and have lots of bends in them.

Because of the timeline, Er must have died very shortly after marrying Tamar. It says that he was evil in the sight of the Lord and the Lord took his life. We don't know how the Lord took his life, only that the Lord took it. It was common in that culture for the next brother in line to take his brother's widow and raise up a descendant for his brother. The first child by that wife would be for his brother, and the remaining children would be his offspring. So, Judah gives Tamar to Onan to raise up an offspring for Er. Onan took Tamar, but deliberately wasted his seed on the ground so that he would not give offspring to his brother. It appears that the two brothers were not fond of one another. What Onan did was very displeasing in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord took his life also. That left Judah with only Shelah, his youngest

Judah told Tamar to go live with her father until Shelah grows up and that he would give him to her. Judah never intended to give Shelah to Tamar. Judah's thoughts are given in the text. Judah was afraid that he would also die if he married Tamar. He sent Tamar to her house with the intention of not having to deal with her again. When we make an agreement with someone, we need to honor our word. Jesus said in Matthew 5:37, "*Let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.*" David wrote in Psalm 15:4 that a man of integrity "*swears to his own hurt and does not change.*" Judah was not honest and forthright with Tamar, and he also was not a man of his word

c. Judah's Second Agreement With Tamar (Gen 38:12-23)

(Gen 38:12-23) "Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. {13} It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." {14} So she removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife. {15} When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. {16} So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you

give me, that you may come in to me?" {17} He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send it?" {18} He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. {19} Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments. {20} When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. {21} He asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?" But they said, "There has been no temple prostitute here." {22} So he returned to Judah, and said, "I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, 'There has been no temple prostitute here.'" {23} Then Judah said, "Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her."

Next, Judah's wife, Shua, died. He was a widower himself. After the time of mourning was over, he went to Timnah where his sheep shearers were. This tells me that it was late spring, because that is when you shear sheep. He went to visit his friend, Hirah. Tamar heard that Judah was going to Timnah and she had also heard that Shelah had come of age and she had not been given to him as his wife. She removed her widow's clothes, hid her face, and pretended to be a harlot. When Judah came by, he offered her money to have her, and they made an agreement for a young goat. Since he did not have one with him, she asked for a pledge. He gave her his seal, his cord, and his staff. Tamar conceived by Judah, and put her widow's garments back on.

When Judah sent the young goat by Hirah to pay Tamar, he could not find her. He said that he could not find the temple prostitute. In many of the false religions, they had temple prostitutes, and it appears that this was a practice with the Canaanites. One of the gods they worshipped was Ashtoreth, a female deity. Prostitution was part of their pagan worship. It was also a practice with the Greeks in Corinth in the New Testament. The Bible is very clear in both the New Testament and the Old Testament that any physical union outside of marriage is sin. Judah was not walking in the ways of the Lord; he was walking in the ways of the world. His friend was a Canaanite; his wife was a Canaanite, he was living with the Canaanites, and he was walking in the ways of the Canaanites. Though we are in the world, we are not to walk in the ways of the world.

d. **Tamar Gives Birth To Twins** (Gen 38:24-30)

(Gen 38:24-30) 'Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" {25} It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?" {26} Judah recognized them, and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again. {27} It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb. {28} Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." {29} But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. {30} Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah."

After three months Judah was informed that Tamar was with child by harlotry. Judah has no judicial authority, although he was wealthy and had influence. He said that she should be burned. She was officially engaged to Shelah, but had not kept herself pure. Therefore, the custom of that day was to put to death adulterers. While she was being taken away to be put to death, she sent word to Judah that she was with child by the man that owned these things. Those things were the pledges that she had taken from Judah that day when he was on his way to Timnah. Judah immediately recognizes his seal, cord, and staff, and he knows that he is the one that had sinned. He declared that she was more righteous than him, since he did not give Shelah to her in marriage. Judah takes her into his house, but he did not have any further relations with her.

Tamar had twins and the midwife tied a scarlet thread on the hand that came out first. However, the hand was pulled back in and the other twin came out first. Therefore, she named the boy Perez, which means breach. Then, the twin with the scarlet thread came out and she named him Zerah, which means dawning or brightness.

2. The Significance Of The Passage

As I prayed about this troubling passage, the Lord spoke to me about why this passage is here. He spoke to me about the significance of the passage. So, I want to spend some time talking about the significance of this chapter.

Over the past few weeks, we saw that there are consequences for our actions. Simeon and Levi took revenge on the people at Shechem, and slaughtered all the males. In Genesis 49:5-7, when Jacob was blessing his sons before he died, he said for his soul not to enter their council and for his glory not to be united with their assembly. We saw a couple of weeks ago that Reuben defiled his father's bed, and consequently, he would not have preeminence, even though he was the firstborn.

(Gen 49:3-12) "Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. {4} "Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled *it*—he went up to my couch. {5} Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. {6} Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. {7} Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel."

Jacob took away Reuben's birthright. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn by Leah, and Joseph was his firstborn by Rachel. Jacob rejected Simeon and Levi, Leah's second and third son, and he gave the firstborn rights to Joseph. In 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 we saw that the firstborn rights were given to Joseph, and that Judah prevailed over his brothers. From Judah would come the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.

(1 Chron 5:1-2) "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. {2} Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph),"

Who was the leader that was going to come from Judah? Let's go back to Israel's blessing over his sons. We will pick it up in Genesis 49:8-12.

(Gen 49:8-12) "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down to you. {9} Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? {10} The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples. {11} He ties *his* foal to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine; he washes his garments in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes. {12} His eyes are dull from wine, and his teeth white from milk."

Notice that the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet. A scepter is an ornamented staff carried by rulers on ceremonial occasions as a symbol of sovereignty. To him shall be the obedience of the peoples. This is repeated in Psalm 60:7, where God says that "*Judah is My scepter.*"

(Ps 60:7) "Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet of My head; Judah is My scepter."

In Psalm 45:6, we read that God's throne is a scepter of uprightness. Then, in Hebrews 1:8, Psalm 45:6 is quoted in reference to Jesus. It reads, "But of the Son He says, 'Your throne O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of the kingdom.'"

(Heb 1:8) "But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM."

(Ps 45:6) "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom."

We discover that the Messiah, who would hold the scepter of the kingdom, was going to go through Judah's lineage. The firstborn rights went to Joseph, but the lineage of Christ was going through Judah. In Psalm 78:67-71, we read that God "rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah." The lineage of Christ through Judah was God's choice. Judah was chosen by God to have the lineage go through him.

(Ps 78:67-71) "He also rejected the tent of Joseph, And did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, {68} But chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved. {69} And He built His sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which He has founded forever. {70} He also chose David His servant And took him from the sheepfolds; {71} From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.

So, when we look at the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 or Luke 3, we see that His genealogy is traced back through Judah. Let me read the first three verses.

(Matt 1:1-3) "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham: {2} Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. {3} Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez was the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram."

If we did not have today's chapter, we would not know how Judah became the father of Perez by Tamar. We would have missing links in Jesus' genealogy. So, the significance of the passage today is the lineage of Christ through Judah.

I want to talk about God's choice of Judah for the lineage. He could have easily chosen Joseph, but He did not. Joseph was a man of integrity. God used Joseph in a mighty way, but He chose Judah for His lineage. In Deuteronomy 7:6-8, God tells the Jewish people that they are a holy people to the Lord, and that He chose them to be a people for His own possession. He did not choose them because they were more in number. In verse 8 we read that He chose them because He loved them.

(Deut 7:6-8) "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. {7} The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, {8} but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

How does that apply to you and I? In Ephesians 1, God tells us that He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. You and I have been chosen. We did not choose God, but He chose us. He chose us before we were ever born. Paul goes on to say "*in love He predestined us to adoption as sons.*" He chose Israel because He loved Israel. He chose Judah because He loved Judah. He chose and adopted us because He loves you and I. He did not choose you and I because we were great in number or anything else. He simply chose us because He loves us.

(Eph 1:4-5) "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love {5} He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,"

I want to make a couple of other statements about His choice of us. He chose Israel to become His possession and a holy nation. We read in 1 Peter 2:9-10 that we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession. God chose us because He loves us. He also chose us to be His possession, and to be a holy nation. You and I are called to be a holy people to the Lord. (See Deuteronomy 14:2.)

(1 Pet 2:9-10) "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; {10} for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY."

Because we have been chosen to be a holy people, we are to live holy lives. In Colossians 3:12-13, Paul gives us a glimpse of what that means.

(Col 3:12-13) "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; {13} bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

Conclusion and Applications

When I asked the Lord why He chose me, He told me that He chose me because He loved me. He did not choose me because I was a righteous young man. Like Judah, I was a flawed man. But God had purposes for Judah and for his descendants. Notice what Moses records in Deuteronomy 10:15. “*Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples, as it is this day.*” God was looking ahead to His Son, Jesus, who would forever hold the scepter of righteousness. God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him because He loved Him and because He had a plan for his descendants. God chose them to be a holy nation, and to be a people for His own possession.

That is significant for us. God wants us to know that He chose us and that He loves us. He wants us to know that He chose us to be a holy nation, a people for His own possession.

This morning, if you have never received Christ into your life, it is God’s desire that none should perish. God loves you and wants you to be His possession. God has plans for your life. If you would like to receive Christ into your life, the Bible says that we must believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and we must confess Him as Lord. If you believe and would like to confess Jesus as Lord, pray with me.

Jesus, I do believe that You are the Christ. You were the descendant that would come through Judah that would hold the scepter of righteousness. I believe that You came and died for my sins, and were raised from the dead. I believe that You died for my sins so that I could be made holy. I want to receive you into my life. This morning, I confess You as Lord of my life. I want to follow You with my whole heart. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

We are going to end this morning with a song from 1 Peter. After we are done singing, Tom is going to lead us in the Lord’s Supper.

Introduction (Gen 37:1-2a, 2 Tim 3:16-17)

1. The Account Of Judah

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- 2. The Significance Of The Passage** (Gen 49:3-12, 1 Chron 5:1-2, Gen 49:8-12, Ps 60:7, 45:6, Heb 1:8, Ps 45:6, 78:67-71, Matt 1:1-3, Deut 7:6-8, Eph 1:4-5, 1 Pet 2:9-10, Col 3:12-13)

Conclusion and Applications (Deut 10:15, Rom 10:9-10)