



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 38: 1-30

“Judah and Messianic Succession”

TRANSCRIPT

One notice immediately as you come to Genesis, chapter 38 that for some reason, the inspired author of holy Scripture thought it is necessary to insert this chapter between chapter 37 and the following chapters 39, and on which have to do with Joseph. And one immediately asks the question, “why,” but nevertheless it is here and in the exposition that will follow. We will try to explain at least some of the reasons that may have guided the author in inserting this chapter. As you know, it is a chapter that has some rather strange things in it, but nevertheless it is part of the word of God and we are expounding the Scriptures and so we are going to attempt an exposition of it.

Let’s begin reading the first one. We will read the entire chapter.

“And it came about at that time that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shua, and he took her and went into her, so she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. And she bore still another son and named him Shelah, and it was at Chezib that she bore.

Now Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar, but Er, Judah’s first born was evil in the sight of the lord, so the lord took his life. Then Judah said to Onan, ‘Go into your brother’s wife and perform your duty of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother.’”

As you know, this custom of levirate marriage, which is referred to here, is later incorporated into the Mosaic law. It was, however, the practice of more than one of the nations of the ancient east and was designed to preserve the name of the brother and also his inheritance and evidently since it is included in the law of Moses, it has the approbation of God. Now we read in verse 8,

“And Onan knew that the offspring would not be his that is the child is reckoned to be the child of the brother who had died. So it came about that when he went into his brother’s wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother, but what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, so he took his life also. 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.’ (He evidently feels that there is some ill luck associated with Tamar.) So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.

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 sheep shearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah, the Adullamite. And it was told to Tamar, ‘Behold your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.’ 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.

When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. So he turned aside to her by the road and said, 'Here now, let me come into 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 into me?' He said, 'Therefore, I will send you a kid from the flock.' She said, 'Moreover will you give a pledge until you send it?' And 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 into her, and she conceived by him. Then she arose and departed and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments. When Judah sent the kid by his friend, the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her, and 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.'"

You will remember that in some of the religions of the ancient east, it was accustomed for prostitution to be associated with the worship, and there were temple prostitutes, and that is of course is what Tamar has sought to disguise herself as. And since the gods were gods of fertility, the act of fornication with the temple prostitute was regarded as a worship act. It was of course a vile kind of religion, but nevertheless that is what is referred to here and the association of the fornication with the fertility of the soil and the gods who are responsible for it is the reason for the temple prostitutes. Verse 22,

"So he returned to Judah and said, 'I did not find her and forth furthermore, the men of the place said, 'There has been no temple prostitute here.' Then Judah said, 'Let her keep them lest we become a laughing stock. After all, I sent this kid, but you did not find her.'

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 burnt.' Later on, it was the priest's daughter, who was guilty of a sin like this only, who was to be burnt. Adultery was punished in the Mosaic Law by stoning to death, but this of course is before the time of the Mosaic law. It was while she was being brought out that she sent for 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?' And Judah recognized them and said, 'She is more righteous than I in as much as I did not give her to my son Shelah.' And he did not have relations with her again. And it came about at the time she was giving birth that behold there were twins in her womb. 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.' 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, which means the breach. And afterwards his brother came out, who had the scarlet thread on his hand and he was named Zerah."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning in the exposition of the Book of Genesis is Judah and the Messianic succession. As many of you know, who have been listening to the exposition of the Book of Genesis in these morning hours on Sunday, I have many times, particularly recently commented upon the statements that Professor H. C. Leupold has made in his commentary on Genesis and his hints for the homiletical use of the Book of Genesis. He has advised the preachers in which he counsels them about certain of the leading ideals in the chapters and also offers advice on whether certain chapters and certain sections of the chapters should be preached.

Now he has often advised against the preaching of chapters in the Book of Genesis and portions of the Book of Genesis, and in my opinion as I have been trying to

express to you, it’s only my opinion, but in my opinion, he is usually wrong because I think it is sensible to preach what is revealed by the Holy Spirit, and I think particularly it is so in Believers Chapel since we do try to have a systematic consecutive expository ministry. But if Professor Leupold is ever right in counseling that a chapter should not be preached, he would be right here. He says, concerning this particular chapter, “Entirely unsuited to homiletical use much as the devout student may glean from the chapter.” I rather think, however, that since this chapter is found in the word of God that it is therefore the subject for preaching and certainly is part of the divine revelation.

I remember some words that John Calvin has spoken concerning other doctrines that are not too popular when they are preached. Speaking about the doctrine of election, Calvin in *The Institutes* makes the comment that we ought to teach the truth of God that He has given us to teach, “Lest we seem to scarf at the Holy Spirit for publishing what we ought to suppress.” There are people who give advice to the effect that you should never preach, for example, the doctrine of election, because it is bigotry or it causes problems.

In fact, when I went through theological seminary that was the advice that was given to me by my professor of theology. He said that the doctrine of election ought not to be preached to an ordinary audience. That was of great interest to me because I just naturally it seemed had the idea that all of the Bible was revelation and therefore all of the Bible ought to be preached, and that interested me, that comment that that was a part of the Bible that should not be preached, and in my reading I had kept that in my mind, and as I was reading through the Gospel of John shortly after that I noticed that the Lord Jesus had not heard that piece of advice from my systematic theology professor, because he kept talking about the doctrine of divine election through the unsaved Pharisees and Sadducees. And I rather thought, though I highly respected my theology professor and still do as a great man of God -- I often give indications of that in quoting him -- but in this instance at least I do think that he was wrong.

We must not seem to be scarfing at the Holy Spirit for publishing what ought to be suppressed, and therefore we ought to proclaim everything that is found in the divine revelation.

Now Calvin speaking specifically about the doctrine of predestination said, “Whoever, then, heaps odium upon the doctrine of predestination openly reproaches God, as if he had unadvisedly let slip something hurtful to the church.” In other words, when a person heaps odium or hatred upon the doctrine of predestination, he is saying in effect, “Lord you have unadvisedly revealed something that really is harmful for the church of Jesus Christ.”

I rather take the other view. I think that he has revealed what is helpful to the church of Christ. And if it causes division, then we must not attribute the cause to the preaching of election, but to the sin of the human heart, for the gospel always causes division because man’s heart is wicked. And so therefore, in spite of the advice of Professor Leupold and with a great deal of trepidation, I want to attempt to handle this chapter, and I think also I should mention this that I hesitate to say anything about this chapter for another reason.

We are living in a very sad era of our society and particularly I think in our western world and I believe especially in the United States of America. We often say we are living in the age of anxiety or we say we are living in the age of adultery, but we are really living in the age of offensiveness. Our society is, to use an adjective which I think, is gross. Our society is gross.

In *Time* Magazine, in the essay, there was an essay on “Back to Reticence.” I wish it were possible to read the whole essay because I think it was well written and makes a very significant point, and the point is that what we are living in is an age of grossness. He doesn’t say that, but that is precisely what we are living in. He refers to the behavior of some of our leading tennis stars on the tennis court and in effect says that what has happened is that the tennis courts, which were originally places where rather nice people

used to play the nice person's game, has become very much like a roller derby with all kinds of grossness manifested in the activities, in actions, and gestures of the participants. It goes on to speak of much of the other type of grossness that exists in the United States and comes back finally calling us to some reticence.

One of the saddest things today is that the offensiveness, which appears in our society began under the guise of what has been thought to be a very refreshing virtue: honesty, and it is a refreshing virtue, honesty, but the doctrine of letting at all hangout has now resulted in a grossness and crudeness and coarseness in our society that is very, very bad in my opinion. We know what life is like. We don't have to be reminded of it in public and I don't want to contribute to it, and this chapter is a chapter in which we have some of the grosser aspects of human life set forth very plainly, but nevertheless part of the Bible and so I say with some trepidation, I will try to handle it. I confess to you this is the first time I have ever preached the sermon on the Genesis, chapter 38. I shouldn't have waited so long probably.

One might ask the question at this point, why is this chapter or why this story found in this chapter, why is it in the Bible at all? And of course we know this that it is inserted here in the story of Joseph. We have Joseph in chapter 37, Joseph in chapter 39, and following and then suddenly here is this chapter 38 inserted in the unfolding of the significance of Joseph in connection with the overall plan of God with reference to Jacob and his son.

Let me suggest that first of all the reason that the Holy Spirit has given us Genesis chapter 38, is that it reveals the grave moral dangers that surrounded Jacob and his sons among the Canaanites, among whom they were living. It also stresses the difficulty of keeping the children of the chosen family pure, to be untouched by the society about them. In fact, it is obvious things become so bad in the land that deportation to the land of Egypt is necessary. Egypt was a land that was gross itself, but nevertheless they didn't like strangers and they particularly didn't like shepherds, and so when Israel were bound

into the land of Egypt, they were able to be separate from the people, because of their own particular calling. So this chapter here is a chapter that reveals why deportation to Egypt was necessary for Jacob and his sons, and then the following chapters will unfold how Joseph becomes the instrument of the physical preservation of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt.

Chapter 38 also sets the faith and chastity of Joseph in the context of the Canaanites and the life there, and chose the rarity of these virtues of faith and chastity among the people of God. It has an important place in the unfolding of the leadership of Judah. Judah becomes the effective leader of the brothers as we shall see in the chapters that follow, and this chapter is a chapter about him, about his wickedness, about his sin, but also about his repentant confession near the end of the chapter and the obvious beginning of the process of sanctification in his life.

It is an interruption in the Joseph's story, perhaps also to create some suspense, because one wonders what happened to Joseph since he was sold into Egypt into captivity to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, and so the normal feeling as you finish chapter 37 is to say what has happened to Joseph. And so chapter 38, holding off the information, perhaps does create some suspense and his fate is in the balance. And therefore there are reasons why this chapter should appear here as we just think of the context of it.

Now the lessons are also found in the story, which culminates in the horror of Judah's and Tamar's sin. There is the nature of man's depravity. You see it in Judah, who is of the chosen family. You see it also in Tamar, and it revealed something of the natural outworking of the fact that we have sin in our members; that nature of man's depravity becomes very, very coarse as one can see.

We also see the absolute justice of God, because when Er does that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, God -- let me put it very bluntly -- God kills him, that's what we read. We read that Er was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life. Now that reveals the justice of God. Judgment on the sons of Judah is the judgment of God. So we

have here then an outstanding illustration of the divine candor in the revelation of the hearts of the chosen and also in a revelation of the justice of God.

We also have a marvelous revelation of divine grace, marvelous grace shown to Judah, and his repentance and growing sanctification, and when we reflect on the ultimate outcome of this, that Tamar becomes one of those in the land of our Lord, we can see some manifestation of the marvelous grace of God in its unfolding.

Well, let’s look at the chapter. I would like go through the chapter as quickly as possible and conclude with a lesson or two that one sees in it. The opening five verses of this 38th chapter unfold the details of Judah’s marriage. We read in verse 1 and it came about at that time that Judah went down or departed from his brothers.

Now some of the commentators suggest that Judah departed from his brothers because he had a falling out with them over the fate of Joseph, because Judah had said in chapter 37 in connection with the sale of [sic] Joseph, “What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him for he is our brother, our own flesh.” So he had sought to defend Joseph to some extent and commentators see in this an evidence that perhaps further disagreement arose over the treatment of Joseph, and he found it necessary to leave them.

But there is a haphazardness in the choosing of his wife that reminds one of Samson. Judah when he went down to visit a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah, saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. Incidentally, his wife’s name is never given in this chapter. She is simply called the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua or Shua’s daughter. When he goes down and he takes this woman and he goes into her, and the marriage is evidently consummated. Now this unnamed Canaanite then becomes the wife of Judah. This is one of the things that signify the moral decline of the chosen family. This was something that was wrong. It was wrong to take a wife of the Canaanites.

Now the Apostle Paul in the New Testament sets forth in the plainest way the consequences of a believer marrying an unbeliever. We read in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, in verse 14, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness or what fellowship has light with darkness or what harmony has Christ with Belial or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?” That is a biblical principle from the beginning of the revelation on through the in the Bible over and over and over again, warns believers against being yoked together with unbelievers.

Now there is no yoke that is more of a yoke than the yoke of marriage, and consequently it is of the greatest importance that we in our marriages that we contract, contract them with believers, if we are believers. What fellowship does one who has stands in a righteous position before God had with someone who is unrighteous in the sight of the Lord? A believer is righteousness in Christ. He is light in Christ. He is the temple of God in Christ indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Why should he marry? What is the point of marriage with someone who is unrighteousness outside of Christ, who is darkness being outside of Christ, who is not the temple of God, but the temple of idols, but temple of sins? What fellowship is there between a believer and an unbeliever, but I speak especially to young people?

It is of the most importance that you listen carefully to the instruction from the word of God. Do not for one moment seek to rationalize by saying, “Oh, if I marry him or if I marry her, I’ll be able to lead them to the Lord.” That is a rationalization that is a direct disobedience of the word of God. Now I know you can give illustrations of individuals who were unbelievers, who married believers, and became believers. There are illustrations of that that is marvelous grace from the Lord, but you cannot expect if you directly disobey the word of God to have the divine blessing. And my heart truly bleeds for a lot of young people who, knowing this still, in a fool-hearted fashion disobey the word of God, find themselves yoked to unbelievers, and then have to face the

consequences of what follows. I wish it were possible for me to give you some of the illustrations that I have seen of this in many years of observing the practices and attitudes and actions of fellow believers.

Now the next verses 6 through 11 describe Judah’s procuring a wife for his son. Judah selected his own wife, but either sides he is going to select his son’s wife, and so we read in verse 6, “Now Judah took a wife for Er, his first born, and her name was Tamar.” Now the Bible goes on to say that Er was evil in the sight of the Lord, that evil is not described. In the light of the context we might be safe in saying it was some form of sexual evil, since it was mentioned in the context of marriage. But do you know there is a steep moral decline in the chosen family?

Now you can find in the chosen family and also in Christian experience that there is a tendency to an immediate deep plunge from grace when faith begins to wane. The normal thing that happens in so many of our Christian homes, it is sad to observe, is this. Grandfather, or at a point in the past, one man or one woman comes to an understanding of the grace of God, they have been brought to a deep conviction of their sin, they know the burden of what it is to be lost, condemned, and then God reveals to them the wonderful saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ, they look after the cross, they see that Christ has died for sins, and they flee to the cross, and they feel and know the burden of sin has been removed.

They have an experience very much like Christian’s experience when the burden rolled down to the foot of the cross and into the grave of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they know the freedom and the joy and the vitality of being saved, having the forgiveness of sins. And they have a vital Christian testimony and they seek to communicate it to their families and they do in measure but second-generation Christians so often don’t have the vital experience of the first generation Christians.

Sometimes we don’t really think that it is necessary for our children to have a direct experience of the grace of God themselves, and so we do not encourage them, and

challenge them to face the question of their own conversion in a personal way. We seem at times to encourage them to think that because they grow up in a Christian home they are Christians, but they need the same experience that grandfather had, that father had, and you will observe this in families that frequently by the time, the second, third, sometimes the fourth generation comes there's not a great deal of faith in the grandchildren. But at other times the decline is much steeper and even in a father and mother who know the principles of grace and have had the experience of salvation. When faith begins to wane and interest in spiritual things begin to wane, then suddenly in the almost immediate family there is a plunge into sin. One thinks of that when you look at this. Judah, the son Jacob, and now in his children and they are evil children, Er and Onan.

Now the sin of Onan has to do with the custom of levirate marriage to which I have referred. It was the custom and evidently it was countenanced by God, regarded as right because what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord. Moses says; it was later incorporated into Mosaic law. If a man died before he had children, but he had a brother, it was his brother's responsibility to go into his brother's wife and to raise up an heir for that brother because the property and the estate depended upon it. And that was incorporated into Mosaic Law. It is the law of levirate marriage. Now Onan knew this, but he rebelled against it and refused to carry out his duty to his brother.

Now why was there so much displeasure? Why did God kill him for this? Well in the first place, it was a persistent practice on his part. Now the New American Standard Bible is I think not as accurate as it might be in the translation of verse 9. I know that is disappointing to some. Some had been told, if you get the New American Standard Bible, you will have all these corrections the preachers make in the text. Sad to say that is not true. You see the original text must be interpreted like anything else and interpreted different in their opinion of the meaning of the context. In the final analysis, no translation is perfect.

Now this translation was made by some students of mine and I don't like to correct my own students, but in verse 9 when it says, "So it came about that when he went into his brother's wife," if you will look, if you were able to look at the Hebrew text at this point you would see that this was not a once and for all occasion, but rather refers to a persistent practice, and so the when of verse 9 should be translated "whenever" and in the New International Version, it has been corrected and it is there, whenever. So we should read then verse 9, "And Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so it came about that whenever he went into his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother." So this was displeasing to the Lord in the first place because it was a persistent practice on Onan's part. He and Tamar evidently had sexual relationships a number of times and every time he would as the text says waste his seed on the ground. It was whenever.

Another reason why it was so displeasing to the Lord was because evidently it was done for greed. He knew that that offspring would not be his, so if a son was born, that son would inherit the property of his brother, Er, and that he would not be recognized as Onan's son but as Er's son and hence it seems he wanted the property of his brother because it would ultimately belong to the family and he would have a larger portion.

And it was also a perversion of marriage. Marriages are divine institution. He was doing what is called taking preventive measures. Dr. Barnhouse says on his comment perhaps a little too strongly, "Onan was slain because he was the first man to practice birth control." Now he goes on to qualify that little bit by saying that a doctor may prescribe birth control, but there can be no doubt that Onan's disobedience was an abomination to the Lord. When God kills a man for it, we had better pay attention. It was a perversion of marriage, a perversion of the divine institution, it certainly was a perversion of the will of God, and that I think is the important thing.

It was a studied outrage against the will of God, against his family, and also against his body, and out of what he was doing constantly has come the term "Onanism,"

which is a word that refers to sexual aberrations including such things as masturbation. So this was a direct outrage against the will of God. It's not surprising then that we read what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord, so He took his life also. He committed sin unto death by this persistent sin.

Now that is something that is taught in the New Testament, my Christian friend. Persistent sin or sin unto death is something that takes place in the age of the church. We read in First Corinthians, Chapter 11, that because of the things that were happening at the Lord's table, the disorders there, some are weak, Paul says some are sickly and some had fallen asleep. The sin against the Lord God as a member of the family of God exposes us to the discipline of God and that discipline is a discipline so severe that it ultimately involves our physical life, so it is a serious thing to sin against the Lord God. It is a serious thing to sin persistently against the Lord God.

Now evidently Judah infected by the superstition of the Canaanites began to think that Tamar was ill-omened or ill-starred, and that bad luck was associated with any relationship to her because Er had died and Onan also had died. He doesn't realize that it is because of their evil that they have died, but rather associates it with Tamar, and so since he has a third son by the name of Shelah, he does not want Shelah to marry Tamar because he thinks that may be the same thing will happen to him. So he suggests that Tamar, although, he had responsibility to her to give her Shelah, that Tamar remain a widow in her father's house until Shelah grows up, but he did not intend to give Shelah to her so that Shelah might be the means of a son and an heir for her.

Well, the situation changes with the death of Judah's wife. We read in the 12th verse. 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 sheep shearers at Timnah. This was a time of festivities, it was a time of celebration, it was a time in which they reaped the benefits of their work of handling the flocks. The shepherds were at this time of the

year happy, festive. There no doubt was a great deal of drinking of wine, a great deal of celebration, and of course a great deal of evil because of the society at that time.

A word came to Tamar that Judah had gone up to be with the sheep shearers and realizing that time was not on her side and that Shelah was not being given to her, this indomitable woman -- because she was indomitable woman, say what you will about her; she was a sinner, what she did was wrong -- but nevertheless she is an indomitable woman very much like an Esther and she is concerned with her right as a matriarch in the land of Judah because she was married to the eldest son. And being married to the eldest son she knew that her offspring possessed certain rights. And knowing the Canaanite cult encouraged ritual fornication as a kind of fertility magic, she decides on this rather weird scheme that she will go up and she will play the part of a temple prostitute.

Now the odds of success were exceedingly large, but it is remarkable that exactly what she anticipated would happen, did happen. She knew her man, she saw him coming, knew her man, or looking at him from the other side and of course this is the important thing really, it was the providence of God that this take place.

So we see the sad picture of the head of the royal line, Judah, haggling with what he thought was a prostitute over the price of sexual intercourse. She is very smart. She demands a pledge in order that she might have protection, and so her scheme is successful. Judah makes an attempt afterwards to pay his debt. It was, by the way, the going price, the kid of the goats. In other passages of the Bible that same price is mentioned. So it was the going price and when he sought to pay it, Tamar could not be found. Now then later on the inevitable happened. It became known that Tamar was pregnant and so Judah is the head of the family and word comes to him, it is described in verse 24, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot and behold she is also with child by harlotry."

And so Judah in venting his explosive anger, but down deep within I think he was greatly relieved because that meant that Shelah would not have to be given to her.

Venting his anger outwardly, he says, "Bring her out and let her be burnt." But she had the goods on him and so as she was being brought out, she just brought forth that little signet ring and the cords and the staff -- and incidentally there were the markings of identification on these staffs. And so she just simply set them to Judah and she said, "I am with child by the person to whom these things belong." And he looks at them, recognizes them as his own, realizes that evasion is impossible, and blurts out the repentant words. I rather think, there is some question about that, but I rather think they are repentant words. He says, "She is more righteous than I." She is more in the right than I am. A clear admission that his fornication with her was an illicit fornication. Oh, the candor of the Bible. For you see this is the one from whom our Lord derives his name, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and this is his ancestor.

Well the chapter ends with description of the birth of the twin sons and naming of these sons. We don't have time to say anything about that. Let me just say a few words in conclusion. Thus ends the chapter filled with the horror of this fearful and lurid story. The redeeming features are very few, but Judah's confession of repentance and perhaps some other lessons justify its inclusion in the word of God. I certainly would go with the Lord God in this case, and one of the things that immediately come home to you is the possibility of evil that is latent in human nature, even in religious human nature.

I have no doubt that Judah outwardly at least seem to the men of the Canaanites to be a religious man, identified with the Lord God Jehovah, but it reveals that even religious people have the sin principle dwelling within them and the possibilities of evil are deep and persistent and overpowering until the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ takes place and even then as believers the sin principles still dwells within our members. But there is a kind of stress on the grace of God in this that I think is marvelous because in the Lord's dealings with Judah one can see the beginning of a definite growth in sanctification, and furthermore in the Lord's relationship to Judah and Tamar we see illustrated the principles of grace in the Bible.

When you turn over to the first chapter of the Book of Matthew, you are somewhat startled, if you just read that chapter, to read these words that open the Gospel of Matthew. I am going to read them because I think they are startling:

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son David, the son of Abraham. To Abraham was born Isaac and to Isaac Jacob, and to Jacob Judah and his brothers, and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar.”

There she is, in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Incidentally, to begin a gospel with a genealogy strikes us modern Westerners as singular, to say the least. To preface the life of the Lord Jesus with an elaborate table of descents through 41 generations and then to show that the 42nd generation doesn’t have any real connection with the 41st seems to us to be irrelevant. But that’s the way this gospel begins because you see it is designed to show us that our Lord, while he is connected with the line is nevertheless of it because he was born of a virgin.

But one of the surprising things about this genealogy is the fact that it contains five women within it. Now that’s not surprising to us and our society, which has been influenced so much by the feminism of today. We might wonder and look at this and say, why are not more women in it? In fact there are some that would say why are the women here and the men missing. Well that is an interesting question. What a collection of women are found in it. One of the commentators says, “It’s not normal to find the names of women in Jewish pedigrees at all. The women had no legal rights. They were regarded not as persons, but as things.” Now that’s wrong, but nevertheless, some have thought that women’s rights were so few that one could almost say that. We know that the Jews pray the regular morning prayer, “Oh God, I thank Thee that Thou has not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” [Laughter] That is a lovely prayer, isn’t it men? [More laughter]

Now think about these women though. Think about the women that are included. There is Tamar, the deliberate seducer and adulteress, considered the Gentile; Rahab the Gentile harlot of Jericho; Ruth the Moabites of whom it is said concerning Moabites that they should not enter into the congregation of the Lord. Bathsheba, the woman who was seduced by David and whose husband was treated with unforgettable cruelty; and the fifth woman, the Virgin Mary. Amazing that these women and these particular women should be there. Three who seems strangely there. Two particularly, one a harlot and the other the deliberate seducer and adulteress, Tamar.

Now one of the reasons for this of course is to disarm perhaps Jewish criticism of our Lord's birth, to remind those who read this that in the story of the Messianic succession of the Old Testament there are some unusual incidents recorded in it and made part of the ancestor of the Messiah. There is a stress also upon the sovereignty of God in the providence by which in unexpected way God carries out his purpose.

One thing is certain, a Jew would never have used such a genealogy unless tradition compelled him to do so and so this genealogy is not one that is manufactured by a man seeking to deceive anyone. He would never have put women in the genealogy and he wouldn't have put these women. So the inclusion of the women is a tribute to the genuineness of the ancestry of our Lord, but most of all, it illustrates the fact that the Lord Jesus is truly one of us, apart from sin, not infected by sin. He is nevertheless one of us and in his own ancestry, in his own genealogy, there is to be found Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and then of course the Virgin Mary.

And being one of us, he is able to be our representative, our substitute, the one who dies for his own. So how encouraging to read, right in the beginning of the New Testament that he is qualified to be our representative and to save us from sin; the sin of a Judah, the sin of a Tamar, or whatever the particular manifestation of our evil nature may be in our own lives, he is able to save us from it. If you are here this morning and you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, don't comfort yourself by saying you

have not been guilty of the sins of Er or Onan or Judah or Tamar, the evil that is latent in the hearts of men is latent in your own heart and given the proper occasion, it will manifest itself, and it will if it is not forgiven it will take you to the Lake of Fire ultimately.

May God help you to see your guilt, your condemnation. May God help you to see your need and that your case is hopeless apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ and may God help you to see that he has provided a remedy for sinners, a cross of Christ and may God give you the grace and the fear if necessary to flee to the cross of Christ to receive as a free gift, everlasting life. It doesn't come by joining the church, by praying through, doing good works, any religious works it comes as we recognize that our case is hopeless and flee to the mercy of God and receive in grace the salvation He has provided or by grace or you are saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast. Come to Christ, put your trust in Him, find deliverance and the forgiveness of sins. May we stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so thankful to Thee that we have the word of God, all 66 books, in all of the chapters in the books. We know there are difficult things in some of them, but we know that with good reason they are there. We give Thee thanks for the chapter that we have read through and studied. May its lessons impress themselves upon our hearts. May grace and mercy and peace go with us as we leave today, and if there should be some who have not come to Christ. O God through the Holy Spirit if it should please Thee, bring them to the knowledge of him. In his name we pray, Amen.