

Genesis 37-38 • Joseph dreams and Judah's Hypocrisy

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We are in the 37th chapter. Pray with me before we get into it.

Heavenly Father, we feel it necessary always before we come before your Word to study it, that we humble ourselves and just confess to you, Lord, that apart from your Holy Spirit and apart from the wisdom and illumination that you give, we're lost in really understanding and laying hold of this Word.

Father, we don't consider ourselves more than we ought and we come to you as the source of all knowledge and wisdom. And we pray that you would open our hearts tonight to hear your voice and to receive from this Word according to your intentions for us this evening.

Lord, you know everybody here, you know what's going on in their lives, what's going on in their hearts, and you know what's going on in the world, which affects us every single day.

And so I pray my Father, God, that you would use our study tonight to really encourage, equip, challenge and bless your children tonight as we take time to dig into the Word. We ask you to be with us and we ask it in Jesus name, amen.

All right, Genesis chapter 37. It begins by saying, "*Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, (meaning his father's travels) in the land of Canaan.*" (ESV)

And then verse 2 says, "*These are the generations of Jacob.*" If you have a New King James (NKJV) Bible that you're reading from, your Bible says, "*this is the history of Jacob.*"

And it begins here by focusing on Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. And it says, "*Joseph, being seventeen years old, was pasturing the flock with his brothers. He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.*" So pause there for just a moment right away.

We're given some interesting insight and you can see that Joseph got off to a bad start with his brothers because he complained to his dad about... And we don't know what..., it was probably their work habits or something they were doing that just, Joseph felt was wrong. And so he went to his dad and ratted on him.

And so, these guys had that sort of a reason to not like Joseph very much. But there was another reason his brothers didn't like him and that's given to us in verse 3.

It says, *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his sons, because he was the son of his old age. And he made him a robe of many colors.”* And just the existence of that robe, a very nice thing to give to a son, would have been a clear sign of his father's special affection.

And it was enough to stir up the jealous hatred of all of his brothers related to him. And, we talked when we were going through dealing with Jacobs parents, when we were talking about Isaac and Rebecca, we talked about the danger of playing favorites as parents. And it's very challenging because, if you have more than one child, there's probably one kid that you connect with better than others just on a personal level.

It doesn't mean that you love them more or love the others less, but it can sure feel that way to other kids and that's one thing. But when a parent actually begins to favor a child and treat a child differently than all of the others, I think that there is a real danger that goes along with that sort of family dynamic. It just creates all kinds of tension.

And in Jacob's case, there were really 2 sons that he favored, and it was Joseph and his brother Benjamin. And the reason was, those were the 2 boys who had been born through Rachel, who was really the love of Jacob's life. I mean, that was the only woman he ever wanted to marry. It was the only woman he was ever in love with.

And in fact, she died in childbirth giving birth to Benjamin, and that probably made it all the more poignant and tender for him to have these boys. They probably reminded him of Rachel in some way and so he favored them and that created tension in the family that in this particular case is going to boil over in very dangerous ways. And we're going to see this as we go on.

We're told in verse 4, *“But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.”* Or as the NIV says, *“they couldn't speak a kind word to him.”*

“⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, “Hear this dream that I have dreamed: ⁷ Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸ His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to rule over us?” So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.”

You can tell that Joseph's not... he's 17. And I remember when I was 17 and I've told you guys many times, that's for a young man, those are the stupid years. Starting around, I don't know, 13 to 19, something like that. And there are exceptions to that. If there's some young men here in the room today, let me just say that I've seen some men who exceed and excel this whole idea. But for me, I'll just say this for me, those were my stupid years and you don't tend to make the best decisions at that age, unfortunately.

It says in verse 9, *“Then he dreamed another dream (and smart guy that he was) and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” ¹⁰ But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?” ¹¹ And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.”*

He was, oh, maybe we'll see. All right, let's stop here for a moment and let me talk for you to you for just a moment about dreams. Believe it or not, I get a lot of emails from people who want to talk to me about their dreams that they feel that perhaps the Lord has given them.

One of the things they'll often say to me is, they'll tell me this whole dream, then they'll say, pastor Paul, what does this dream mean? And I'm like, what are you asking me for? That's, not what I do. I just told them, you got to pray about it.

But let me just say this, dreams can be a legitimate means of God communicating with you, they can. I've had one dream in my lifetime that I believe the Lord gave me in a sort of directive that He had for me. And I won't

get into all the details, but it was during a difficult season in our lives, and the Lord... it bore itself out in ways that I believe validated it is a genuine dream from the Lord.

But one of the things that I hear from people a lot about their dreams is, they'll say, I had this dream, I think it might be from the Lord, but I'm totally confused. And my response is, yeah, well, I don't think that's from the Lord then because I don't think the Lord gives us things to confuse us.

I think He gives us directives to direct us, to enlighten us, so that we might know the way to go. God has lots of ways of communicating, but He certainly isn't going to confuse you on purpose. If somebody's totally confused about the meaning of their dream, I have real serious doubts, honestly, about whether that dream is necessarily from the Lord.

If you're unsure about a dream, then don't talk to people about it, ask the Lord. Pray about it, ask God, is this something, were you communicating this to me? And if so, I'm going to need you to corroborate it another way or, that sort of thing. But just..., but pray about it.

And then lastly, the thing that we're learning here in Joseph's case is, not every dream has been given to communicate to other people. In other words, God may..., and He may give you a dream.

We looked at a passage in the Book of Joel just this last Sunday that talked about in the end times, God would pour out His Spirit and there would be dreams and visions that would come from that outpouring. And so there is a biblical legitimacy to the whole issue of dreams, but it doesn't mean if God has given you a dream, it's necessarily something He wants you to share. It could be just for you and you alone.

And that was the wisdom that Joseph lacked as a 17 year old young man. He didn't realize what he was doing was aggravating his..., well, I don't know if he realized it or not. I guess I'm injecting a little bit there. He may have, maybe he did it on purpose.

I don't know what kind of a 17 year old kid he was, but he shouldn't have done it. He should have withheld the information. He should have prayed about it and sought the grace and wisdom of God. It was very unwise of him to share these things with his brothers, knowing the family dynamic was what it was and so forth. But then again, he was 17.

So we go on here in verse 12 and it says, *“Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. ¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, “Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them.” And he said to him, “Here I am.” ¹⁴ So he said to him, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word.” So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.”*

Let me just remind you about a couple of things. It was Shechem where Levi and Simeon went into the city and killed all the men. So there's a danger with these guys making their way with the flocks all the way back to Shechem so it could be that Jacob was concerned about that.

Now we read in our last study that God actually protected Jacob and his family by putting a fear of attacking them in the hearts of the Canaanites, so they would leave them alone. Well, but Jacob was still concerned, and he wanted to know how things were going.

But, I got to tell you something, I think this was a huge blunder on Jacob's part to send Joseph. I mean, Jacob, as the man of the home, as the father, as the husband, he should have been aware of the family dynamic that was going on here.

He knew that Joseph had told these dreams to his other sons. I have to believe that Jacob was aware of how they responded to Joseph telling those dreams. And frankly, it is the responsibility of the man of the house to protect the members of the family.

And this was a serious oversight, I believe, on Jacob's part by sending Joseph out to check up on his brothers. He had already brought a bad report to his father because of them, which they hated him for. They had a lot of reasons to hate him and Jacob had to have known that.

He had to have been at least aware to some degree of the animosity that existed. And it was just a really, really dumb idea on his part, to do that.

I encourage men, in your home, in your family, be aware of the dynamics. Be aware of the drama that's going on so that you can step in if need be and limit that.

Anyway, verse 15 goes on. It says, *“And a man found him (that’s Joseph) wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, “What are you seeking?” ¹⁶ “I am seeking my brothers,” he said. “Tell me, please, where they are pasturing*

the flock.” ¹⁷ *And the man said, “They have gone away, for I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.”*

And it says here in verse 18, *“They saw him from afar, ...”* It was probably not hard to see him coming from a distance with that particular garment he wore that his father had given him that was, all the colors that it had and so forth. It was quite different.

And it says, *“...and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him.”* Now that tells you where their hearts are at. This is frustration, anger, and bitterness that has now turned murderous.

It's one thing to be angry at someone. It's one thing to be frustrated at someone. It's another thing to want them dead. Honestly, whether you would ever do it or not, isn't the issue. You know that, right?

I mean, Matthew chapter 5. Just read through the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus talks about if you've done it in your heart, you've done it. So this is what's going on in their hearts and apparently Reuben, the eldest son wasn't there, or at least wasn't privy to this conversation as it was going on, and you'll see that in just a moment.

And it says in verse 19, *“They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer.”* ²⁰ *Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.”*

²¹*But when Reuben heard it, (so now he's in on the conversation) he rescued him out of their hands, saying, “Let us not take his life.”* ²² *And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but do not lay a hand on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hand to restore him to his father.”*

He was secretly thinking, I'll just encourage them to put him into a pit. And by the way, if you have a different Bible translation, your Bible may say, *“cistern,”* which is actually pretty accurate. I looked up the Hebrew word. Anyway, but he was going to rescue him out of that and bring him back to his father.

Verse 23 says, *“So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore.”* ²⁴ *And they took him and threw him*

into a pit. (or cistern, and the reason we believe it was a cistern was because it tells us that) *The pit (it) was empty; (and) there was no water in it.*” And of course that's the purpose of a cistern.

Verse 25. *“Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, (in other words, the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham) with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt.*

²⁶ *Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. ²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.”*

They've gone all the way from planning to murder him to, well, no, let's just leave him in a pit and no, let's sell him. Let's sell him into slavery.

Now, what we're not told here is how Joseph pled with his brothers as they were selling him to these Ishmaelites and in trying to convince them not to do this thing to him.

We actually discovered that much later on when Joseph confronts them, but they're not aware of who he is. It's in the 42nd chapter of Genesis. I'll put it up on the screen here. It says,

Genesis 42:21 (ESV)

Then they said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.”

Then they said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we (would not or we) did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.”

It's interesting that we're not told it here, but later on they talk about how he pleaded with them. But can you imagine? A little brother pleading with his older brothers. Pleading with them, begging them, please don't do this and they didn't listen and they didn't care. They hated him so much that they were willing to sell him into slavery. It's pretty sad story. I mean, you think about Jacob's

sons and you think about these guys are going to be the heads of the tribes of Israel, and the blessing of God, and the covenant of God that was made originally through Abraham, and passed along to these various descendants, and look what they're doing. Look what they're capable of.

In verse 29, it says that, *“When Reuben returned to the pit and saw that Joseph was not in the pit, he tore his clothes (which of course was an ancient way of showing grief) ³⁰ and returned to his brothers and said, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?””*

In other words, where am I going to go to try to find him or whatever? Obviously again, Reuben wasn't there when they sold him into slavery so they got to come up with some kind of an explanation for why Joseph is missing because eventually they have to go home.

It says that, *“³¹ Then they took Joseph's robe and slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³² And they sent the robe of many colors and brought it to their father and said, “This we have found; please identify whether it is your son's robe or not.” ³³ And he identified it and said, “It is my son's robe. A fierce animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces.”*

³⁴ Then Jacob tore his garments and put sackcloth on his loins (again, another picture of grief and mourning) and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, “No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” Thus his father wept for him.”

What an incredibly cruel thing to do to your dad. Can you imagine? I mean, just imagine. It almost boggles the mind.

And then the chapter ends by simply saying, *“³⁶ Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.”*

And we're going to see that God has a plan, even in the midst of such cruelty and difficulty.

Now, we're going to cover one more chapter tonight. And I got to tell you, I'm not really sure why the biblical writers chose to insert the events that they did here in chapter 38, other than the fact that they took place right around that same time. But what we have here in chapter 38 is really an interruption in the story of Joseph because the story of Joseph is going to continue on and do so for

many chapters. But we stop here in chapter 38 and we have a story about Judah, one of the sons of Jacob.

And it begins here in chapter 38 by saying, *“It happened at that time (we're told this is right around that time and it could be these circumstances played into this event, maybe Judah was so concerned about his father's mourning for this lost son that he just couldn't bear to stick around because it tells us) that Judah went down from his brothers...”*

And what that means in the Hebrew is that he separated himself from his family. It doesn't mean he just took a trip for a day or two. It literally means he stepped away from the family. He, for some reason, and again, we're not sure, but he separated himself and it tells us here that he *“...and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.”*

While separated from his family, in verse 2 we're told that, *“There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, ³ and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. ⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. ⁵ Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.”* Meaning the last son.

We're told here the Judah took a Canaanite wife, which was a very bad idea, and we're going to see this. Because the Canaanites were a very corrupting influence on the people of God; His covenant people. And even though we know that they are far from perfect people in their own right, people, the Canaanites were way worse.

I mean, their pagan practices, the things they did, oh, it was terrible and you're going to see that this has an impact on Judah's family. He didn't protect his family. He created a family with this Canaanite woman and the impact on that brought all these unintended consequences.

That's one of Sue's favorite phrases where she always talks about unintended consequences. You make a decision and then there's things that happened that you didn't intend to happen or you didn't think that were going to happen or anticipate happening, but they happened and, unintended consequences.

Well, marrying as Judah did, a woman who was a Canaanite, brought all kinds of them and we're going to see it here. It says in verse 6, *“And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn,...”* Now, we've obviously..., there's all this time that's

been passing that his son grew up enough to take a wife, so there's been a period of time that has gone on.

And it says that, “...and her name was Tamar.” That's the woman that he got for his firstborn.

“⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD put him to death.”

Now, we're not given the reason or what the wickedness really was here by Er. We're just told that he was wicked, but I believe that this is one of those unintended consequences.

I think that this is probably that strong Canaanite influence that had come into Judah's family because he married into that whole thing and it just, it polluted the hearts of his boys. And particularly Ur, to the point where the Lord brought a disciplinary action upon him and put him to death.

Verse 8 says, “*Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.”*”

Stop there and let me explain this for a moment. What Judah was asking of his second born son was to take up the role of the Kinsman Redeemer. And this is something we see that is laid out for us in the Book of Ruth.

A Kinsman Redeemer, was the closest relative to a deceased person, and he had a responsibility to take the wife of his deceased brother, or it could be a cousin or a nephew, whoever was the closest relative and to have children in his brother's name, so as to carry on his brother's name. It was a big deal in Israel to not let the name of someone cease in the historical records of Israel.

And if that man owned land, you would purchase the land, you would redeem the land. If he had a wife, you would receive her. And again, it required a selfless attitude, because what you did with this wife, that belong to your brother or closest relative, would all be for his estate, for his benefit, not yours. Okay?

So a kinsman redeemer had to be selfless to that degree that he knew what I'm doing on behalf of my brother, I'm doing for him and not for myself. This is not going to benefit me. All right.

And in verse 9, we're told, *“But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. (in other words, if he produced a child with Tamar, that this was not going to be his child) So (it says) whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother.”*

In other words, Onan was selfish and refused to function in the role of the Kinsmen Redeemer because it wouldn't benefit him. And so it was a very selfish attitude on his part.

And it says in verse 10, *“And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also.”* Again, you see this influence. I believe you see this Canaanite influence that has now taken hold of Judah's two firstborn sons and the Lord has put them to death.

Verse 11, *“Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah (meaning his third son) my son grows up”—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house.”*

Now, that statement that says, *“for he feared that he would die, like his brothers,”* that tells you what Judah's intention was. He sent her back literally to live under her father's roof because women didn't live alone in those days, they had no way to provide for themselves. And he wasn't willing to do it.

And that's the other thing about Judah here. He should have protected Tamar. He should have taken care, even if he, even if she never married again. He should have taken her under his roof and taken care of her. That would have been the godly thing to do. But he sent her back to her father's household.

And he said, stay there as a mourning widow. And then when my son comes of age, I'll give him to you but he had no intention of doing that. And that is communicated in that line, he feared that his other son would die. You can see what's going on here.

And it says in verse 12, *“In the course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. (the Canaanite woman that Judah had married passed away so we can tell that probably sometime has gone on by here) When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.”*

Now, sheep shearing was a time of festivity. It was a time of rejoicing and partying, if you will. It was just like when crops came in from the ground, wheat or whatever, barley.

Harvest was payday, and so people would party when that happened. They were in a festive mood and I think Tamar probably knew that because it goes on to say in verse 13, *“And when Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep,”¹⁴ she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah (which was Judah's youngest son) was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage.”*

Again, she heard that Judah was shearing sheep, she knew he'd be in a festive mood, in this case, an immoral mood. And so she went and put a veil over her face so as to obscure her face. But what you're not told here is that she dressed like a prostitute. Okay, and that's what you need to know.

So it tells us here in verse 15, *“When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face.”*

There you go, and by the way, prostitution, remember, Judah is living among the pagans. This is that period of time. And prostitution was everywhere in the pagan society. And in fact, it was considered a way of worshiping the gods.

There were gods that they believed, oversaw fertility; fertility of the land, fertility of your herds, in fact, even fertility of your wife or wives in some cases. And so, a man would go to a temple or place, and he would have sex with a cult prostitute. And with the belief that they were offering a sacrifice to the gods of fertility and things would go better for him. His crops would be better. His herds would have more animals and give birth and that sort of thing. And it was just, this was common among the pagans. All right? It was a common thing.

So here's Tamar dressing as a common cult prostitute, and it says in verse 16, *“He turned to her at the roadside and said, “Come, let me come in to you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”*

¹⁷ *He answered, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” And she said, “If you give me a pledge, until you send it—”* ¹⁸ *He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” She replied, “Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand.””*

Let me stop there. So they're negotiating prostitution and he basically, makes this deal with her. And he says, I'll give you a goat. And she says, well, you don't happen to have a goat with you right now so what will you give me in lieu of that goat? I mean, you'll obviously have to send it to me later so what pledge will you give me to show me that you're serious about this.

He says, well, what do you want? She says, I want your signet, I want the cord that's attached to it, and I want your staff. And a signet, as you probably know, was a seal of identification. And it was either made out of stone or metal, but it was either carved into the stone or engraved into the metal in such a way that it bore a person's identification. It was like a logo. I mean, they didn't call it that then, we would call it that today. It was your family logo or your family crest or something that identified you. And it was used for signing receipts. It was used for any sort of an agreement that you were making with someone to buy and sell land or animals.

And when that signet was rolled or pressed into clay or wax, it would leave the person's imprint, which is their signature. And so that's why they called it a signet. Kings would have a signet ring and they would give it out to trusted servants to make edicts in their name and so forth. And these signets, by the way, were typically worn around someone's neck with a cord.

And so she's asking for the signet and the cord that he would use to wear it around his neck and she wants his staff in addition to that.

It says at the end of verse 18, that, *“So he gave them to her and went in to her, (and they did their thing and it says that) and she conceived by him. (at the end of that verse) ¹⁹ Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.”* She put on those garments that would signify her as a widow once again.

Verse 20. *“When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ And he asked the men of the place, “Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?” And they said, “No cult prostitute has been here.”*

²² *So he returned to Judah and said, “I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, ‘No cult prostitute has been here.’” ²³ And Judah replied, “Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her.”* In other words, I carried out my responsibility, I offered the goat, she wasn't there. There you go, we did our due diligence, let's just move on.

Verse 24, *“About three months later (which of course would be the time when a pregnant woman would start to show) Judah was told, “Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality.” And Judah said, “Bring her out, and let her be burned.””*

Yeah, isn't this cool? Just what a neat guy. Judah is basically playing the part of the righteously indignant father in law. And he says, she needs to die for this. Little does he know he's about to be exposed as a total hypocrite.

Verse 25, *“As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, “By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant.”* Tamar was not a dumb blonde, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have probably said that. That's just a term we use. You know that, right? Please no nasty grams. She was not a..., she was a smart lady. I mean, think about it.

“...And she said, “Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff.” ²⁶ *Then Judah identified them and said, “She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not know her again.”* And that, of course, is a poetic way of saying, they had no further physical relations between the two of them.

“²⁷ When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ And when she was in labor, 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 as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. (how weird is that) And she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” (or as the NIV says, so this is how you have broken out) Therefore his name was called Perez.” And the reason they named it that is because Perez means, a breach and you'll see that at the bottom of your page on your Bible

And then it says and, *“³⁰ Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah.”*

Now, we're not told, necessarily that Judah did the right thing and took Tamar into his home and took care of the boys, but he did. And the reason we know that, is because this Perez, who came out ahead of his brother, even though his brother stuck a hand out first. What a strange mental picture that is.

This Perez appears in the lineage of Messiah. And so, we know that the covenant lineage goes through this particular child. And by the way, let me show you this on the screen. You can actually see this in the Book of Ruth. It says,

Ruth 4:18-22 (ESV)

Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Now these are the generations of Perez: (that's the same Perez) Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Who became obviously king David and we know that Messiah comes through the lineage of David, so this is all pretty interesting.

We're looking at this family and we're thinking to ourselves, good grief. Could this have gotten messier and more dramatic?

You have this child named Perez who is born out of immorality, the worst kind of immorality. And you naturally think, I mean, if you didn't know the end of this story, if I hadn't just told you what I told you about the fact that this guy is going to wind up in the lineage of Messiah, you might look at this and you might say to yourself, well, that's a lost cause. Perez, we'll never hear from him again. I mean, the kind of immorality and sin and wickedness that caused this child to be conceived and so forth.

God certainly can't use those kinds of people, but you'd be wrong. And we all are wrong, but we tend to do that. We tend to look at... You might be even looking at your own life and knowing what you know about your past, you may have even had that thought course through your mind. I don't think the Lord could use people like me.

Look at the people that he used in the Bible. I bet your background isn't this shady, questionable, or whatever. But even if it were, what is that to God who has a purpose and a plan for everybody's life? And He has a purpose and a plan for you.

And I know that some of you came out of immorality before you came to Christ. I know that some of you live lives that you don't even want to think about, let alone talk about.

And I don't know for sure, but I'm willing to bet there are times that the enemy loves to throw that stuff back up in your face. Look, the kind of life you've

lived, the kind of things you used to do. God doesn't use people like you, the enemy will say, He uses good people. Oh, really? I give you Perez.

Let's stand and close in prayer.

Well, twas five days before Christmas. Hope you guys can join us Christmas Eve, we're going to have a good time.

Father, I thank you so much. I thank you for your Word. Your Word is so good. It reminds us Lord that it's not about how good we've been. Whether or not I've lived a good life, it's about whether I've put my faith in the work of your Son, Jesus Christ on the cross. That's what it all comes down to.

Because Lord, there's not one person in this room, or who's listening, or watching online who is worthy of being your child or being blessed. And we're certainly not worthy of inheriting heaven. Lord, I don't deserve heaven. I deserve hell. But that's not what you give me.

And just, Lord, because I've put my faith in what Jesus did on the cross, you now tell me that I'm saved. My sins are forgiven and I can live that new life. And I can put the old life in the rearview mirror and just live for you from now on. And I'm so thankful, Lord. I'm so thankful for getting what I don't deserve.

Thank you for the reminder tonight about Perez. Pretty, pretty dark background, and yet you used him in the very lineage of Messiah, your Holy Son.

Thank you, Lord. We praise you and worship you. We thank you. We rejoice in you. And we are so grateful as we are just days away from celebrating the birth of Messiah.

We're so grateful that we've already received the best gift that we could ever get, Jesus Christ our Savior. Thank you, Lord.

Be with us as we go. Give us safety, Lord, as people drive home in the fog. Help us to be mindful of the things that we've heard tonight.

We ask all these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.