

STUDY THIRTY THREE

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN

Genesis 38

Introduction

To understand the story of Judah and Tamar we need to understand the ancient West Asian custom of ‘brother-in-law marriage’.

According to this custom if a married man should die without a male heir it was the duty of the man’s younger brother to marry the widow. This was in order to produce offspring that would be counted as belonging to the man who had died. Later God made the custom of brother-in-law marriage into a law for Israel to make sure that the family name would continue (Dt. 25:5-6). The story we read in this chapter is one of the most sordid stories in the Bible. Not all the stories in the Bible are beautiful and encouraging. But they are all included for a purpose (2Tim. 3:16-17).

Questions for Discussion

1.a) Whom did Judah marry?

b) What were the names of Judah’s sons?

c) What was the name of Er’s wife?

d) What happened to Er?

2.a) What did Judah tell his second son Onan to do (v.8)?

b) Why was it important for Onan to do this?

3.a) What was Onan's sin?

b) What did God think of this (v.10)?

c) Does God judge people today by putting them to death?

4.a) After Onan's death what did Judah tell Tamar to do (v.11)?

b) Why did Judah not want Tamar to marry his third son, Shelah?

c) Can one person bring 'bad luck' on another?

5. Why is it wrong to have sexual relations outside of marriage?
(See 1Cor. 6:18-20)

6.a) When it was discovered that Tamar was pregnant what did Judah order to be done to her (v.24)?

b) Do you think Judah would have been so angry if he had discovered a man rather than a woman guilty of a similar sin?

c) What does God think about a society that blames women more than men? (See Hos. 4:14 & Jn. 8:1-11)

7. Was Tamar more righteous than Judah (v.26)?

8. What are some of the possible reasons why God chose to include such a sordid story in the Bible? (See Dt. 9:4-6 & Mt. 1:1-3)

9. What hope is there for people who have lived sinful lives? (See Eph. 2:1-10)

For Further Thought And Action

Think about how you can honour God with your body.

Memory Verses

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

1Corinthians 6:19-20