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[0 : 00] Last week we ended with Genesis 37-36.

That verse says this about Joseph. Meanwhile, the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard. Joseph's older brothers sold Joseph to the Midianites because of their own hatred, jealousy, and greed.

And if you haven't looked ahead, you'd expect chapter 38 to pick up with what happens next to Joseph. Instead, chapter 38 never mentions Joseph. We get a glimpse into the next 20 or so years of Judah's life, and that's the same length of time, or just about, between when Judah last saw Joseph and when Judah and Joseph will see each other again.

Because chapter 38 is not about Joseph, many studies of Joseph's life actually skip this chapter. However, in each of the first three lessons, we've discussed how Genesis 37-50 really aren't about Joseph.

Said another way, Joseph is not the main point of these chapters. The main point of the book of Genesis, including Genesis 37-50, is to show the progression of redemptive history, or how God will redeem his people from the curse of sin.

[1 : 27] Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that he is faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. Even more teachers skip chapter 38 because the chapter documents such disgusting behavior.

However, we know that we hold strongly to 2 Timothy 3.16. Remember that verse. It says, It would have been so much easier, or so I thought, if Paul had told Timothy, all scripture except Genesis 38 is breathed out by God.

Of course, we know they didn't have chapter and verse markings yet back then. Studying this chapter, though, reminded me that 2 Timothy 3.16 is true.

There's a lot to see in this chapter, so much that instead of skipping it, we're actually going to spend two weeks on it. So by now, you're probably tempted to read ahead to see why I wanted to avoid it at first, and why I've changed my mind.

We're going to read the entire chapter soon, but first, because it's about Judah, let's consider what we know about Judah already. We know that the seed of the promised Messiah will pass through one of Jacob's sons, and Judah is the fourth son of Jacob, whose mother was Leah.

[2 : 58] The previous three sons already seem to have disqualified themselves from carrying on the line of the Messiah. Last week, we saw what those three did. Reuben slept with his father's concubine.

Simeon and Levi murdered all the adult males in Shechem after one of the men raped Jacob's daughter, Dinah. And of course, the rapists deserve to be punished, but Simeon and Levi used the rape as an excuse for murder, robbery, and kidnapping.

Surely Judah has to have better character than his three older brothers, wouldn't you think? But we got a glimpse of Judah's character last week. After Simeon and Levi killed the men of Shechem, here's what Genesis 34, 27 through 29 told us about what the brothers did.

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their flocks and their herds, their donkeys and whatever was in the city and in the field, all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives, all that was in the houses they captured and plundered.

Judah must have participated in that plundering, and that should make us suspicious that Judah suffers from greed. We didn't need to wait too long for Moses to confirm our suspicion about Judah's greed.

[4 : 22] We hear directly from Judah after the brothers had thrown Joseph into the pit, and here are Genesis 37, 26 through 28. Then Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?

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. Then Midianite traders passed by, and they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt. So far, the picture painted by the few things we know about Judah is not looking very flattering for him either. So now let's go ahead and read all of Genesis 38 and learn even more about Judah's lack of character.

Genesis 38 says, It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adulamite whose name was Hira. There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua.

He took her and went into her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Ur. She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.

[5 : 43] Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezeb when she bore him. And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.

But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. Then Judah said to Onan, Go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her to raise up offspring for your brother.

But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he went into his brother's wife, he would waste the semen on the ground so as not to give offspring to his brother.

And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah, my son, grows up, for he feared that he would die like his brothers.

So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. In the course of time, the wife of Judah, Sheba's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheep shearers, he and his friend Hira, the Adulamite.

[6 : 56] And when Tamar was told, Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep, she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance of Enam, which is on the road to Timnah.

For she saw that Shelah was grown and she had not been given to him in marriage. When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. He turned to her at the roadside and said, Come, let me come into you, for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

She said, What will you give me that you may come into me? 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.

He said, What pledge shall I give you? She replied, Your signet 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 went away, and taking off her veil, she put on the garments of her widowhood. When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adulamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

[8 : 08] And he asked the men of the place, Where is the colt prostitute who was at Enam by the roadside? And they said, No colt prostitute has been here. So he returned to Judah and said, I have not found her.

Also the men of the place said, No colt prostitute has been here. 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.

About three months later, 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.

And she was brought out. She brought word to her father-in-law, By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant. And she said, Please identify whose are these, the signet and the cord and the staff. And 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. When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb.

[9 : 16] 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. But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out.

And she said, What a breach you have made for yourself. Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward his brother came out with the scarlet thread on his hand, and his name was called Zerah. What do you think of Judah's character now? Now you know why initially you would have preferred this story to have been omitted from Moses' account.

The preacher, for just about every sermon I've read or heard on this chapter, makes nearly an identical comment after reading these verses. And that comment is, Why is this story here? If we really believe 2 Timothy 3.16, surely God, through Moses, had a purpose for including this story precisely where it is. And now that you already know we're going to spend two weeks on this chapter, you're probably really hoping that God had a purpose.

[10 : 22] I believe, actually, as we dig into this chapter, we're going to see that Scripture answers that question. If I do my task and can back up that statement with Scripture, my goal is that over the next two weeks, you'll agree that Scripture does explain why Genesis 38 is here.

Before we get into the verses themselves, remember what we already know. You've heard me say it every lesson so far during these Joseph studies, and have already said it once tonight.

The main point of the book of Genesis, including Genesis 37 through 50, is to show the progression of redemptive history, or how God will redeem His people from the curse of sin.

Throughout Genesis, including the account of Joseph, God shows that He is faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. But the answer goes even deeper than that.

And the deeper answer is the main idea of chapter 38. The events in chapter 38 show why God sent Joseph to Egypt. These same events give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace.

[11 : 34] So the events in chapter 38 show why God sent Joseph to Egypt, and these same events give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace. Hold me to proving that.

Remember in the first lesson, I said to be like the Bereans. See whether that main idea holds up to the scrutiny of Scripture. Tonight we'll cover the first part of that main idea.

Next week we'll cover the second part. So over the next two lessons, we'll break chapter 38 into five sections, and we'll start with verses 1 through 6.

And in those first six verses, we see the family tree. So the family tree is your first section. These verses do more than show us Judah's family tree.

These are the verses that hold the key to understanding why God sent Joseph to Egypt. So let's read verses 1 through 6 again. It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adulamite whose name was Hira.

[12 : 42] There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shewa. He took her and went into her and she conceived and bore a son and he called his name Ur.

She conceived again and bore a son and she called his name Onan. Yet again she bore a son and called his name Shelah. Judah was in Cheesub when she bore him.

And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. The reference to at that time in verse 1 of chapter 38 pertains to the time that Joseph had just been sold into slavery.

That was also the time when the remaining family members unsuccessfully were trying to comfort Jacob in his grief. So the statement about Judah going down is a geographical reference, but Moses' word choice also helps us to highlight just how far Judah has fallen.

Two brothers from the family selected by God to supply the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel now reside outside of the promised land. Joseph endured a forced separation.

[13 : 52] Judah separated from his family voluntarily. Judah wasn't sold into slavery, nor was he advancing the patriarch's acquisition of territory.

No one forced him to abandon the land of promise. He simply departed on his own. A sense of foreboding is conveyed through Judah's separation from the rest of his family, his friendship with Tyra, and his marriage to an unnamed Canaanite woman who was the daughter of Shua.

In Genesis, marriages to Canaanites were never applauded. Abraham was careful to make sure that Isaac avoided marrying a Canaanite woman.

Listen to Genesis 24, verses 1-3. Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.

And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, Put your hand under my thigh, that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac.

[15:10] Then if you skip down to Genesis 26, verses 34 and 35, we see this about Esau marrying a Canaanite woman. Genesis 26, 34 and 35 say, When Esau was 40 years old, he took Judith, the daughter of Beri, the Hittite, to be his wife, and Basamoth, the daughter of Elon, the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

Rebekah and Isaac are more careful to keep Joseph from making the same mistake. Listen to Genesis 27, 46 through 28, 1.

Genesis 27, 46 says, Then Rebekah said to Isaac, I loathe my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women like these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and directed him, You must not take a wife from the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan Aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and take your wife from there, one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.

Then after Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau, Esau married another Canaanite out of spite. Genesis 28, 8 and 9 say, So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please Isaac, his father, Esau went to Ishmael and took as his wife, besides the wives he had, Mahaloth, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nevioth.

[16:47] Deuteronomy 7, 1 through 4 explain what was wrong with these marriages. Deuteronomy 7, 1 through 4 were written well after Judah's marriage, but the same principle applied during Judah's day.

Those verses say, When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it and clears away many nations before you, the Hittite, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, and when the Lord gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction.

You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods.

Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you and he would destroy you quickly. The issue has nothing to do with the ethnicity of the wives. The issue has everything to do with the abominable religious practices of their people.

For proof of that, we need to look no further than the book of Ruth. Boaz was allowed to marry Ruth, a Moabitess, because Ruth had proven herself to be a devout follower of the one true God.

[18:13] The strongly expressed will of Abraham for Isaac and Isaac for Jacob was that they not take wives from the daughters of the Canaanites. Jacob clearly does not have the same influence over the choices that his sons make.

We see here that Judah marries a Canaanite. Simeon also will marry a Canaanite, so that the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was in danger of being compromised by Jacob's sons.

As a result, one of the reasons that God leads Jacob's family into Egypt is to prevent their assimilation with the Canaanites. No similar threat of assimilation existed in Egypt because the Egyptians maintained the strict segregationist policy toward all foreigners.

God leads Jacob's family into Egypt to prevent their assimilation with the Canaanites. So let's look at some verses for proof of that, and we'll start with Genesis 43, verses 30 through 32.

These verses happen after Joseph, who by that time is now second in command in Egypt, sees his brother Benjamin for the first time in a long time. Genesis 43, 30 through 32 say, Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep.

[19:37] And he entered his chamber and wept there. Then he washed his face and came out, and controlling himself, he said, Serve the food. They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

Also look at Genesis 46, verses 31 through 34. Genesis 46, verses 31 through 34.

These verses happen immediately after Joseph is reunited with his father. 46, 31 through 34 say, Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have. When Pharaoh calls you and says, What is your occupation?

You shall say, Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers, in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen, for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians.

[21 : 02] Joseph knew that when Pharaoh heard that Jacob and his sons were shepherds, Pharaoh would want them separated from the Egyptians. Joseph goes out of his way to emphasize that Jacob and Jacob's sons were shepherds.

Notice first that Joseph gives Pharaoh the news himself, and then Joseph tells his brothers to tell Pharaoh that same thing again. Jacob wants the brothers to emphasize that not only are they shepherds, they have been shepherds for a long time, and so have their ancestors.

So now do you see how Scripture supports the claim that God sent Joseph and his family to Egypt to prevent their assimilation with the Canaanites? Except for Joseph, Jacob's sons lacked the character and fortitude to keep themselves separated from the pagans, whose practices would further corrupt the line of the seed.

Because of that, God had to send Jacob's family to the Egyptians who would force that separation. The Egyptians' religious beliefs were wrong, but the Egyptians followed their own convictions better than God's chosen people followed the will of the one true God.

Without the disgusting events chronicled in chapter 38, we wouldn't see how far down Judah had fallen, and without the disgusting events chronicled here, we wouldn't know why God sent Joseph and later his family to Egypt.

[22 : 29] Remember the main idea of this passage. the events in chapter 38 do show why God sent Joseph to Egypt, and these same events give us a glimpse into the magnitude of God's grace.

So we're beginning to see why chapter 38 is in the Bible where it is, and we're beginning to see why we'll spend more than one week in chapter 38. We're approximately halfway through the teaching time, and we've yet to finish the first section of the lesson.

In fact, we haven't made it through one verse yet. Despite the sordid nature of this chapter, we can learn a lot from it. So now let's move on to verses 2 through 5, and we'll see what happened after Judah went down.

It says, there Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went into her, and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Ur.

She conceived again and bore a son, and called his name Onan. Yet again, she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezab when she bore him.

[23 : 37] So as you can see, Moses says very little about Judah's wife. He even omits her name. We know very little about her, but what we do know is this.

She's the daughter of a Canaanite named Shua, and she provided Judah with three sons. Judah's sinfulness here is worse than it first appears.

Moses' original writing in the Hebrew has several parallels to other momentous sins in Genesis. The verbs describing Judah's action are striking.

It says, Judah saw Shua's daughter and took her. The same verb combination, saw and took, is first used in Genesis 3-6, where it describes the actions of Eve that led up to her eating the forbidden fruit.

She saw and took that fruit. Later, the same combination is used to describe lust, especially sexual lust. In Genesis 6-2, the sons of God saw the beauty of the daughters of men and took them as wives.

[24 : 44] In Genesis 12-15, the princes of Pharaoh saw the beauty of Sarah and took her into Pharaoh's harem. And then in Genesis 34-2, that we looked at last week, the verb combination is used to introduce the rape of Dinah.

Shechem saw Dinah and took her and lay with her and violated her. After Judah saw and took his wife, Judah stays in the land long enough for his oldest son to reach marriageable age.

Look at verse 6. It says, And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. Verse 6 tells us nothing about Tamar's ancestry.

Because she was residing in Canaan, most teachers assume she was a typical Canaanite with the same corrupted religious beliefs. She very well may have been and she probably was.

And if she was a typical Canaanite, like most people suppose, Judah arranging for his firstborn to marry a Canaanite provides even more evidence of how far Judah has fallen or how far he has gone down as Moses puts it.

[25 : 52] If we could have talked to Judah at this point, Judah probably would have told us that the decision to be separated from his father, brothers in the land is turning out pretty well.

After all, at this point, he's got a wife and he's got three sons and he doesn't have to be bothered by all of those scheming brothers and the grieving father that he left behind. But looks can be deceiving.

So we've seen the family tree for Judah. In the last section we'll cover tonight, we'll see the family trimmed. The family trimmed.

Judah's family tree that was documented in the first six verses is about to lose two of its branches.

So let's see how God trims those branches. Starting in verse 7 and going through verse 11, it says, But Ur, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord and the Lord put him to death.

Then Judah said to Onan, Go into your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother. But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his, so whenever he went into his brother's wife, he would waste the semen on the ground so as not to give offspring to his brother.

[27 : 07] And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord and he put him to death also. Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah, my son, grows up, for he feared that he would die like his brothers.

So Tamar went and remained in her father's house. We don't know what Ur did. All we know is that whatever he did, it was serious enough to earn what his family and friends would consider a premature death.

After Ur's death, Judah tells Onan to do his duty and raise up offspring for his dead brother. Jacob's family already was practicing what would later be codified in Deuteronomy 25 verses 5 and 6 as the norm for the nation of Israel.

So here are Deuteronomy 25 verses 5 and 6. If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go into her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

[28 : 26] In verse 9 of tonight's text, we see what happened when Onan pretended that he was going to do his duty by Tamar. Onan made sure that he never fathered a child by Tamar.

And the tense of the original writing here indicates that Onan's actions were not a one-time thing. What Onan did, he did repeatedly. So why would Onan do what he did?

Well, like his brother, Onan obviously was wicked. And like his father, his wickedness manifested itself at least in part through greed. Onan knew that if Tamar had a son, that son would take away some of the inheritance that would otherwise belong to Onan.

Any son born to Tamar would become the first heir to Judah's estate. And in those days, the first heir received a double portion, meaning that any son born to Tamar would get twice what Onan would get.

So think about that. The father would get half as much as his biological son would get. Tamar's son by Onan would get that half and then Onan and Shelah would get a quarter each.

[29 : 36] They would split the other half. However, if Tamar had no heir, the estate would be divided only three ways. Onan would receive the double portion, so he would get two-thirds of Judah's estate and Shelah would get the other third.

The difference there is pretty significant. We can assume that Onan could do the math. He decided that he would rather have two-thirds of the estate than just a quarter of the estate.

He may have been able to pass basic math tests, but he couldn't measure up to God's test. And verse 10 clearly states what God thought about Onan's actions. Verse 10 is the verse that says, And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also.

Between Ur and Onan, these are actually the first two times in Scripture that God is said to be directly killing somebody because of that person's wickedness. and he does it very quickly right there in the span of a few verses to Judah's oldest two sons.

So these verses are filled with a dark sort of irony. Judah has participated in deceiving his father by making him think that the son whom he loved had been killed.

[30 : 51] And now within the span of these few verses we see that God has killed two of Judah's three sons. Verse 11 records Judah's reaction to Onan's death.

It says, When Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house till Shelah grows up, for he feared that he would die like his brothers, so Tamar went and remained in her father's house.

We see something else about Judah here. He's oblivious to how much his life and choices are being opposed by God. As he considers what has happened to his first two sons, he secretly decides that he will have nothing to do with Tamar from now on and therefore Shelah will be withheld from any leveret responsibilities, even though Judah outright lies to Tamar about what he plans to do.

Judah had no inclination, at least as far as we can see, that his actions had anything to do with what had happened to his family. We see here, though, that he did have no intention of giving his youngest son to Tamar because he superstitiously regarded her as a woman who was the kiss of death.

And without condoning Judah's lie to Tamar, understanding how he drew that conclusion is easy once we realize that he has never seemed to consider that his actions may have contributed to what has happened to his family.

[32 : 18] Being so far removed from the culture of that day, we could easily overlook the significance of what Judah is doing to Tamar. He is sentencing her to a life of widowhood with no possibility of children to look after her in her old age.

That would be a hard life because of how women were treated back then. Judah's treatment of Tamar is opposite of what God's word commands for widows. Put yourself in Tamar's place here. She was victimized by Onan. Now she's being deceived by Judah. However, Tamar still believes what Judah tells her. It says that she returned to her father's house to wait.

We close the last section by looking at how Moses' word choices remind us of other momentous sins in the Bible. And his word choices here in this section recall the situation just before the flood. And that should give us some idea of how seriously God views the sins of Judah and his sons. We saw earlier that like the sons of God in Genesis 6, Judah is described as seeing and taking one of the daughters of men.

[33 : 33] His sons are described as evil in the sight of the Lord, recalling Genesis 6, 5 where the Lord saw that the evil of man was great in the earth. The Lord in wrath killed Judah's sons just like how his wrath resulted in the destruction of mankind in the flood.

There are subtler indications in the Hebrew text to indicate that God wants us to compare Judah and his sons' actions to the actions of the people killed just during the flood.

For example, what Ur does and what Noah finds in the sight of the Lord are each reversed in their names. Ur does evil in the sight of the Lord and his name reversed actually spells evil in Hebrew. So, think about that. He does evil in the sight of the Lord and his name reversed actually spells evil. And then Noah's name reversed spells favor and we're told that Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord.

So, the wordplay with the names in the two stories again suggests that the two narratives are meant to be thought about here. By his choices, Judah is exhibiting the same evil heart that brought the flood in the days of Noah.

[34 : 52] Judah is a son of God who here has decided to follow his own lust and abandon the restrictions of the covenant into which he was born. His apostasy is so great that the author wants us to think of the wickedness that caused the flood.

So, consider what we've seen about Judah so far. The portrait of him is being drawn in very dark colors. There's nothing good or commendable about the heart of the choices that Judah is making at this stage in his life.

He's attempting to build a legacy for himself outside the covenant that was to direct his life and his choices and he's living in a place of deep darkness and rebellion. God must use the radical means

of killing his sons to keep him within reach.

Those last few words should be chilling to us. Judah is living in a place of deep darkness and rebellion and God must use the radical means of killing his sons to keep Judah within reach.

As we've seen already, tonight's verses show us why God sent Joseph and then later Joseph's family to Egypt. God had to send them to a place where the pagans would do a better job of keeping the family away from an ungodly culture than Jacob's family had done on their own.

[36 : 09] Judah going down was more than a statement of the compass direction. Judah was going down spiritually, too. We'll see that even more when we finish the chapter next week.

In the meantime, what else can we take away from the verses tonight? Well, first, God takes sin seriously. God takes sin seriously.

God killed two of Judah's sons because of their wickedness. That's not the God most people want to talk about, but that is the God of the Bible. And if God takes sin so seriously, certainly we should take sin seriously, too.

Second thing we can see is that God is actively involved in people's lives. God is actively involved in people's lives. God knows what is going on with Judah, and he's taking action to bring Judah back to him.

That action is going to be very painful for Judah in the short term, but that action is just what Judah needs. Otherwise, Judah would be going down the path of his two oldest sons.

[37 : 21] As we go through the remainder of the chapter next week, we will see that God is working in Tamar's life, too. Tamar has been ignored and written off by most of the men in her life, but God still remembers her.

Some people will try to portray God as a silent observer just hoping that people will do the right things. This passage and other passages in the Bible prove otherwise.

Like what we said just a few minutes ago, God will use whatever means necessary to bring his straying people back to him. One pastor noted that perhaps God doing whatever it takes to bring his people back to him could be the reason why God is allowing so much hostility toward Christians today.

As in Judah's case, most modern-day Christians are becoming nearly indistinguishable from the godless people around us. If Christians won't separate themselves from the immoral culture, then perhaps God is doing the separation for us once again.

Time may tell whether that's the case, but regardless, it's something to ponder. The third thing we need to take away from this passage is that the story doesn't end here.

[38 : 33] The story doesn't end here. This is not a very happy place to stop for the night because at this point in the story, Joseph is separated from his family. Judah is separated from most of his family.

A lot of the family that he was with has been killed. And Tamar is separated from the family she married into, the family responsible for taking care of her. Even worse than that, Judah is separated from God.

Tamar at this point likely is too, but God won't leave them there. God's providence that we talked about last week is still at work and it's at work in their lives at their darkest time.

As Paul Harvey would say, you will need to come back next week for the rest of the story. And that's where we'll see God's amazing grace. I thought about doing my Paul Harvey invitation and thought better of it there at the last second.

True believers, though, should take comfort that God sees what is going on in their lives and that God is active in their lives. So, all of us as true believers should take comfort that God sees what's going on and is active in what's going on.

[39 : 42] Flip it around, though, and we see that unbelievers should be very concerned. As we've seen from this passage and other passages in the Bible, God will judge sin.

That's why it is up to us to share the good news that followers in Christ have been and will be saved from the wrath of God. Remember 2 Corinthians 5 verses 19-21.

In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

We implore you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word, even the parts of your word that are difficult to study and sometimes actually disgusting to read.

[40 : 46] God. We thank you that you do have reasons for including those in the Bible. Help us to see them and accurately interpret them as we go along. And we thank you again that you're not just a passive God who ignores what's going on but who actually is active in the lives of people.

Let us always be mindful of that and let that encourage us to share your word with others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.