

Biblical Sexuality

Volume 7

Understanding the Spiritual Impact of Sexual Sin

Important Lessons from the Lives
of Judah, Joseph, and Reuben

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Chapter 3

The Price of Fornication

This chapter examines the true spiritual price of sexual sin (fornication), as spoken forth by Judah.

Judah Backslides

Gen.38:1-2

And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her.

Judah set himself on a “downward” spiritual path when he separated himself from his tribe and married into an ungodly culture. Marrying into this culture set in motion a chain of events that had the potential of undermining God's plan for his life. Judah also developed ungodly friendships in Canaan. It is important to understand that ungodly associations will often influence us into making bad decisions.

When Judah married a Canaanite, he was not acting in accordance with what had been divinely revealed to Abraham. Namely; **“God's covenant**

people were not to marry pagans.” This prohibition was established to:

- prevent the corruption of the Abrahamic bloodline (through which the promised Redeemer would be born)
- prevent God's people from adopting pagan behavior

As a result of his disobedience, Judah became ensnared by the ungodly value system he married into.

Judah's Three Sons

Three sons were born to Judah from this marriage: Er, Onan, and Shelah. Er, Judah's 1st born was "wicked" (Strong's 7451). The word wicked means *evil, corrupt, or malicious*. When speaking of individuals, it refers to those who cause *injury, calamity, or misery*. Er's character was so vile, God killed him. Onan, Judah's 2nd born, "displeased" (Strong's 7489) the Lord. The word displeased is rooted in the same word that describes Er as "wicked." Having been raised in an ungodly culture, Judah's first two sons had become wicked, and both died prematurely.

Gen. 38:11

Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

After the death of Judah's first two sons, the responsibility of the "Kinsman Redeemer" now fell upon Judah's youngest son, Shelah. However, Judah thought Tamar was somehow responsible for the premature deaths of his first two sons and did not want to give Shelah to her. In reality, Judah's sons had been raised in a corrupt, ungodly culture. Their premature deaths came as a result of the "wicked" behavior they adapted while living within that ungodly culture.

Godly Principles: Ungodly People

Rom. 8:7-8

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Judah could not escape his godly heritage and the godly principles he had been taught. Judah's decision to separate from his people, and the godly influences of his youth, caused conflicts on a number of levels. Living in a pagan culture, Judah found himself trying to convince ungodly people to live by Godly principles. Ungodly people will always be at odds with Godly principles.

A prime example of this conflict can be seen when Judah tried to persuade Onan to obey the Kinsman Redeemer Law. When Judah tried to convince Onan to apply the Kinsman Redeemer Law, Onan used it as an opportunity to fulfill his sexual lust.

But he neglected the responsibility of the law's true purpose. It is important to note that wicked, unrighteous people, like Onan, will usually choose temporal lust over eternal purpose.

Tamar's Plot

Gen. 38:14-15

And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.

Tamar was determined to have children and was not going to be denied the rights and privileges provided her by the Kinsman Redeemer Law. Therefore, she devised a plan to present herself to Judah as a harlot (temple prostitute), hoping to be impregnated by him.

Here again, we see someone with an ungodly perspective attempting to apply a Godly principle. People like Tamar, who are not in right relationship with God, routinely resort to ungodly means (deception, dishonesty) in order to get what they want. Like many, Tamar believed the "end justifies the means." However, this is not God's way. Godly principles will work as God intended, if we apply godly means.

Spiritual Encounters

Gen.38:15-16

*When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an **harlot**; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) **And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?***

Every scripture is useful in expanding our knowledge of some aspect of God's purpose, nature, and character. The passage in Gen.38:15-16 represents a **spiritual encounter**.

This encounter is important because of the **spiritual** lesson it teaches us about sexual sin. If we are to understand the lesson this passage teaches, we must recognize what Tamar represents; a **spirit of harlotry** (Prov.7:10-27). Dressed as a harlot, Tamar symbolizes an evil, unseen spiritual force. The **spirit of harlotry**:

1. is always cloaked in deception
2. seeks to reap spiritual destruction
3. is on a mission to defile through sexual sin

Ultimately, Tamar's plot would not have worked if Judah had not become corrupted by Canaanite culture. Judah's thought life had become polluted by the culture he had adopted and by the friendships he maintained. Even though there was no written law prohibiting sex with prostitutes, the acceptable standard for sexual behavior had already been established in Gen.2:23-25.

The Gen.2 standard was *heterosexual intercourse within the confines of covenant marriage*. As we saw in Gen.6:1-6, fallen man had totally rejected this (sexual) standard. God, through Judah, was now beginning to re-establish His original (sexual) standard. The encounter recorded in Gen.38 was key to the re-establishment of that divine standard.

Access To Your Flock

When Judah began to negotiate the "price" for the harlot's services, she asked an important question:

"...what will you give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?"

This question is just as relevant today as it was back then because it affirms that all **sexual sin comes with a hefty spiritual price tag** (Prov.5:9-11; Prov.6:32-33; Prov.7:22, 26-27).

Gen.38:17-18

And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him.

What are you willing to give in exchange for illicit sex? Judah thought he had negotiated a goat from his flock for sex. In Old Testament times, a man's "flock" represented.....