



## ***She Is More Righteous Than I***

Genesis 38

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**Overview:** The story of Judah and Tamar seems to interrupt the Joseph narrative, but it explains how the Lord was preserving Judah's family line and Jacob's family tree at the same time. Judah's behavior is suspect from the beginning as he marries a Canaanite woman who gives birth to three sons. Tamar enters the picture as a wife for the oldest son but is then passed on to his brothers with no reasonable expectation for having children of her own. In her demoralized state, Tamar poses as a prostitute in order to secure a child through Judah and thus lay claim to her proper status in the family line. Judah's discovery that Tamar is pregnant exposes his hypocrisy as he calls for justice even though he has denied her rights and committed the same sin. His confession of her righteousness being superior to his exonerates her reputation and initiates the first step in his restoration. Far from being an interruption, this "breach" of protocol encourages us to consider the plight of the weak and the restoration of the repentant.

**01. Tamar's plight reminds us that the weak are easily victimized and expected to remain silent about their situation; but God will vindicate the righteous and is not ashamed to identify with them.**

**02. Judah's hypocrisy reminds us that moral weakness lies within us all, and we seldom see our own sins clearly; but God will expose the unrighteous and loves to restore the repentant.**

*Go to the Land I Will Show You*

1. What do Genesis 37:26-27 and 38:1-2 indicate about the character of Judah? What did the Lord do to the sons of Judah when they were evil (38:7, 9)? Why do you think God spared Judah but not Er and Onan? What does this suggest about God's grace and mercy to the undeserving?

2. What was the purpose of Levirate marriage, according to Deuteronomy 25:5-10? How would Tamar's life be affected by the refusal of her brother-in-law to carry out his responsibilities? Though not necessary today, how does this arrangement indicate God's care for widows?

3. What do you make of Tamar's plan to have children through Judah? Is there a wrong way to do the right thing? We may be sympathetic to her because we know her backstory—do you have sympathy for others in her situation also, even those whose lives do not resemble a responsible way of living?

4. How does Judah's reaction to Tamar's pregnancy expose his hypocrisy? How is this confrontation similar to David and Nathan in 2 Samuel 12? Why is it easier for us to see the shortcomings in someone else's life before we admit to our own? Pray for God's grace to follow the wisdom of Matthew 7:1-5.

5. Why was it important for Judah to confess Tamar's righteousness in this matter (verse 26)? How did his statement vindicate her character in the community? In what way does his simple statement provide a model for genuine repentance? How does it contrast with self-serving apologies?

**For Further Reading:** Thomas Goodwin, *The Heart of Christ in Heaven Towards Sinners on Earth*. First published 1651; Banner of Truth Puritan Paperback version, 2022.

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