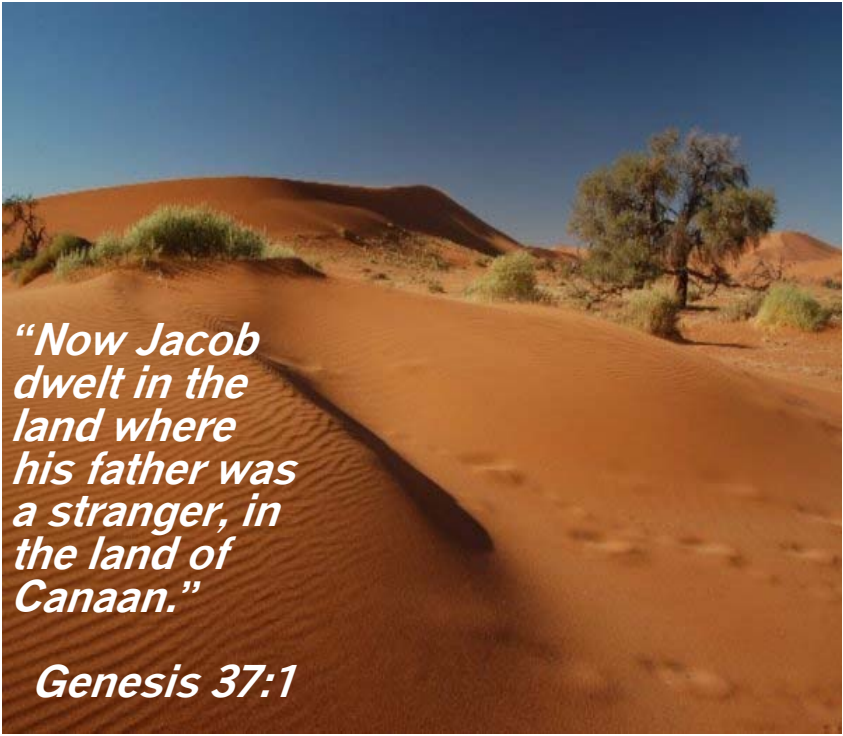




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## Sowing the Word

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*“Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.”*

*Genesis 37:1*

## Genesis 37-38

May 6th, 2009

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So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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## Helpful Study Resource:

*Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter

## Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout  
this booklet is:

**With the Word Bible Commentary**

**by Warren W. Wiersbe.**

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

# Outline

- I. Creation (1–2)
- II. The Fall of Mankind (3)
- III. Early History of Mankind – First Thousand Years (4-5)
- IV. Noah and the Flood (6-10)
- V. Tower of Babel (11)
- VI. Abraham (12-25:18)
- VII. Isaac (25:19-27)
- VIII. Jacob (28-36)
- IX. Joseph (37-50)

## Detailed Outline For This Week

### IX. Joseph (37-50)

- A. Joseph's Early day (37)
  - i. Joseph's youth – 17 years old (v.2)
  - ii. Joseph's purity (v.2)
  - iii. Joseph's position - favored by his father (v.3)
  - iv. Joseph hated by his brothers (v.4)
  - v. Joseph's dreams (v.5-11)
  - vi. Joseph seeks his brothers (v.12-15)
  - vii. Joseph's brothers intend to kill him (v.16-24)
  - viii. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery (v.25-28)
  - ix. Ruben's failed intrigue (v.29-30)
  - x. Joseph reported dead to his dad (v.31-35)
  - xi. Joseph in Egypt (v.36)
- B. Judah's Folly (38)
  - i. Judah's family (v.1-5): Wife Shua, sons by her: Er, Onan, and Shelah.
  - ii. Er and Onan die for their wickedness (v.6-10)
  - iii. Tamar deception (v.7-23)
  - iv. Judah confronted by Tamar (v.24-26)
  - v. Tamar's children (v.27-30)

# Notes for Booklet

## Chapter 37 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

### Joseph's Unique Story

Joseph stands out in the Bible as an amazing individual. In the many chapters that record Joseph's life, there is not a single sin reported by him. Some wonder if he was foolish in some of the things he did in doing things like telling his brothers of his dreams. Yet such folly is not sure and it is not sin. Now, the truth is that Joseph was not a perfect person. The only perfect person is our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, Joseph stands out with only a few people in the Bible whose lives are recorded in detail – that sin is not solidly laid to their charge. Consider even the book of Genesis so far and the sin that is recorded so far. In each of the lives that we have details on, we see their sin. We see Adam's sin in the garden, Noah's drunkenness, Abraham's follies in Egypt, Gerar and with Hagar. We see Isaac's disobedience and Jacob's constant follies. Yet Joseph, will stand out as a man whose character shines in beauty. May such an account inspire us and give us hope!

### Joseph as a type of Christ

With Joseph's sterling character recorded in scripture, it is perhaps no surprise that his life becomes a fascinating foreshadowing of Christ. Joseph is one of the most beautiful types (symbols) of the Lord Jesus Christ in the OT, though the Bible never labels him as a type. A. W. Pink lists 101 correspondences between Joseph and Jesus.

For example,

- Joseph was loved by his father (v. 3);
- He rebuked the sin of his brothers (v. 2);
- He was hated by his brothers and sold into the hands of enemies (vv. 4, 26–28);
- He was punished unjustly (chap. 39);
- He was exalted and became the savior of the world, for all the world had to come to him for bread (41:57);
- He received a Gentile bride during his rejection by his brethren (41:45).

Here is a challenge for you as we continue in the reading of Genesis: See how many types and foreshadowing's you can see.

## Joseph's Purity

The first detail given to us about Joseph is that he told his dad of the evil of his brothers. Many questions come to us about this. Was this the right thing to do? Was this tattle tailing? Perhaps such questions are interesting, yet we don't know enough about the situation to make solid conclusions. Yet, I find myself wondering, why is this the first thing that God ever tells us about Joseph? What is there in this that God wants to hold up to us as the first thing we ever see about him? I believe the thing that God wants us to see is Joseph's personal purity. At a young age, he is not being carried away by peer pressure and not running in the folly of his brothers. He stands and stands alone against their sin. I think of Daniel, in Daniel 1, also at a young age purposing in his heart not to defile himself by the sins around him. There are great similarities between Daniel and Joseph - but this is the one that God holds out to us first. May we see and be moved by Joseph's ability to be pure in an impure environment, even if it means standing alone.

## Chapter 38 Highlights and Helps by Pastor Jim

This is an ugly chapter. In it we see Judah's sin displayed before us. The question is, why? What is God showing us in this chapter and why is it here?

One – it is a brilliant contrast. Chapter 38 is bracketed by the telling of Joseph's story. In fact at the end of chapter 37 and at the beginning of chapter 39, we see Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers because of their sin and jealousy. Perhaps, part of the point of this chapter is to show us the great contrast between Judah and Joseph. Perhaps it helps us see how amazing Joseph's character was in contrast with those around him. When jewelers want to display a diamond in its beauty, they often do so against a black cloth. The reason is that the black cloth helps bring out and show the beauty of the diamond. So, one of the reasons is to show us what Joseph was standing against.

Two – it shows us Jacob's folly. Jacob sets Joseph aside at a young age, giving him the coat of many colors, or even some think it was a coat with sleeves. The simple point was it was setting Joseph above his brothers. In that culture, this role was meant to go to the first born son. He would be the one that would be in charge of and lead the family after the father died, such a coat would by right go to him. Jacob seeks to choose Joseph for such a role in his family. Yet, Joseph will not inherit that role, spiritually. Oh, Joseph is an amazing man and God uses him mightily. But

the right of the firstborn will actually go to Judah. It will be from Judah that the Messiah will come. Perhaps part of the point of this chapter is to show that it would be Judah who would inherit these rights.

Three – it is about Christ. The simple thing for us to understand is that the whole Bible ultimately is about Jesus. This is what Jesus tells us in John 8 and what the angels tell us in Revelation. The key factor in this chapter is we see the next link in the chain of the line of Christ. In this link, we continue to see marks of grace and amazing favor that is displayed in the line of Christ.

Matthew 1:1-3

*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram.*

# Q & A With Pastor Phil

## **How do chapters 37 and 38 of Genesis relate to one another?**

At first glance it may appear that chapters 37 and 38 are unrelated. That is, they appear side by side in scripture but, they are two accounts independent of one another. In chapter 37 we see the beginnings of Joseph's journey. His father favored him and as a result, his brothers were jealous and sought to kill him on account of it. Joseph was sent by his father to check on the status and condition of his brothers and the flock and bring back a report. Joseph's brothers carried out a plan to sell Joseph into slavery and deceived Jacob into believing that Joseph was killed by a wild animal.

Chapter 38 follows the story of Judah. Judah marries a Canaanite woman and has three sons. In time he took a wife for his firstborn son. The remainder of the chapter is quite ugly and deals with the sinfulness of man and the effects of sin. The chapter concludes with Tamar giving birth to twins that were fathered by Judah. At the close of the chapter the story focuses again on Joseph almost to the end of the book of Genesis.

## **A Chapter Out of Place?**

For many chapter 38 is a very unpleasant detour. After all, we have just been introduced to Joseph, given a glimpse of his future exaltation and then watched him be sold to the Ishmaelite traders. Then the story shifts and in all of chapter 38 Joseph isn't mentioned. Is chapter 38 somehow out of place? It may seem so, but there is one constant that ties these two chapters together... Judah. Judah plays a major part in both chapters. Judah is the one who conceives the plan to sell Joseph as a slave. In chapter 37 verse 27 tells us that Judah's brothers listened to his devious scheme. Judah and his brothers used Joseph's coat dipped in blood to deceive Jacob into believing that his son was dead. In this passage it is the sight of this article of clothing that communicated a message greater than the sum of all their words. So it is in chapter 38. Judah was greatly humbled when Tamar presented his personal belongings. Her words were very brief because simply the sight of his belongings spoke a far greater message to Judah. No doubt he was stunned.

## **The Problem of Judah's Character**

Judah probably thought that his scheme worked. Joseph was out of the picture. They didn't have to physically harm him to accomplish this. Jacob believed he was dead. On top of all this, Judah and his brothers profited

financially by selling Joseph as a slave. This evil was not only committed toward Joseph, it devastated Jacob as well. In verse 35 we see the tremendous grief of a father who would not be comforted. I find the way that Judah deceived Jacob to be exceptionally cruel. It would seem that there was no remorse or regret on the part of Judah. Unfortunately, the problem of Judah's character doesn't end in Chapter 37. In verse 2 of the next chapter, Judah marries a Canaanite woman. This is the same sin that Esau indulged in that brought such grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Judah had three sons with his wife and in time took a wife, Tamar, for his eldest son. After God judged both Er and Onan, Judah promised Tamar that his youngest son would provide an heir for her. Shelah became of age, but Judah never honored his promise to Tamar. So Tamar baited Judah by pretending to be a harlot. She took Judah's signet and cord and his staff as collateral with the understanding that he would send a young goat as payment. Tamar conceived and then put aside her veil and once again took up her widow's garments. When Judah sent the young goat as payment she was nowhere to be found. Later when Judah hears that Tamar was guilty of harlotry and became pregnant, he rashly calls for her to be burned. This reminds me of the account in John 8 where a woman was caught in the act of adultery. I always thought it was strange that only the woman was brought before Jesus. Where was the man? In this case Judah was the man and his self righteousness was short lived. Once Tamar produced the signet cord and staff, Judah realized his guilt and acknowledged that Tamar was indeed more righteous than he. Truly, your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23).

### **A Testimony of Grace**

Although Judah demonstrated such poor character, I have to believe that God was at work in him. I think the incident with Tamar was a turning point in his life. He was no doubt humiliated, but I believe it's more than that. Perhaps Judah saw the similarities in the way that he deceived his father and the way he himself was deceived by Tamar. Perhaps he understood that God was not blind to his actions and that he would be accountable. Ultimately, Judah became a different man. In chapter 49 of Genesis, Jacob blessed his sons. Reuben was passed over because of his sin. Simeon and Levi were chided for their anger. But Judah was honored. It was through Judah's line that our Savior, Jesus Christ, came into the world. When Tamar gave birth, her son, Perez, "*broke through*". We look at the circumstances from his birth and wonder how anything good could possibly come from such an ugly situation. We look at the life of Judah and see so many flaws and wonder how he could ever be honored by God.

As we have seen so often in the book of Genesis, God so graciously works in spite of the failures of his people. The story of Judah is no exception and is another chapter in the testimony of God's matchless grace.

## With the Word Bible Commentary

### Genesis 37

As you read the life of Joseph, you see in him a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was greatly loved by his father (v. 3; Matt. 3:17), hated and envied by his brothers (John 15:25; Mark 15:10), plotted against, sold as a slave, arrested unjustly, and made to suffer. But he went from suffering to glory and became the savior of the people who had rejected him.

God's goal for all His children is that we become like His Son (Rom. 8:29). The goal is glorious, but the process is painful. Both Jesus and Joseph had to suffer before they could enter into their glory (Luke 24:26; 1 Pet. 5:10). Had Joseph remained at home, his father probably would have pampered him and ruined his character. God knew what was best. Joseph's dreams were to him what God's Word is to us today: they gave him the assurance he needed when the going was hard.

Again, Jacob reaped what he had sown. He had killed a beast and lied to his father (27:9ff.), and his own sons lied to him.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 37:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Genesis 38

Marrying a Canaanite woman was disobedience on Judah's part (24:3; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1). When one gets away from the family of God, it is easy to fall into temptation and sin (Ps. 1:1). Two of his sons were slain by God, and then his wife died. What tragedy!

It was expected that the next son would marry the widow and thus preserve the family, but Judah probably did not intend to keep his promise (v. 11). Tamar's purpose was good, but her plan was wicked. Leaving the signet and staff was like leaving fingerprints, because each man's was distinctive. Judah was quick to condemn Tamar for sinning, but what about his own sins toward Joseph and Tamar?

Why is this sordid chapter in the Bible? For one thing, we see the contrast between Judah's sin and Joseph's victory (chap. 39), and we realize the importance of purity. But the main reason is to add another link in the Redeemer's family tree (v. 29; Ruth 4:18–22; Matt. 1:3). How gracious God is to mention a prostitute like Tamar in the genealogy of the Savior!

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Ge 38:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.





