

Multi-Colored Grace, Pt 3: Scarlet Sin and a Scarlet Thread (Gen 38)

Please turn in your Bibles to Genesis 38 as we continue our new series on the multi-colored grace of God. Chapter 37 ends with Joseph's coat of many colors, or whatever exactly his robe or tunic looked like, it was presented to his dad who thinks he's dead. Arabs passing through bought Joseph from his brothers, he's sold in an ancient African slave trade, but the color of skin of the peoples involved isn't an emphasis of this story (or Scripture). The heart is what God emphasizes, *the color of sin inside* is what colors us. Our sins are as scarlet, Isaiah says, our sins leave crimson stains on our souls, and this chapter has scarlet-letter types of sin, then it ends with a scarlet thread.

[it points to a gospel that washes away our sin within]

We've seen grace to the brown-skinned Arabians in this series from chapter 36, we'll see grace to darker-skinned Africans descended from Ham in later chapters, today we'll see grace to the other descendants of Ham, Canaanites, who were known for sexual sin, what some would later call *scarlet sin*. And a scarlet thread in Gen 38 marks one born of scandalous sexual union with a Canaanite. Like Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, the sin we see in Gen 38 carried permanent stigma, stain and shame in the eyes of many. But in a scarlet thread of redemption, even scarlet sins can be washed white as snow.

[even the scarlet A of adultery in harlotry]

Gen 37:36 says Joseph's brother was sold as a slave to Potiphar in Egypt. It ended with a lot of unanswered questions. Gen 38 raises more questions ...

38:1 *And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah.² Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.³ So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er.⁴ Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan.⁵ She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him.⁶ Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother."⁹ Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.¹⁰ But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also.¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.¹² Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died;*

and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.¹³ It was told to Tamar, “Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.”¹⁴ So she removed her widow’s garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, “Here now, let me come in to you”; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, “What will you give me, that you may come in to me?”¹⁷ He said, therefore, “I will send you a young goat from the flock.” She said, moreover, “Will you give a pledge until you send it?”¹⁸ He said, “What pledge shall I give you?” And she said, “Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand.” So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him.¹⁹ Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow’s garments.²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman’s hand, he did not find her.²¹ He asked the men of her place, saying, “Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?” But they said, “There has been no temple prostitute here.”²² So he returned to Judah, and said, “I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, ‘There has been no temple prostitute here.’”²³ Then Judah said, “Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her.”²⁴ Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry.” Then Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”²⁵ It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, “I am with child by the man to whom these things belong.” And she said, “Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?”²⁶ Judah recognized them, and said, “She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not have relations with her again.²⁷ It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.²⁸ Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, “This one came out first.”²⁹ But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, “What a breach you have made for yourself!” So he was named Perez.³⁰ Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah. **39:1** Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt...

And all God's people said ... huh? How does this fit in with the *Holy Bible*? It sure doesn't fit in with children's SS curriculum or any flannel-graph sets. It doesn't fit in many adult churches with feel-good and how-to messages. It doesn't fit the idea of the Bible as a good book of moral stories to live by. It doesn't even seem to fit in Joseph's story. Gen 37 ends leaving us hanging as Joseph becomes a slave in Potiphar's house, then Gen 39 picks up right where Gen 37 left off in Egypt. But Gen 38 in-between interrupts Joseph's familiar story for a very strange and very unfamiliar story of Judah leaving his shepherd brothers. Is it a "meanwhile, back at the ranch..." sort of story?

It doesn't even fit in the order of time with Gen 39. Gen 38 covers about 22 years, enough time for Judah to have 2 sons be old enough to marry and die and his 3rd to reach marriageable age, before Judah and his brothers go to Egypt when Joseph is 39 years old. Joseph was 30 years old when promoted by Pharaoh (41:46), then there were 7 years of plenty and 2 years of famine before they're reunited (45:6). But Gen 39 reverts back to when Joseph is a 17-year-old caught up in human trafficking to Egypt. It's like frozen in time for 22 years while Gen 38 happens, then Gen 39 flashes us back 22 years.

Even Jews of Bible times were puzzled by the chronology. An ancient book written after the OT (Jewish book of *Jubilees*) re-arranged the events to fit a 'better' flow chronologically. Josephus just skips over this story. Hundreds of years later, the famous Jewish commentator Rashi wondered why Gen 38 was, in his words, 'placed here to interrupt the account about Joseph.' In more modern times, Gen 38 has been called by one scholar an 'unconnected, independent, interruption,' or another says it has 'no connection at all with the strictly organized Joseph story.' Another calls it a 'peculiar chapter [that] stands alone, without connection to its context. It is isolated in every way...' One more calls Gen 38 'an alien element, suddenly and arbitrarily thrust into a record which it serves only to disturb. Certainly few people would choose this chapter as a basis for teaching or preaching.'¹ I guess I'm few...or alien?

But I think this just proves again that this book wasn't written by mere men. The OT also wasn't edited by the ancient Jews even when they weren't sure how it all fit in the flow, they left it intact because it's God's Word. Some of it seems odd to some or offensive to others, but all Scripture is inspired and useful. 2 Tim 4 commands preach all Scripture, even though ears will itch for other things that they'd prefer to listen to. I trust and pray you're the people who would rather God's Word offend your sensibilities than it inflate your self-righteousness. We'd rather it step on our toes than tickle our ears.

The things we read in this book that are uncensored, unsanitized and often unsavory, are because the fall in Gen 3 really happened. This is a real world book that gives us real hope, because the gospel of Gen 3:15 is really true. It redeems sins like incest in Gen 19 with Lot's daughter producing Moabites. Or sins in Gen 34 like rape and mass genocide of all the people in Shechem. Or even sins in Gen 38 like Onan's seed or Tamar's harlotry with an in-law. But these things aren't just to make us think of sins of others (the 'really bad' ones we may not do), but to consider our own *seemingly respectable* sins. If we skip this chapter, we miss out on a key part of the gospel's scarlet thread.

A book I showed you last week on the gospel according to Joseph explains: 'We often approach the Bible as if it were a series of heart-warming stories designed to inspire us to good, clean, moral living. In[stead], we find a far more profound hope. This disturbing passage moves beyond the ravages of sin to provide a picture of hope, transformation, and divine breakthrough for Judah and Tamar...a story of God triumphing over the evil in and among us'²

Our outline today:

- 1) the scarlet sin of Judah and Tamar
- 2) the scarlet thread of redemption
- 3) the scarlet stains washed away – our application

First, the scarlet sin of Judah and Tamar

We need to go back in context to Gen 37 to see how Gen 38 fits in context.

37:1 *Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.* ² *These are the records of the generations of Jacob.*

That's the same formula that introduced Noah's family story, and Abraham, and Isaac, and now this is the last one in Genesis saying *this is Jacob's story*

If we think Gen 37-50 is *Joseph's* story, we'll be confused as to why Gen 38 is here. But this is actually *Jacob's* story. Joseph is part of a bigger story, the story of Jacob, or Israel, and 12 sons who become its 12 tribes (see Gen 49). But not only are Joseph and Judah both part of a bigger story of Jacob, this is also a part of a bigger story of a Messiah to come, Gen 49 says by Judah.

The bigger story of Genesis has the big themes of land, covenant, and seed. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his 12 sons had land, covenant, seed promises ...but Joseph is outside the land at the end of Gen 37 (*the land* promise is in question for him). And Judah marries now outside the covenant in Gen 38.

So *the covenant* is threatened, too. Judah's first 2 sons die without seed/son (Onan on purpose), so *the seed* promise is also in jeopardy for Judah's tribe. The chosen family's chosen line may be wiped out by sin Judah has chosen³

38:1 *And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers ...* This contrasts with 37:1 where Jacob lived in the land of his fathers, now Judah is leaving the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's covenant family. In v. 1 the idea isn't just a geographical departure, it's a spiritual abandonment.

² *Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.* [the Hebrew suggest *lust* at first sight]
 - same phrase as Eve who 'saw and took' what was forbidden (3:6)
 - same as Gen 34:2, Shechem 'saw and took' Judah's sister Dinah
 - Simeon and Levi were outraged when this Canaanite took and tried to marry their sister, but Judah sees and takes on a forbidden union

⁶ *Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar.* In Gen 24, Abraham made his son Isaac solemnly swear he wouldn't marry a Canaanite. In Gen 27, Isaac's wife Rebekah says if their son Jacob marries a Canaanite, she's not sure life would be worth living. Jacob heard his dad charge him not to take a Canaanite for a wife in Gen 28, but now Jacob's son Judah takes the first one he likes the looks of and marries his son to one.

⁷ *But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.* ⁸ *Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty [i.e., marital duty] as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother."* ⁹ *Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother.* ¹⁰ *But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also.* ¹¹ *Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.*

Judah superstitiously thinks Tamar is bad luck, that *she's the problem* as she goes 0 for 2 in having husbands who stay alive. He's afraid his 3rd and last son will die so he doesn't want to give him to her, but he makes her think he will in v. 11. You need to understand in historical context, ancient laws for levirate marriage required if a married man died with no son, a brother or kinsman is to marry the widow to have kids with her to preserve that family.

The children would still bear the name of the first husband and inheritance. Closest in our culture is a will listing a guardian to raise your kids when you die. The kids keep their family name and any inheritance, but in agreeing to be their guardian, the agreement is to raise up children for your kin. Onan, though, doesn't take on his promised role to raise up children for Tamar, he uses her for his own gratification while not taking the responsibility with it.

[Onan wants his brother's inheritance for himself]

The point here is not that God kills people who do birth control. This isn't a commentary on family planning or spacing of children. It's not teaching us moms can never have breaks or young couples who want to wait a couple years before having kids are in sin. This is about Onan being a dirtbag! If you want a balanced biblical study on family planning that is pro-children but also considers other biblical principles, I'll put the link online if you want to study further "quiver-full movement" theology.⁴ But this is like a guy who says he'll be a foster parent or guardian and he's only in it for the money and his own desires and he refuses to take on his legal fatherly role.

[Onan doesn't care for his brother's widow or the things of God]

A man who refused this role in Israelite law was to be publically shamed by her taking off his sandal. Onan, though, pretends to take on that duty, he uses Tamar for sexual desires, but secretly makes sure she never conceives. God struck Judah's first son dead for some unspecified reason, and now He strikes down Onan the barbarian. Poor Tamar has been abused and used for her husband's pleasure without his provision for her (like many still today). And in v. 14 it becomes clear that Judah won't provide Shela for her either. He lost his first 2 sons married to Tamar, 3 strikes and he'll be out of sons. The covenant line will die out if someone doesn't act, but Tamar won't let it

What she does is not something a Christian would do, or even our culture in modern America typically. But in ancient Canaanite law custom,⁵ if no male kinsman of the brothers will fulfill their duty, the next of kin, even a father of the deceased could be called upon. Judah is not married at this point as v. 12 says, and in v. 14-18 Tamar knows how Judah is with the women, so she veils herself so Judah will come into her. She tricks him who won't provide for her *by giving his son*, so that *he himself will bear her* a son. It's not how we do it today, nor should it be, but as an ancient pagan Canaanite, Tamar is actually the one fulfilling their law while Judah's one not fulfilling their law

Genesis 38:26 is the key statement by Judah as he recognizes this: "*She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.*" It's a self-indictment. He says 'compared to me, she's righteous, I'm the sinner.'

If it was up to Judah, the chosen covenant line would have died out, and we would never have the 12 tribes of Israel or the Messiah through Judah's line. But God, being rich in mercy, uses a pagan Canaanite widow to keep the covenant family line alive, because none of the men are doing what's right!

v. 26 is a turning point for Judah confessing his unrighteousness, because in v. 24 we see his *self*-righteousness and hypocrisy. He hears Tamar has been immoral and is now pregnant out of wedlock, and Judah shouts "let her be burned!" Quick to judge, get rid of her and his responsibility for her off his hands, but in her hands she has in v. 25 the ring, cord, staff of the father of her child (basically Judah's ID card, might as well have been his DNA test).

[Pr 5:22 warns adulteries "ensnare him, the cords of his sin hold him" NIV]

It's like Nathan telling King David about a man who took what wasn't his in a poor man's lamb that he loved, and David shouts out "the man deserves to die." And Nathan replies "You are the man!" David had taken what was not his, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David deserves to die, and David repents. I think this is the beginning of Judah's repentance also. If Tamar deserves to die, Judah deserves to die for the sin *he condemned*. In the end of v. 25, he is asked to please examine and see who these articles of clothing belong to. Judah confesses, "I am the man. I am the sinner, the most unrighteous here." This is where repentance starts, and Judah will be a changed man by Gen 44

[repentance sees self as the biggest sinner, that's the first step]

Why is Gen 38 right after Gen 37? I think partly to connect this with 37:32 where after Judah convinced his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery, it's the exact same question they pose to their father, *please examine and see who these articles of clothing belong to?* These words echoed in Judah of his sin by deceiving his father with the robe of Joseph, crimson-stained by blood of a goat. Tamar now deceives her father-in-law Judah who deceived his father in Gen 37, and again a goat is involved (in 38:17). Did Judah know his own mother's story, how she was also veiled so Jacob didn't recognize her when he went in to her in the tent, tricked by his father-in-law Laban? Sin is never clean, consequences repeat in families but repentance brings grace (Gen 44)

[Tamar is seen by later Jews as a repentant believer in the covenant]

We'll see grace at work in Judah's family next week in Gen 39, a temptation to immorality resisted. This is another reason I think Gen 38 is here, to give us a contrast between Judah giving into temptation and Joseph resisting the same temptation with Potiphar's wife in the next chapter. We'll look at that more next week. But another reason I think Gen 38 is here is to help us see why Joseph had to go to Egypt: so Jacob's sons would later go there because they needed isolation or they'll all be pagan in Canaan like Judah or all dead

And this takes us from point #1. the scarlet sin of Judah and Tamar, to ...

Point #2. The scarlet thread of redemption

God graciously didn't make Tamar die or Judah die. Certainly the unborn child never deserves to die for the sins of its parents, even harlotry or incest. Our world would counsel Tamar to get an abortion, an unwed teen mother pregnant out of wedlock carrying her father-in-law's child. But God sees all life as precious. This unborn life was very special in God's plan. Judah's sin was the stuff of tabloids in the grocery checkout line, but a scandalous grace uses it in Holy Scripture instead. God doesn't overlook sin, He overrules it. A concluding point of Genesis is even in man's evil God intend good, 50:20

Two sinners could have died here, and we would have no 12 tribes of Israel and no Messiah from Judah's tribe. But in the place of 2 deaths for harlotry, there are 2 lives given graciously to the womb of a Canaanite widow whose 2 men had died in sin. God in His grace gives 2 sons in v. 27, despite sin, He gives twins, a double blessing for Judah who had lost 2 sons to death. Zerah comes out of the womb hand-first in v. 28-30, and the midwife ties a scarlet thread to his hand. And then the other brother grasps and pulls him back in and the other emerges in v. 29, and he's named *Perez=breakthrough*

[he'll live up to his name as grace breaks through him in his sinful family]

These twins recall Judah's father Jacob when he was still in the womb with his twin Esau: one comes out red, and the other comes out hand-first trying to grasp and pull his brother back in. In Gen 38, a literal thread is tied to the one marked out for firstborn blessing, but there's a metaphorical thread also running throughout Genesis of God's chosen covenant line not being man's conventions or choice of the firstborn. Cain is the firstborn ever, but Seth is the chosen line. Of Ham, Shem, and Japheth, Shem is the line that produces Abraham. Ishmael's firstborn, Isaac is the son of promise. Esau is firstborn to Isaac, but Jacob is the covenant line producing Israel. Reuben is Jacob's first, but he will not be the line Messiah comes through. Joseph is chosen by his father and marked with color like Zerah, but his line isn't the Messiah's.

[Judah through Perez would be the breakthrough, as Perez means]

Those who think Gen 38 is unconnected to its context miss this point. This is the culmination of the Genesis theme that God's sovereign choice is not based on man's choice. God's ways are not man's ways of fig leaves, first-borns or fleshly methods. God's grace is often found in most unlikely places and people to fulfill Gen 3:15's promise of a seed, a Redeemer. It's a thread that runs through Gen 38, through this woman, through redemptive history. A 'scarlet thread' is mentioned again in Joshua 2.⁶ Rahab is told to hang one in her window so Israel would rescue her home in the judgment of Jericho.

Like Passover in crimson red blood running across the doorposts to redeem houses rescued in the exodus, Rahab's scarlet thread protects her house, too. Rahab and Tamar are both Canaanites, both played a harlot, deceived others in imperfect faith to preserve covenant people, both are later counted part of Israel, marrying into the same family, bound together by this scarlet thread.

Judah in v. 26 said Tamar was more righteous than he, but not everything she did was right. Later Scriptures tell us even our righteousness is tainted by sin. Isaiah says even our most righteous deeds are like filthy rags, 64:6. Someone more righteous is needed, more righteous than Tamar or Judah, a different kind of righteousness is needed to deal with sin's crimson stain. In later Scriptures the term *kinsman-redeemer* was used for someone who took responsibility for one like Tamar, fathering a seed, redeeming her situation.

[turn to Ruth 4 to see one who *does* step up, unlike Onan or Judah]

This thread runs through the story of Ruth, a Moabite widow. Moabites had a crimson stain and shame as their people began from incest of a daughter with her dad in a cave. Ruth might as well have a 'Scarlet I' on her shirt as she comes into Bethlehem with Naomi, her in-law. Ruth's Jewish husband, Elimelech's son had died, so she's in a situation much like Tamar, needing a kinsman to marry her, produce and raise a son, and redeem the inheritance

Ruth 4:8 **NIV**: *So the kinsman-redeemer said to Boaz, "Buy it yourself." And he removed his sandal.* ⁹ *Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi [idea is bought back, redeemed] all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon.* ¹⁰ *I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records...* [look at v. 12, they reply] *through the offspring the Lord gives you by this young woman, may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah*

...

What a beautiful benediction this is of a chapter in Genesis that didn't start out very beautiful! What a sweet sequel to Gen 38 for Tamar, once thought to be cursed, now they invoke her name as blessed and a model of blessing! Her name once carried a stigma, now it carries celebrations in Israel! Tamar a Gentile Canaanite widow becomes a wonderful wedding blessing to Jews! By way of application, grace can transform you, too! Your regrets or shame or past or sinful family aren't irredeemable and don't curse you. If you're in Christ, He bore the curse for you on the cross and can make you a blessing! He is the greater Kinsman-Redeemer fulfilling what Judah's sons wouldn't.

Be encouraged Gen 38 proves Romans 8:28: God works *all things* for good. Why is Gen 38 in the Bible? Why is Perez mentioned here? ¹⁸ *This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron,* ¹⁹ *Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab,* ²⁰ *Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,* ²¹ *Salmon the father of **Boaz** ... [so a thread runs thru Tamar's son to his great-great-great-great grandson Boaz]*

Now turn to Matthew 1. Ruth 4 picks up where Gen 38 left off in Perez, and Matthew picks up where Ruth left off, showing the rest of the scarlet thread: ¹ *The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:* ² *Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of **Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.*** ³ ***Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar*** [scarlet thread on him born of scarlet sin. V. 5]... ⁵ *Salmon was the father of Boaz **by Rahab*** [converted prostitute with a scarlet thread out her window], *Boaz was the father of Obed **by Ruth**,* [a Moabite, that people that began by incest] *and Obed the father of Jesse.* ⁶ *Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon **by Bathsheba who had been the wife of Uriah** ...* [by a scarlet A of adultery]

[David also had Uriah killed to cover up his affair]

The family of Jesus, v. 21: “...*for He will save His people from their sins*”! Even sins of murder, adultery, harlotry, pregnancy outside marriage, incest! The scarlet sin of Judah and Tamar (#1) becomes part of the scarlet thread of redemption (#2), so the scarlet stains of our sin can be washed away (#3)

The 3rd and final application: repent or rejoice in the Lord who washes sin. That language/image I get from Isaiah 1:18: “*Come now, and let us reason together,*” *Says the LORD, “**Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool**”*

That's in the context of being washed, cleansed, a call to repent (v. 16). The OT Law shows our sin, only the gospel can transform it. One Puritan wrote ‘the sharp needle of the Law makes way for the scarlet thread of the Gospel’

[it's the breakthrough, like the name Perez means]

God's Law pierces us and shows us our sin, as scarlet. In the OT Law, there was scarlet thread as part of the veil to the holy of holies in the temple, or a ‘crimson yarn’ (2 Chron 3:14 NIV). In the NT gospel, Matthew 27 tells us they put on Jesus a robe made of scarlet thread, a scarlet robe to mock Him, and then as He dies, it says the temple veil was torn from top to bottom, end to end. The scarlet thread comes to end in Jesus as He dies on the cross and all who trust Him, though their sins are as scarlet He cleanses white as snow

Some of you may need to repent, turn from your sin, cry out in faith to Him for mercy. This story proves there's no sin Jesus can't redeem if like Judah you see your unrighteousness and like Rahab trust Him alone to save. Isaiah says, if you see your sin is as scarlet and repent, He washes it white as snow

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide; what can avail to wash it away? Look!
there is flowing a crimson tide—whiter than snow you may be today.

... grace that will pardon and cleanse within ... grace that is greater than all our sin!⁷

We should rejoice at grace greater than all sin and sufficient for all struggle. God calls us to rejoice in the Lord and this should help us to rejoice in Him. Tamar is celebrated on the first page of the NT as mothering Messiah's line! Matthew's Christmas story prelude genealogy rejoices in 5 sinful women, 4 Gentiles, 3 pregnant sinfully, 2 prostitutes and an incest in a family tree! It's a family tree with some gnarly knots! There are not-so-beautiful branches in this family tree, which is good for us sinful non-Jews who are also grafted into this tree of God's people. A beautiful Savior hung on a tree for ugly sin.

In His family tree Tamar paralleled in v. 18 with another teen pregnancy scandal. In v. 19 Mary has a stigma, too, a disgraceful shameful stain and a scarlet A in the eyes of their world, a child conceived outside of marriage. This is how Jesus enters the world. He came through sinners and for sinners like prostitutes, publicans, the proud. He's a friend of sinners, all who repent

One writer says the women in Mt 1 'provide an illustration of Jesus' power to save sinners, and to show that God's purpose for the...line was achieved despite human sin...[each] had a highly irregular and potentially scandalous marital union...these unions were, by God's providence, links in the chain to the Messiah ... each of them prepares the way for Mary, whose marital situation is also peculiar, given the fact that she is pregnant but has not yet had sexual relations with her betrothed husband Joseph. Thus the inclusion of the likes of Tamar in this family tree on one hand foreshadows the circumstances of the birth of Christ, and on the other hand blunts any attack on Mary. "God had worked his will in the midst of whispers of scandal."⁸

Scarlet color 'was a deep and permanent dye, virtually impossible to wash out once set (Isa. 63:2-3)' but there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, where sinners lose all their guilty stains.⁹ 'Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's pow'r in the blood, Sin stains are lost in its life giving flow; there's wonderful pow'r in the blood.'¹⁰ For all who repent of our debt of sin, we can rejoice that 'Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain—He washed it white as snow.'¹¹

¹ Quotations in this paragraph from Steven Mathewson, "An Exegetical Study of Genesis 38," *Bibliotheca Sacra Journal* 146:584 (Oct 89) p. 373-74.

² Iain Duguid, *Living in the Light of Inextinguishable Hope: The Gospel According to Joseph*, p. 32.

³ Voddie Baucham, *Joseph and the Gospel of Many Colors*, chapters 2-3.

⁴ <http://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?currsection=sermonstopic&keyword=quiverfull>

⁵ John Davis cites 'the prevailing Hittite and Assyrian custom of having the duty of levirate marriage performed by the father of the deceased,' *Paradise to Prison*, p. 268.

⁶ NASB.

⁷ Julia Johnston, "Grace Greater than our Sin."

⁸ Victor Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 455-56.

⁹ William Cowper, "There is a Fountain"; and David L. Jeffrey, *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*.

¹⁰ Lewis Jones, "There's Power in the Blood."

¹¹ Elvina Hall, "Jesus Paid It All."