

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

STORY OF FAITH: WEEK 6

Abraham's grandson, Jacob, had a total of twelve sons. Judah was his fourth son and Joseph was his eleventh (although not in order, all 12 sons are listed in Genesis 35:23-26). The older brothers hated Joseph and sold him into slavery. Yet God honored Joseph and used him to keep all twelve brothers alive during the famine—thus preserving Abraham's lineage and keeping His promise to Abraham from Genesis 12:1-3.

But while God used Joseph to save the family, He chose another brother, Judah, to lay the foundation for a future royal dynasty. In the final chapters of Genesis, when Jacob is about to die, he calls all of his sons together and gives each a prophetic blessing. When he came to Judah, his fourth son, he gave a royal blessing...

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:10, ESV)

Here in Genesis 49, we see that a descendant of Abraham (through Isaac, Jacob, and now Judah) will be a king; a king through whom the nations will be blessed. Again, this is a promise of the coming Messiah. "You are a lion's cub, O Judah" A symbol of sovereignty, strength, and courage. Years later, Judah (or Israel) is often pictured as a lion (see Ezekiel 19:1-7 and Micah 5:8). And Judah's greatest descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, is called "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" in Revelation 5:5.

When we get to the first chapter of Matthew's gospel, Judah and his sons are listed in the genealogy of Jesus (as expected). But so is a woman named Tamar (oops, not expected)! The Messiah's own ancestry is not always what you might expect (see Genesis 37 for more details). Ultimately, Abraham's family tree is often broken and dysfunctional, but God still loves them and will keep His covenant and His promise to bless the world through them.

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GENESIS 49:1-12 ESV

- 1 Then Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in days to come.
- 2 “Assemble and listen, O sons of Jacob, listen to Israel your father.
- 3 “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the first fruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
- 4 Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father’s bed; then you defiled it—he went up to my couch!
- 5 “Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords.
- 6 Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstringed oxen.
- 7 Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.
- 8 “Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons shall bow down before you.
- 9 Judah is a lion’s cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?
- 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
- 11 Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.
- 12 His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk....

Matthew 1:1-6 (ESV)

- 1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
- 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
- 3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram,
- 4 and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,
- 5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,
- 6 and Jesse the father of David the king.

DISCUSSION GUIDE QUESTIONS on your own, with family, or with your small group

Read Genesis 49:1-28. What stands out to you in Jacob’s prophetic blessings to his sons? Does anything bother you? List several things here:

Read the Genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17. There are five women mentioned. List their names here:

Knowing that it was very rare for a woman to be mentioned in a genealogy back then, why is it significant that Matthew included them?

Why is it good news for you and me that not all of Christ’s ancestors were perfect people?

Can you identify a time when God was faithful to you (and/or kept a promise to you) even when you did not deserve it?

Finally, God’s covenant with Abraham now flows through an unlikely great-grandson named Judah. How is this foundational for the rest of the Biblical story?