

Bible Workshop

Joseph and his family*

4. Judah

OUR STUDY of Judah brings us to questions of leadership and repentance. Judah was the fourth oldest son of Jacob, born to Leah after Reuben, Simeon and Levi (Gen. 29:35). Like them, he didn't receive the birthright. However, the lineage of Christ came through Judah, and we'll soon see why.

1 Begin in Genesis 37:

- What indications in this chapter are we given that Judah has become the leader of the brothers?
- Who do you think came up with the plot to stain Joseph's coat with blood in order to deceive their father?
- Is Judah a positive or negative influence on his brothers?
- What is his attitude toward his father in this chapter?
- How would you describe his character at this point in the story?

2 Now let's look at Genesis 38.

- Judah went "down" from his brethren. What does this one word tell us?
- Whom did Judah become friends with? Was his friend a good influence (vv. 12,20)?
- Read verses 12-26. What sin did Judah commit?
- What lessons do you think he learned from this? What does this teach us (consider John 8:11)?

- Is this chapter in the right chronological place in Genesis? Why is it in the middle of the story of Joseph? Contrast this story with Joseph's example in 39:7-12.
- Why did God allow this story to be in the Bible?
- Look at verses 27-30. Where else does a scarlet cord come up in the Bible? Can you figure out how the two events are connected?

3 If we have a look at Genesis 43:8-10, we see Judah is well on the road to spiritual growth at this point.

- Pick out some words that indicate to us that Judah has grown spiritually.
- Why has he changed? What lesson does this provide us with?
- Jacob said he would not send Benjamin down to Egypt with his brothers (42:38). Why does he take that back now and why does he trust Judah?

4 Now take a look at Genesis 44:14-17.

- What is the situation? Why does Judah take charge in this incident?
- Verse 16 is an amazing confession and acknowledgement by Judah on behalf of all the brothers. What does he confess?
- Why is it amazing that, out of all the brothers, Judah is the one to acknowledge this?
- Is he a positive influence/example to his brothers now? If so, why?

Judah is shown to be a mindless, insensitive man, lumbering through life with his chief concern of having a good time. Unbeknown to him, God's ministering angels were nearby, watching all and recording all. Judah might have been appalled to realise that his escapades would be exposed through the Inspired record for all generations to see. The reason why God has preserved this story is to warn those who are following the same course of self-destruction. It is a reminder of the consequences of our actions, for flesh has not changed, and we are subject to the same propensities . . . leaving us with strong warnings about the frailty of human nature.

Shane Kingsbury, *Teenagers of the Bible*, p. 32

Judah is not pleading on the basis of a protestation of their innocence, but on the devastating effect their conviction would have on the one who was now so dear to them all. He spoke eloquently of his FATHER, an OLD MAN and Benjamin, the LITTLE ONE, the SON of his OLD AGE. Never before had he thought so dearly about his father and family.

Teenagers of the Bible, p. 82

5 Now take a look at Judah's speech in Genesis 44:18-34.

- a) What is so memorable about his speech?
- b) Count up the number of times 'father' appears in the speech, and then 'brother' or 'lad'. What does this teach us?
- c) How would you describe his character now?
- d) What has brought about this change?
- e) ". . . lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father". Here is the final stage of true repentance and mature love. What do we learn from Judah's attitude here about what our attitude should be towards sin?

6 Judah's blessing is recorded in Genesis 49:8-12.

- a) What does this blessing tell us about how Jacob feels and how God feels about Judah now?
- b) Who or what is "Shiloh"? Where else is Shiloh mentioned in the Bible?
- c) What amazing promise is in this passage?

- d) What lessons does Judah's remarkable change teach us:
 - about God?
 - about ourselves?
 - about the influence we can have on others?

7 Judah made an extraordinary turnaround and, above the others in this story, changed his heart to be in tune with God.

- a) When did God openly establish that Christ was to come through Judah's lineage? (Find the reference.)
- b) Although God knows the end from the beginning, we do not. In your opinion, was this event of Judah's repentance the key to Judah being named heir to kingship? Explain and find precedence for your answer (think of one of Judah's brothers).

* Adapted from a workbook issued to young people attending the Manitoulin Youth Conference in Canada and used by permission. Comments on these questions are invited and should be sent to the Publishing Editor.

Judah is the man who represents the greatest conversion from the depths of sin to manifestation of spirituality. He is the man who proves that "with God nothing is impossible".

Teenagers of the Bible, p. 97

Judah chose a careless and selfish course of action, leaving a trail of confusion behind him, and yet many years later, under the influence of Joseph, he became a humble and godly man. This teaches us that nobody is beyond the merciful arm of God, providing they are prepared to repent and seek a new way of life.

Teenagers of the Bible, p. 32