

## **Rahab**

Scripture refers to this Amorite woman of Jericho as Rahab the harlot. While perhaps truthful in identifying her early profession, how demeaning it is for her to have been permanently branded this way. She was a woman of such faith that she risked her life to help God's people in a time of their great need. She also was a participant in the lineage of kings, including our blessed Son of Man, our Lord Christ Jesus. There are some unbelieving souls who use her presence in Scripture, and in the lineage of Jesus, as evidence of the absurdity of the fact that Scripture could have been authored by God. They reason, from their earthly perspective, that God would not have allowed the disclosure of such an embarrassing ancestor, for how could pure and sinless Son of Man ever spring from such sordid roots? What should instead be concluded by such admission is that our sovereign and omniscient God chooses whomever He will to be His agents in carrying out His plan of redemption.

In admitting to, and describing the spiritual warts of each of His chosen servants, we should see more forcefully the truthfulness, rather than any absurdity in His precious Word. Every human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). Therefore whether so described or not, each and every ancestor of the Son of Man, along with everyone else ever to have born of woman, is sinful to the fullest by their very nature. However, God is truth. He cannot violate His nature, so every word of Scripture is truth, His truth, and it is absent of fabrications or false imagery. There was no need for her vocation to have been revealed in order to make her place in Jesus' ancestry known. So why did He? Because all of Scripture is given for our learning, we must conclude that there is a lesson here. This may be nothing more than that our sovereign omnipotent God uses even the most sinful, unlikely and unqualified for His purpose. He even used a pagan, idol worshipping prostitute to participate in His divine purpose. If she were here today, and brought before a group of the most faithful Christians, who among them, after they had honestly examined their hearts, and their lives, would feel qualified to cast the first stone against her. (John 8:7)

Five women are identified as part of our Lord's genealogy. However, His genealogy as listed by Matthew, mentions only Tamar, Rahab and Mary, while Luke lists only men. Ruth and Athaliah are mentioned elsewhere in Scripture as contributors to His genealogy. From what we know of Tamar she is not presented as an example of what we might call virtue. She tricked Judah her father-in-law into siring Pharez, the tenth generation prior to David. It took ten generations of "dilution" in order to purge his illegitimacy out of the bloodline so as to allow David to be qualified to become King and begin the royal line that led to Jesus.

However, as noted above, we should not view her too harshly, given the culture of the day, and the circumstances preceding Tamar's transgression. Scripture tells her story quite clearly, so we've no need to expand this discussion by reiterating it here. What we should make note of in this story is the far greater iniquity of Judah. We note first that he broke his promise to Tamar regarding an obligatory commitment involving a Levirate marriage for her to his youngest son. Second, we see him callously soliciting the favors of a road-side prostitute, not knowing that it was in fact Tamar. From Tamar's perception, she felt justified in taking drastic actions, because Judah would not allow her to marry his third son to whom she was betrothed. So in desperation, she simply took matters into her own hands regarding what she considered was her right, and his obligation, that is to at least, provide her with a son.

With some justification, she may have reasoned that it was not a great stretch of the Levirate law that if his son could not be her husband, then it was the father's obligation to marry her. We know nothing of Tamar's background, other than because of her name, she very likely was a Canaanite. It is clearly evidenced, as here expressed, that God's election is by grace. God utilizes His omnipotence, that is His foreknowledge of every being's thoughts feelings and deeds in determining where and how he dispenses His grace. Otherwise He would never have chosen Judah to be the one of the twelve sons of Jacob through whom the lineage of Jesus would grow. It was by God's grace that He infused in Rehab's mind to do what she did as part of His Grand Plan. In this case, while he didn't sanction such action, He chose to over-rule evil to fulfill His purposes. Could

the choosing of Tamar, a Gentile, and Judah a Jew, for the continuing of the sacred blood line have been a foreshadowing of the fact that both Jews and Gentiles were to share the blessing of the Gospel? This observation came from the writings of the English Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1556)

While some falsely try to demean Ruth, on the basis of their erroneous understanding of the threshing floor incident. She was not only blameless, but comes across as a striking example of faith, innocence, loyalty and love at their finest. She was the most godly of the four women who preceded Mary in Jesus ancestry.

Athaliah however, was the very worst, so bad that it would not be unfair to consider her as being 100% evil incarnate. While not listed in the genealogies given in either Matthew or Luke, as the mother of Judea's king Ahaziah, she was in the lineage of Jesus. We also know that for every man listed, there was an unnamed wife and mother who had to have participated in this process. Any human author if he was disturbed to see Tamar mentioned in the line of Jesus would most likely have cringed at the very thought of any reference to Athaliah. Rahab appears to be saintly in whatever may have been her most sinful moments as compared to the best aspects of Athaliah, had there even been any. She was the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab, the king of Israel, which in itself reveals much.

Scripture tells us quite a bit about Jezebel and Athaliah, quite enough to recognize that each was the personification of evil at its worst. This seems to discredit my contention that God's providing of grace is influenced by His foreknowledge of each persons entire life. However, I don't believe it does. I believe that He sometime chooses to use the very worst of humanity to serve His purpose, even in the genealogy of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. This is one of the ways which He teaches us that His ways are not our ways, and that His sovereignty prevails in all things. Because this paper is about Rahab, we will only briefly mentioned Athaliah as an example of how even the very most evil of women were allowed to become a part of our Lord's genealogy, and the manner in which this took place. I believe that the message for us that no matter how wicked you are, or have been, whether you repent or not, you are not necessarily eliminated from His

list of those He may use. Blessed are those from among these who choose Jesus, whose purpose is a life-long ministry of service directly to Jesus, as their Lord and Master.

As noted, Jezebel was the wife of king Ahab of the Northern Kingdom, and the daughter of the Phoenician king named Ethbaal, who was both king and priest of Baal worshippers. Jezebel, the mother of the Ahaziah, followed his father Ahab as ruler over Israel. This Ahaziah was, as was his father, one of the very worst in the line of Northern kingdom regents. Athaliah, his sister, married Jehoram the son of king Jehoshaphat of Judah, and was the mother of Judea's King Ahaziah, her brother's namesake then her brother became king of the Northern Kingdom when his father died.

When her son Ahaziah died, she killed off all possible legal heirs to the throne, except the baby Jehu, who she didn't know of, and whom her own sister hid from her. Then, because there was no other known successor, she Athaliah assumed the throne, declaring herself queen, and for over seven years reigned as the only female to have ever been sole regent over Judea. We often see where God has taken very evil persons such as King Manasseh, and remolded them for His purpose. But here we find two women, Jezebel and her daughter, the one who is within the lineage of Jesus, having no redeeming values at any time, given what is recorded of their lives. Each was evil to the very core, and to the very end. Just what we are to learn from this is less evident, and also not our topic.

Back to Rahab. There is one very difficult situation to resolve regarding Rahab and her genealogical place in our Lord's genealogy. Rahab and her family were the only ones spared in the destruction of Jericho, which occurred in 1451 BC. Let's assume that she was young at that time, perhaps 18 years old. Now let's say that she was 40 when she gave birth to her first son. Therefore this would have been in the year 1429 BC.

Let us put this date aside for a while, and approach Boaz's birth date from another direction. This other approach to establishing the date of Boaz's birth, is to see what our study of the Book of Ruth tells us. In Ruth we are told that it was in the time of the Judges and that there was a famine. The only famine recorded in Judges was in the time

when Gideon was a judge. Adding up the years recorded for each of the judges, we find that the year Gideon ended the famine by driving out the Medians, brings us to about 1233BC. The famine began 7 years earlier. We might assume that Elimelech and Naomi, with their two sons, went to Moab during the second year of the famine, having held out until it seemed impossible to any longer properly care for this family in Judea.

They remained in Moab for 10 years. Therefore Naomi probably returned to Israel five years after the deliverance of Israel by Gideon. This then would be in the year 1228 BC and also the year Boaz married Ruth. Having determined that his marriage of Ruth and Boaz took place around 1228 BC, and that he was at that time around, say 80 years old, his year of birth would have been around 1308 BC. With our approach as to his year of birth through Rahab, we found that it was in about 1429 BC. When we examine it from the Ruth direction, we find a gap of  $1429-1308 = 121$  years. If we chose Rahab as having given birth to Boaz when she was twenty, the gap would be 141 years. We could stretch the creditability of each assumption so as to narrow the gap. However, I believe that it would have to be stretched to an undefendable absurdity before it could be reduced to a reasonable single generation time period. Unless we choose to do that, I believe that we can conclude that Rahab was Boaz's grandmother, and that his father's name has not been mentioned. Seeing all of these assumptions one could choose to discredit the whole analysis. However, if one studies them it will be evident that they are all reasonable. Also, they are not compounded and therefore are not expediential.

I believe that we can justify this conclusion when we read Deuteronomy 29:20 where we are told that in some instances there can be men that God may curse such that: "*the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.*" Notice that blotting his name from under heaven does not appear to be the same as out of the book of life, or out of any other book mentioned in Scripture. It simply means that because of some great offense against God, his name, which would otherwise have found its place in some book, was justly removed, leaving no remembrance of him. That's pretty clear, and again I believe that it permits

the above conclusion. It seems compelling to realize that where chronology and genealogy seem to cry out for such a “blotting,” that it did in fact happen. We can only wonder why such wickedness that Athaliah demonstrated, was not a cause for her to have been “blotted out.” Another interesting instance that may be called “semi-blotting,” is found in the genealogy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 1:16.

“Semi-blotting” seems appropriate in that in 2Chronicles chapters 21-23 there is listed a line of three kings, namely Ahaziah, Joash, and Amazrah that are not listed in the genealogy found in Matthew. Also the Matthew genealogy leaves out two of king Josiah’s sons who are listed in 2Chronicles 36. All five of these omissions were evil men, which by God’s sovereign choice He excluded from Matthew’s “official list”. As we realize just how wicked these men were, how much worse could have been those whom He blotted out? For a more detailed examination of this issue, see the commentary called *“The Chronology and Genealogy and of Jesus From Adam to David.”*

Back again to Rahab. It would be wrong to condemn her for being a harlot. She was an Amorite, part of a pagan idol worshipping culture that found no fault with her profession. Knowledge of the power of our Creator God however, had become widespread throughout that part of the world. He was known to most people to be an exceedingly powerful God, one who could part the waters of the sea, destroy a vast army, demoralize a powerful empire, and sustain over a million people in a near waterless, foodless wilderness for forty years. They all had heard these things, but Rahab seems to have been alone in her understanding and inclination to believe and to seek to serve such a God. Surely here was an example of God’s drawing to Himself, and for His purpose, this particular pagan from Jericho! When the two spies came into her house, she realized that providence had blessed her with such an extraordinary opportunity to serve their God that she would not let it escape. As the story goes, she risked her life, by hiding the Israelites, from those who sought to kill them. No doubt, a horrible tortured death would have been hers had they been discovered, perhaps one even worse than theirs would have been. God’s hand was clearly evident as He singled her out for this great purpose, for how else

could the searchers have been so negligent in their search for the spies, and her very dangerous plan having succeeded so well?

Here was her one and only chance, for she knew the total destruction of her city, and all who were in it was inevitable at the hands of those who had this great God with them. So she put her faith and trust in these two, whom she saw as faithful servants of this God. Notice that she had hidden the spies, and diverted the searchers, even before she approached them with her proposition. Because of this, she was very much at their mercy, having lost any leverage she had to affect an argument for her own safety and that of her family. We see here, in addition to her recognition of the greatness of the Israelite's God, all the evidence of a faith in His divine justice and mercy. It was a belief that He would physically save her because of her trust, as expressed by her extraordinary action on behalf of His people. It was a belief, which led to her spiritual salvation, which would come later as she learned more about our merciful God, and grew to worship Him.

Because of Joshua's great faith, he knew that God, not his army, would take Jericho. So why bother with a "spy mission"? Scriptures mentions nothing regarding what they sought or what they achieved as spies. It appears that this entire episode may have been God-ordained for but one purpose, and that is to introduce us to Rahab, and how He would draw her to him. It was to show us a particular form of faith through which righteousness was imputed in Old Testament times. Hebrews 11:3 memorializes her place in that hallowed list of similarly saved souls. This episode also provided one of the many bits of symbolism our Lord has woven throughout His magnificent Book attesting to atonement through blood. Notice that the spies were allowed to escape by way of a scarlet cord, and that Rahab and her family were also saved through the presence of that same scarlet cord. Scarlet is symbolic of blood. The scarlet cord then symbolized safety through blood, that is our Lord's blood on the cross. The scarlet blood on the doorposts saved the first born in all the believing households of the Israelite slaves, and here that same kind of symbolism in the form of a scarlet rope saved another household.

Also, what about the three days that the “spies” were to stay “disappeared” before they could return to their brethren? Can we not see in these seemingly pointless details, the possibility of another very subtle allusion to the Passover? Just as Jesus “disappeared” for 3 days” before He “returned” to the brethren, so also did these spies disappear for 3 days before returning to their brethren! She told them to wait three days in hiding before heading back to their people, because the Amorites would have assumed that they were going back, and so would have pursued them along their likely route. Rahab knew that they would be captured or killed if they had chosen to go back immediately rather than to hide. She also knew that the Amorites would give up, and be back in Jericho well within the three day. Then they could travel back safely.

What a magnificent servant of our Lord this Moabite woman became. Her vocation may have been perfectly acceptable within the culture of her people even though it was punishable unto death by stoning in the Hebrew culture. However, God saw her inner quality of strength, bravery, perseverance and a heart willing to believe and to be sanctified. So God chose her, molded her and equipped her be the seventeenth generational precedent mother of Jesus, prior to Mary

I suspect that there may have been some God-ordained “magic or chemistry” between her and one of the spies, inspite of their short and highly stressed time together before he disappeared down the rope into the darkness. While Scripture appears to be silent on the matter, Hebrew legend has it that Salmon, her future husband was one of the two spies. How wonderfully our loving God takes care of His own, even to the point of arranging marriage where it serves His great plan!

Why else might God have chosen this Amorite to be in the genealogy of our Lord? Perhaps so that her part pagan Amorite son (or grandson) Boaz would be eligible to marry Ruth, another Gentile of outstanding quality, and through her, carry on God’s chosen line to Jesus. Could it be. It was to show us, through His blood line, that the human aspects of Jesus were of both Jew and Gentile. He came to save both! How wondrous it is to see God’s hand working so subtly and purposefully in the lives of His



chosen. If you are His, you can be certain that He is at work both in and around you. Occasionally, by His pleasure, we are blessed to actually see that activity as it occurs. However, it is by hindsight that His work is revealed most clearly. All who have been saved can look back and see most clearly the many incredible influences He has made in our lives.

What also must be kept in mind is that Jesus, the End of the royal line, in the fulfillment of prophecy, was the “Son” that was given by God, through the “seed” God would give the woman, (Genesis 3:15) and also the “Child” that was born of Mary. (Isaiah 9:6) He was the Son of God, His soul, mind and spirit aspects, were of God. As the physical child, His body, the temple housing Him, grew in the flesh. To confirm this, look back to Genesis 3:15 where God tells the serpent that He “...*will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; ....*” Since a woman does not have seed, this was the divine seed that God provided her. Therefore, this most precious Person had no genetically inherited sin because His genetics were of God and therefore brought no sin into His flesh. Thus we can see that whatever were the evil natures of His physical ancestors, they were not able to enter this “Son of God / Son of Man.” Having absolutely no propensity to sin, there is no way that Jesus could have been “tempted” by Satan (Matthew 4:3-11) the word tempted is from the Greek word “perazo”, which can be translated as “test, entice, prove, and tempt.” Test is the first of the list of possible English equivalents. In Jesus’ case, to have translated using the word “test”, would have been much more accurate than “tempt.”