

The Women in Jesus' Genealogy

Before God ever used the four Gospel writers of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – He revealed His Gospel through the lives of four women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

The genealogy of Christ is given to us in Matthew, chapter one. Genealogies are found throughout Scripture like dreary word deserts of unfamiliar, hard to pronounce names that seem to have no design, purpose or beauty. However, the Bible has God's divine hallmark stamped upon every part. There is reason and significance in every verse. God's holy signature becomes visible everywhere as we search for it.

If we can find in this wilderness of strange sounding names, of the first chapter of Matthew, God's divine plan of salvation, then doesn't it stand to reason that God's hand is in every detail of the Scriptures?

I would like to pick out four names in Christ's genealogy, listed in Matthew, chapter one. Almost all of the names listed in this genealogy of Christ are men's names. Many of them would have a sermon in themselves. However, I want to consider four *women's* names listed in Christ's genealogy. Here we find four women who found a place in the royal family of the coming King! Their presence is not accidental, nor incidental, but they are listed here by God's divine purpose. These four women are, "*Representative Women.*" When we look at their personal history, and couple that with their inclusion in genealogy of the world's Redeemer, we will find a striking illustration of God's way of salvation. Before God ever wrote the Gospel according to four men, He wrote it through four women!

Look at Matthew 1:3 – I want to just pick out one name, a woman – "*Tamar.*" In verse 5, we find the name of "*Rahab*" [The King James Translation spells it "*Rachab,*" however it is the same as Rahab of the Old Testament]. Also we find the name of "*Ruth*" in verse 5. Then in verse 6 we find "*her that had been the wife of Urias.*"

We must realize what an unusual things it was for woman's names to be found in Jewish genealogy. Jewish blood line always dealt with the father, the son, the grandson, and so on. No records were kept concerning the mother.

I heard of a Sunday School teacher who offered a new suit to the boy who could find the name of King David's mother. That class of boys searched the whole Old Testament. They looked through every page of the books of Samuel, Chronicles and Kings, I guess they are still hunting hoping to get a new suit. But they haven't found it yet because it isn't listed anywhere. Women were just not usually mentioned in Jewish genealogies. The fact is that Jews, generally speaking, took no cognizance of women in family records.

Here in Matthew, where the genealogical record of Jesus Christ is given, there are over 40 men's names – and only 4 women. The wonder increases when we note that the majority of these four women were not what you would call "*good women.*" Here is the ancestry of the Savior of the world, and all four of the women mentioned, with the exception of one, had names

that was connected with some great sin. And, if that isn't enough, none of these women were Jews. All four of them were Gentiles. Tamar was a Canaanite; Rahab was of Jericho, and was a Gentile; Ruth was a Moabitess; and "*the wife of Uriah*" was a Hittite.

The ancestry of Jesus Christ has four women, all Gentiles, making it clear that God must have some definite purpose in the inclusion of their names. An examination of each of these four personalities will make that purpose apparent.

1. Tamar

The story is found in Genesis 38. It is a story that I must admit I am embarrassed to read in public. I'm just old fashioned enough to feel ill at ease and uncomfortable reading it aloud in public. That doesn't mean the Bible has dirty stories. I wouldn't read my Medical Book in public to you either. [I can hear the pages of your bibles turning now to find it!]

Suffice it to say that Tamar's sin was followed by the birth of a child – a child that was in line of the Savior of the world, the coming Messiah. It was because of her sin that her name appears in the sacred record of our Lord. If she had not sinned, her name would not have been found here. Not that it was God's will for her to sin, she had a choice, like everyone of us does, and she choose the wrong. It was her moral down fall that brought her into connection with the lineage of Jesus Christ.

Do you wonder at this? In a very real sense, this is truth of every saved person. If you are in the family of God, it is only because you realize that you were a sinner, and that Christ came to call sinners, not the righteous, to repentance. The very thing that might have kept Tamar out of the Royal Family is the very thing that brought her in.

One man said to me one time, "*Salvation is not for me, I'm too great a sinner!*" A lot of people feel that way. However, the Bible says, "*We can't be saved unless we realize that we are sinners.*"

The first principle of the Gospel is: "*Salvation is all of grace, for sinner's only!*" This basic fact is set forth in the name and character of Tamar.

Paul said, "This is a true and faithful saying, that Christ came into this world to save sinners."

The Gospel according to Tamar is that salvation of all of God's grace – for sinners only!

2. Rahab

The story of Rahab is told in Joshua, chapter 2. Every student of the Bible knows her character. The Bible does not gild its heroes, or heroines, but deals plainly with the stern facts of life. Scripture introduces her as, "*Rahab was a harlot.*"

It's the story of the fall of Jericho. Rahab saved in a day of judgment by putting her faith in a scarlet cord, placed in a window. Her house remained when the wall fell. While others of Jericho were dying, she was spared because she believed the Word of the Lord. Salvation was hers through faith.

The second principle of the Gospel is that **salvation is received and lived by faith.**

God singles out her faith in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, when He says, "*By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not*" (verse 31).

That scarlet cord was a striking symbol of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The only way to escape coming judgment is through simple faith in Christ's blood, apart from any merits on our own – or demerits!

Here is the Gospel according to two women: Salvation for sinners – and – it is received by faith in Christ's shed blood.

3. Ruth

Unlike the stories of the other women, the beautiful story of Ruth is familiar to every one of us. There is no blot on Ruth's character. However, she was born under a curse. She was a Moabitess. Deuteronomy 23:3 tells us that because of a certain sin the Moabites had committed, they were "*shut out of the congregation of the Lord.*" God's own Word shut Ruth out! Doesn't seem strange that the very woman the Law shut out, is found in the ancestry of Jesus Christ?

The explanation is found in the Book of Ruth. Ruth 2:12 describes Boaz as saying to Ruth, "*The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to trust.*"

The law of God was against her, but she cast herself upon God's mercy. We have in Ruth the third great fact of the Gospel; **Salvation is for those the Law shuts out, who come by grace alone!** The Gospel is plain, we are saved by grace, apart from the Law.

Here was a woman who was shut out of the family of God by the Law. She was a Moabitess, without promises to plead. She was alien from the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope and without God in the world, but she receives the grace and mercy of God.

Salvation is by grace, apart from the works of the Law!

The inability of the law to save is remarkably illustrated in the last chapter of the book of Ruth. Two kinsmen had the right to redeem Ruth. The first kinsman said, "*I cannot redeem Ruth for myself lest I mar mine own inheritance. Redeem thou my right to thyself.*" Then, Boaz steps up and does for Ruth what the first kinsman could not do. The first kinsman represents the law. The Law cannot save, now pronounce the sinner righteous. The Law would mar its own inheritance if declared the sinner righteous. The Law does not have to ability to redeem mankind because of man's sin.

Scripture tell us that, "*He that doeth the works of the Law shall live therein.*" It also says, "*What the Law could not do in that it was weak, God accomplished by sending His Son.*" God did by grace what the Law could not do by works.

The Gospel according to Ruth is:

Salvation is by Grace, apart from the works of the Law.

4. "*The wife of Uriah*"

Her name? The Holy Spirit did not give her name, just called her, "*the wife of Uriah.*" However you know her as Bathseba. You will at once recall the sin of King David. God has a purpose in recalling, this recorded sin here in the lineage of Jesus Christ given in the first chapter of Matthew. The mention of this personality immediately points to the sin of a child of God – the sin of the saint.

Scripture calls David, "*a man after God's own heart.*" Founded upon God's sovereign grace the Promised Seed would come through the lineage of David. David sinned! What about the covenant of God? What about the promise of the coming messiah? God's answer to His promise, and to this question, is, "*the wife of Uriah,*" listed in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1:6.

The hand of God placed the kingly crown on the head of the son of Bathsheba. The Royal line from David to Christ included "*the wife of Uriah.*"

Saints may fall, but there is forgiveness. "*If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). Sin will bring chastening. It certainly did in David's life. But, despite David weakness and sin, the glorious fact proclaimed by Bathsheba is God's forgiveness. It is a message that is needed today!

Here is the Gospel revealed by the lives of four women. The plan of salvation enshrined in four names. The order, beauty and design is seen in the wonderful genealogy of Jesus Christ. Here in a fragment from Christ's genealogical record is God's plan for salvation. Here is the Gospel according to four women:

1. Salvation is for sinners
2. Salvation is through faith
3. Salvation is apart from the works of the Law
4. Salvation is one of forgiveness