



Why Would God Bless Two Immoral Women?

Joshua 2:12: (NASB) *Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth.*



God does not reward sin. On the contrary, He abhors it! Satan's first rebellious thoughts against God will result in his eventual destruction. Adam's sin of disobedience has and continues to result in the power of sin, evil and death plaguing our world to this day. Enter Tamar and Rahab. These are two Old Testament women who both acted immorally and yet found their way into a very unusual position of God's favor. They were two of only five women listed in the genealogy of Jesus. How can this be? Did God make an exception for them? What was it they did or did not do to have the privilege of having Jesus be a descendant

of their bloodlines? The answers to these questions are found in the fascinating accounts and decisions of their lives.

In addition to being in the genealogy of Jesus, there is one other amazing biblical connection with Tamar and Rahab. It has to do with a scarlet thread... but we will get to that later!

We begin with Tamar, as she lived several generations before Rahab. Tamar's most talked about and remembered biblical action was dressing up like a prostitute to deceive her father-in-law, Judah - one of the 12 sons of Israel - into having sexual relations.



- She was not a harlot by trade. She used prostitution to deceive one man.
- She was not a wicked person. Though what she did is uncomfortable for us to discuss, we need to view her story in a historical context.
- The Bible is not advocating that we emulate what she did - there are deeper lessons shown in her story.

To understand Tamar's deception of Judah, let's understand the kind of man Judah was at that time:

Genesis 38:1-2: (NASB) *¹And it came about at that time, (that is, around the time the 10 brothers sold Joseph into slavery) that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. ²Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.*

Judah as the patriarch of the Tribe of Judah was one of the 12 sons of Jacob (later named Israel). He married a Canaanite woman named Shua. We will see how easily Judah seems to continually ignore God's favor.

This is well before the Law, and before Israel was a nation. God spoke to the Hebrews through Abraham's promises and the dreams of Joseph.



We are in Genesis 38, and it is interesting that we are going to interrupt the narrative of Joseph that started in Genesis 37 with this unusual story. We will see why as we get further in.

Genesis 38:3-5: (NASB) ³*So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. ⁴Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan. ⁵She bore still another son and named him Shelah...*

(Source: Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary) Like Esau in Genesis 26:34, this son of Jacob, casting off the restraints of religion, married into a Canaanite family; and it is not surprising that the family which sprang from such an unsuitable connection should be infamous for bold and unblushing wickedness.

Judah was not following in the footsteps of his righteous great-grandfather, Abraham.

Fast forward to the adulthood of Judah's firstborn son Er:

Genesis 38:6-7: (NASB) ⁶*Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the LORD, so the LORD took his life.*

(Source: Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible) What this wickedness consisted in we are not told; but the phrase *in the sight of the Lord* being added, proves that it was some very great evil.

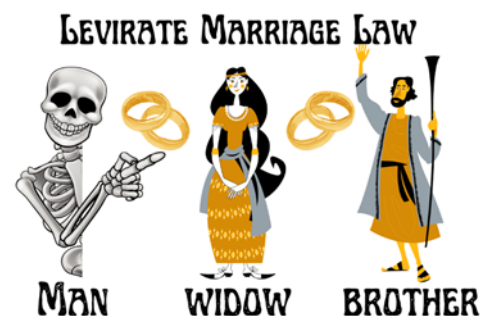
Er, the firstborn of Judah, did something that God saw as wicked enough to say: *I am taking your life for this*. This was no trivial mistake. Judah now faces a dilemma as he seeks to create his family.

Genesis 38:8: (NASB) 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.*

Here we need to pause and explain the "Levirate Law":

(Source: *All of the Women of the Bible*, Edith Deen) It is one of the Bible's best examples of the levirate marriage law. This was the ancient custom of marriage between a man and the widow of his brother required by the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 25) when there was no male issue and when two brothers had been residing on the same family property. The law takes its name from the noun levir, meaning a husband's brother.

The purpose was that there would be an heir to receive the dead brother's inheritance and carry on with his line. The widow gets to still be a mother and have someone to care for her in her old age. This was an important provision to protect women in this patriarchal society. A childless widow had no one to care for her.



We know God approved of this arrangement because it would be codified by the Mosaic Law hundreds of years later. What is only a custom in this account will be continued later by the Jewish Law.

Onan proved to be wicked as well. He did not want to raise up offspring for his brother and prevented Tamar from getting pregnant:

Genesis 38:10: (NASB) *But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD; so He took his life also.*



The Levirate Law only worked when people were not being selfish. A child from such a union would mean less inheritance for Onan. Firstborn males received a double portion. The first child born to Tamar could claim Er's double share of inheritance. Onan had more to gain with his older brother out of the way and no heir.



God's disfavor was plain. *So He (Jehovah) took his life also.* These two sons of Judah demonstrated a great sin before God. We see that Tamar was innocent in these events. She was chosen to be the wife of an evil man. When he died, she was bound to his brother – another evil man. He died as well. Tamar bore no guilt here.

So far, we have Judah, Er and Onan all doing evil in the sight of God.

Tamar is just caught in the middle of the evil - she is not perpetrating it or contributing to it:

Genesis 38:11: (NASB) *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.*

Shelah was too young, and Judah had no intention of giving him to Tamar. He looked at her as being cursed, instead of seeing the evil in his own sons! He simply put her off indefinitely, keeping her from moving on with another husband and leaving her with no protection for when she became old. Many biblical commentaries assume Tamar was a Canaanite. Being sent back to her father's house would also have meant going back to a sinful community. Things are not unfolding in Tamar's favor, even though she is the one who is supposed to be protected in this environment.

Genesis 38:12-14: (NASB) ¹²*Now after a considerable time...the wife of Judah, died...*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.*

Here is where the story starts getting uncomfortable. She dresses like a prostitute and waits for Judah to pass by knowing that his wife had died.

Perhaps Tamar saw herself stuck in an endless pattern of hopelessness. She was promised to be able to marry and have children, but she was instead locked away from that opportunity.

As long as she was waiting for Judah's third son, she was not released to find another means of support from a different husband. She was entitled to live in Judah's household, waiting for the third son to mature, but Judah had sent her back to her father's house where her status would have been uncertain. A woman's role in that society was to bear children and raise a family. Through no fault of her own, she is prevented from doing so and gets desperate.



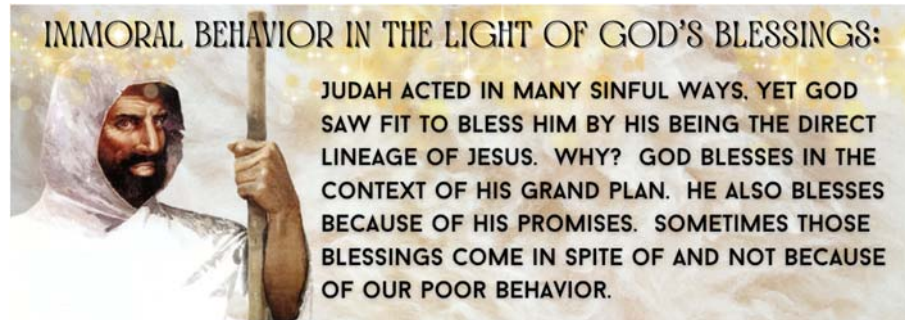
She now saw a way out. Even though it was dishonest and sinful, she would pursue it anyway.



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We want to make sure that we do not think of ourselves as so high and mighty that we receive God's blessing because we believe we are good. Sometimes God's blessings come in spite of ourselves.

With the nation of Israel in its infancy, it looks like truly devoted followers of the God of Abraham are scarce.

Are we suggesting that Tamar has a right to the sin she is about to commit because of how she was treated?

As we continue to unfold the account of Tamar, it is of the highest importance that we realize sinful thoughts and behavior simply cannot stand before God without judgment. What we need to focus on is the overall lessons in this account and how God can always bring forth good results out of evil thoughts and actions.



Tamar marries Judah's evil son who dies. According to the custom, she marries his brother, Onan, who is also evil and dies. She is now entitled to marry the third son, Shelah, but he is too young. Judah, the father, has no intention of letting that happen, but he strings her along and tells her to wait out the years at her father's house. She realizes her circumstances will never change unless she takes matters into her own hands and comes up with this uncomfortable plan. This is definitely what we would call today a dysfunctional family!





38:15-18: (NASB) ¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶So 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? ¹⁷He said, therefore, I will send you a young goat from the flock. She said, moreover, Will you give a pledge until you send it? ¹⁸He said, what pledge shall I give you? And she said, your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand.

Tamar had set up a sinful trap. Judah in all of his ego and godless thinking took the bait.

Tamar asked for a pledge - a security deposit. She specifically asked for Judah's seal, cord and staff.

(Source: *Really Bad Girls of the Bible*, Liz Curtis Higgs) The seal, or "signet" (NKJV) was a small hollow cylinder engraved with Judah's identifying markings, which he pressed into soft clay on documents, like a signature. It hung around his neck on a cord where he could keep it safe and handy when needed... His staff, or "walking stick" (CEV) might have been fancy or plain, a simple shepherd's crook or the symbol of clan leadership.



Tamar protected herself from any retribution from Judah by receiving these pledges, which were undeniable symbols of Judah's identity.

That would be like getting his driver's license and credit card. They would specifically identify Judah. There was a plot building here with all kinds of twists!

Genesis 38:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸...So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹Then she arose and departed and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

And put on her widow's garments - even though she did something very wrong, she goes back to being an obedient widow.

Genesis 38:20,23: (NASB) ²⁰When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her.

He asks the whereabouts of the temple prostitute and is told there is none there, so he reports back to Judah.

²³Then 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.

Judah sent his friend to deliver his promised payment and get his things back. When it was revealed that there was no "temple prostitute" in that area, Judah simply shrugged it off. His attitude seemed to have been: *I tried to pay her, but she did not show up. She can keep those things I gave as a pledge even though they are basically worthless to her.*



He was probably just happy he gets to keep the goat! Was he too embarrassed to go back himself to pay her? Why did he send this friend, the Adullamite? What we have is immoral behavior, and an immoral cover-up for immoral behavior!





Sin's consequences have a way of coming back to plague us. This was the case with Judah:

Genesis 38:24: (NASB) *²⁴Now 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!*

Source: Biblical commentary by Matthew Henry)
Judah's rigour against Tamar, when he heard she was an adulteress. She was, in the eye of the law, Shelah's wife, and therefore her being with child by another was looked upon as an injury and reproach to Judah's family: Bring her forth therefore, says Judah, the master of the family, and let her be burnt; not burnt to death, but burnt in the cheek or forehead, stigmatized for a harlot.

Judah's guilt in not giving Tamar to his son was his way out to save face and to prove she was no good. Disgracing her was easy for him. He was going to *bring her out and let her be burned*. This is hard to understand. Several commentaries interpreted this punishment to be either death by burning or branding on the face.

Judah's reaction and anger was over the top. When someone lives sinfully, they sometimes do extra to cover that by pointing at somebody else. It is easy to point out other peoples' sins, isn't it?

A revealing reaction for one who himself committed so many sins:

Genesis 38:25-26: (NASB) *²⁵It 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? ²⁶Judah 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.*

Tamar is dragged before Judah and she presented her defense in her wrongdoing and in doing so, she plainly revealed Judah's sin as well. Judah sees his wrong – he cannot hide from his own sin. He has to admit that *she is more righteous than I*, even though neither one of them demonstrated "righteous" behavior.

Judah knew Tamar was wrong, but he knew he was far more in the wrong than she. His wrongdoing was in his neither freeing her nor facilitating the Levirate marriage like he was supposed to. It is interesting that he was not including visiting a prostitute in his wrongdoing.

God has a way of taking care of those things and creating consequences. Judah had a lot of difficult things happen to him as he went through his life.

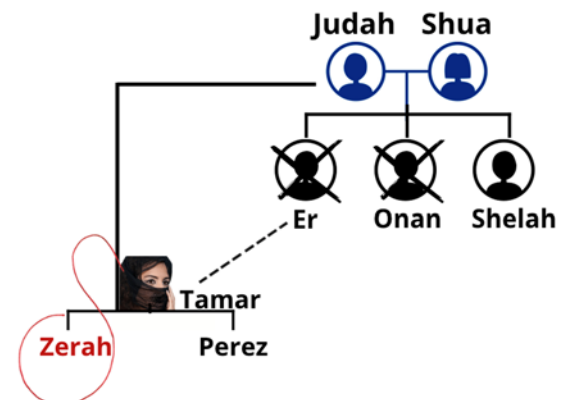
Here we finally see a hint of humility and righteousness in Judah. We will see more of this later in his life. He is growing.

Six months later, Tamar gives birth to twins.

Genesis 38:28-30: (NASB) *²⁸Moreover, 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.*

This scarlet thread marked the firstborn of the twins, so they thought:

²⁹But 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. ³⁰Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.





The meaning and spelling of Zerah's name varies depending on the source. Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible says, "His name was called Zarah - זרה - Zarach, risen or sprung up, applied to the sun, rising and diffusing his light." He should have risen, meaning been born first, but for the breach, or breakthrough, of his brother. They assumed Zerah was the child through whom the blessings would come. But Zerah pulled his hand back in and out came Perez, the actual firstborn. Perez means "to breach, to come out and break forth."

This was an important development for teaching an important lesson down the road. The firstborn son was destined to be the favored son. Zerah, who appeared to be first, was marked as first but ended up second. Remember, Judah - the father of these twins - is the Patriarch of the Tribe of Judah. This tribe is very important - let's see what Jacob's dying blessing is for Judah (he gave a blessing or prediction for each of his sons).

Later, when Israel (Jacob) was dying, his blessing to Judah included the following reference to Jesus coming from his bloodline:

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

This prophecy tells us the Messiah would be born from the bloodline of Judah.

The scarlet thread was given to the child who was supposed to be the firstborn, originally assumed to be Zerah. Jesus was born to the Jewish nation. They had the opportunity to be the favored "firstborn" of the kingdom, but they rejected him and his message. They "pulled back," just like Zerah.

ZERAH	Thought to be the firstborn, but pulled back and lost the position of favor	Pictures the Jewish nation, who rejected Messiah and lost their position of favor
PEREZ	The actual firstborn	Pictures the Gentiles who followed Jesus and become the "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:22-23)

Instead, Perez was born first and received the first-born privilege. So it was when Jesus came, the Jewish nation rejected him, and the privilege was given to the Gentiles:

Romans 10:19: (NASB) *...First Moses says, I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you.*

1 Peter 2:10: (NASB) *for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

In the establishment of God's kingdom, the Gentiles take the place of the Jewish nation because the Jews rejected Jesus. The apparent firstborn was not the actual firstborn. Perez was the actual firstborn in the Old Testament account. The birth order of these twins prophetically shows that Gentile nations would take the place of Israel to become the *church of the firstborn* in Hebrews 12:22-23.



Tamar's blessings:

- Tamar was blessed with bearing the child she was promised.
- She was blessed with being the mother of the tribe of Judah.
- She was blessed with bearing twins.
- She was blessed with those twins being a picture of what would follow in Jesus' day.



How is it possible that such blessing can come from evil actions?

Just because someone does evil does not mean they stay evil. God uses both good and evil to unfold His plan. Several years later in Judah's life, he and his 10 brothers are brought before their brother Joseph whom they sold into slavery many years later.

At this point, Joseph is in Egypt at the right hand of Pharaoh, and his brothers do not even know if he is alive. He is in the process of literally saving the world of that time. They are desperately hungry from the famine and come before this immensely powerful person, not knowing who he is. Joseph, because of his conversation with Judah, reveals himself to them. It is a very emotional moment.

Joseph tells them how God, in spite of their actions, blessed and protected them. They sold him into slavery and wished him dead and out of the picture. Yet, God would still bless them.

Here is what Joseph said to Judah and his brothers:

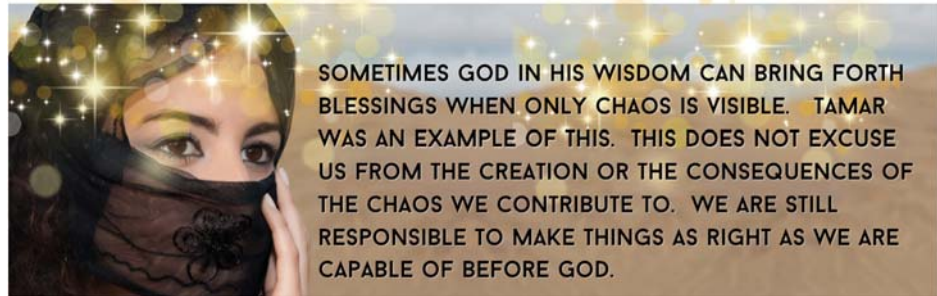
Genesis 45:5,7-8: (NASB) ⁵Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God...

Joseph tested Judah to see if he had become remorseful for selling him into slavery and to see if he had devotion for his father and Benjamin, his younger brother. He passed the test with doing everything correctly. In Genesis 50:20, we remember these amazing words from Joseph: *You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*



Remember when we started, we said Joseph's story starts in Genesis 37 and gets interrupted by our narrative here in Genesis 38? Why? One explanation may be that it forces us to look at the contrast between Judah and Joseph. We see Joseph's faithful character compared to that of Judah. The story of Tamar is in the context of these lessons. While she did something that was very wrong, she is blessed anyway. Overall, she was a righteous, law-abiding woman.

IMMORAL BEHAVIOR IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S BLESSINGS:



We cannot forget that we are responsible to make things right. Though both Judah and Tamar had difficulties after this, Tamar was blessed by being in the genealogy of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior of all mankind. That stands for something!

It is fascinating to see how the dark details of some ancient lives can reveal the bright purposes of God's plan.

Now that we have seen how God worked through Tamar's sins, how did He deal with Rahab?

As we fast forward through several generations, Israel is now ready to enter the Promised Land. The Canaanites and the city of Jericho stood ready to be conquered. God would once again use someone who would lie and was not of good reputation as a tool for His will being done. Here we meet Rahab.

Rahab was a Gentile prostitute living in the idolatrous land of Canaan. The Canaanites were infamous for wickedness. They were into superstition, witchcraft, sexual worship and human child sacrifices.

(Source: *The Message of Deuteronomy*, Raymond Brown) Canaanite worship was socially destructive. Its religious acts were pornographic and sick, seriously damaging to children, creating early impressions of deities with no interest in moral behavior. It tried to dignify, by use of religious labels, depraved acts of bestiality and corruption. It had a low estimate of human life. It suggested that anything was permissible, promiscuity, murder or anything else, in order to guarantee a crop at harvest.

As a woman in this environment, she had little hope to change her way of life. But through her contact with men over the years, she heard the stories of how the God of the Israelites was with them and how He was feared by the surrounding nations. She believed He was the one true God.

Before attacking Jericho, Joshua sent two spies into the city. They came upon Rahab's house:

Joshua 2:1-21: (NASB) ¹...So they went and came into the house of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and lodged there. ²(This) was told the king of Jericho... ³And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land. ⁴But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. ⁵It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them. ⁶But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof.



Not only did Rahab hide the spies, but she also lied and sent the king's men in the wrong direction!



This was all before she had any surety of being spared from the coming onslaught:

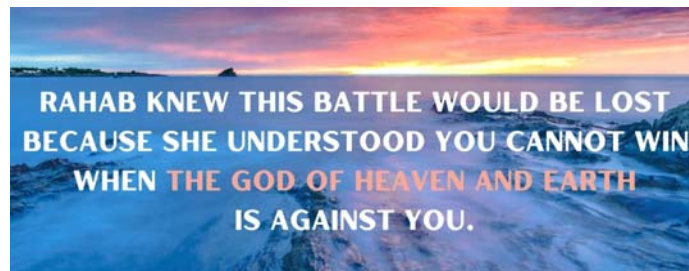
Proverbs 12:22: (NASB) *Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.*

She protected the good guys but in a bad way - now what? Of course, as a prostitute, lying to save God's own is really the least of her sins!

Rahab had a clear understanding of what was going to happen.

Here is where we begin to understand the "why" and "how" of her developing faith and just how strong she is:

Joshua 2:8-13: (NASB) *⁸Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹and said to the men, I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. ¹⁰For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites... whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹...our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.*



She would now do the only sensible thing left - ask for mercy:

¹²Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD, since I have dealt kindly with you, that you also will deal kindly with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth, ¹³and spare my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters, with all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death.

Here we are beginning to see the true character of this pagan woman emerge as it was revealed in the light of truth. *Give me a pledge of truth* - we remember how Tamar also asked for a pledge.

Again, she was raised in this horribly corrupt environment, but when the power of the true God is brought before her, she is immediately full of faith. This shows us we are not trapped by our upbringing or environment. God calls us in whatever circumstances we are in to "come up higher."



When I was young and had moved out of my parents' home, I got myself into a bad environment and was living an improper lifestyle. But God called me when I was in those surroundings and changed my life. Rahab is a great example of the power God has to transform us from our sinful state into the person He wants us to be.

Rahab grabbed hold of righteousness at her first opportunity.

Her honorable approach to the Hebrew spies is met with an honorable response from them:

Joshua 2:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴*So the men said to her, Our life for yours if you do not tell this business of ours; and it shall come about when the LORD gives us the land that we will deal kindly and faithfully with you.* ¹⁵*Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall, so that she was living on the wall.*

Excavations show the city was enclosed with a massive double wall with houses built on the rampart against the outer city wall. This would have been an ideal vantage point for the spies. From this elevated position they could readily observe both the interior of the city on one side of the wall and the surrounding terrain on the other side, the path of escape for the spies.

This was a strategic location with, by God's providence, a strategic person helping the cause of eliminating the sinful Canaanites.

Joshua 2:17-18: (NASB) ¹⁷*The men said to her, We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear,* ¹⁸*unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of scarlet thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household.*

The spies are specific as to how Rahab's daring rescue will need to take place. They need the scarlet cord to be in the exact window they escaped through.

Further, they needed all who would be rescued to be lodged together in the only secure place that would be left in Jericho once the onslaught started:

Joshua 2:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹*It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him.* ²⁰*But if you tell this business of ours, then we shall be free from the oath which you have made us swear.* ²¹*She said, According to your words, so be it. So...they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.*

In other words, we cannot be responsible if you or your family leave the house. If any do, they will be destroyed.

As a person of integrity, Rahab was concerned for her family.

It would be many days before faithful Rahab and her family would be rescued. That scarlet cord was the symbol, marker and guarantee of their coming deliverance. We can see the tie-in to the sacrifice of Jesus.

IMMORAL BEHAVIOR IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S BLESSINGS:



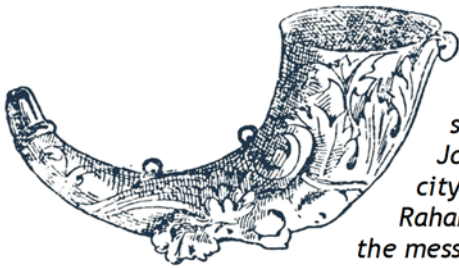


God can see someone's heart through the environment and can find those who will faithfully serve Him.

Sometimes the greatest heroes in a story come from the least likely places. It is all about having a heart for God.

**We are seeing how Rahab and Tamar were blessed by God.
What connected their blessing and what can we learn?**

As we are about to observe Rahab's deliverance, we need to pause and consider the magnitude of the lives of both Tamar and Rahab. They are both listed in the lineage of Jesus and both had questionable life experiences. What are the godly messages of righteousness we can learn from the difficulties of their lives?



But first, let's drop in on the siege on Jericho:

Joshua 6:15-25: (NASB) (selected verses) ¹⁵*Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day... they marched around the city seven times. ¹⁶At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, Shout! For the LORD has given you the city. ¹⁷The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent.*

Joshua shouts out the instructions to take the city and makes sure to protect Rahab and her family in the process. During the siege of the city when the Israelites marched around the walls for six days, they would have been able to see and make a note of where Rahab's house was located because of the scarlet ribbon.

The onslaught is set to begin! Rahab has the cord in the window and Joshua shouted the instructions for battle.

All priorities have been set in place:

²⁰*So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city.*

The wall of Rahab's house where the scarlet ribbon was tied was the only part of the wall standing. What a miracle of God's care for someone who stood up for His chosen people!

Modern archaeology supports the biblical record. In 1907 to 1909, German excavations uncovered a small part of the northern city wall of Jericho from the time of Joshua, where the poor and undesirable lived. It is plausible this was the area of the city in which Rahab's house was located.



Photo Credit: <https://earlychurchhistory.org/beliefs-2/rahab-the-prostitutes-house-in-jericho/>

Also see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/brianmorley/21181052055>



Those who were delivered by Rahab's kindness and faith were tasked with now delivering Rahab and her family:

²²Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her. ²³So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.



Rahab and her family were the lone survivors of the Battle of Jericho. She is credited with being the first Gentile convert to Judaism.

This showed integrity in the leadership of Joshua. He sent the same two men who made the original promise to Rahab to fulfill their end of the bargain. This was an unusual siege in that no one was allowed to remove any belongings as spoils of war according to Joshua 6:17 - EXCEPT, Rahab and her family were allowed to keep everything they had.

What would become of Rahab?

²⁵...Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

At her first available option, she made brave, faithful choices. She turned away from her culture and lifestyle and married Salmon. She became the mother of Boaz, who we remember from the story of Ruth. Down that lineage came King David and eventually Jesus. What a privilege!



Rahab was also listed as a faithful one of old:

Hebrews 11:31: (NASB) *By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*

She is only one of two women to make this prestigious list of faithful ones.



Abraham's wife Sarah is the other woman listed in Hebrews 11.

Why does the Hebrews passage keep the "Rahab the harlot" label? This is an important reminder that God's glory can shine through any of our circumstances. As a principle, Romans 5:20 says, *God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.* Rahab's story magnifies the grace of God. This is our story, too!

When she is described in the lineage of Jesus in Matthew 1:5, she is not called a harlot. She lost that description when she married and had Boaz.

Instead of calling this a "happily ever after" story, we say it is "faithfully ever blessed."



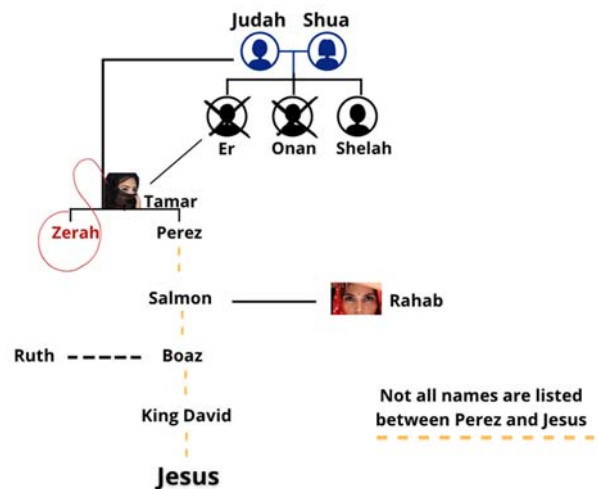


Observations about Rahab:

- She was a Canaanite prostitute who seized upon righteousness when the opportunity came to her.
- Her lies were not her defining moment. As a Canaanite woman, they were a means to an end.
- When Rahab could express her faith in God, she immediately put it into action.
- Rahab's faith is what defined her. Her past - including her lies - were never condoned in Scripture.

We all sin and make mistakes. We should all see ourselves in Rahab because we can rise above our environment and past choices if we leave our past in the past.

In addition to both women being named in the genealogy of Jesus, let's look at their other unique connection. The accounts of both Tamar and Rahab involved a scarlet cord.



The scarlet cord represented the hope of redemption of sin and death through the sacrifice of Jesus. Zerah, the second-born twin, represented the Jewish nation that was supplanted by the Gentiles. Israel had the advantage that should have made them the firstborn class.

Genesis 38:28: (NASB) *Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, that one baby put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a **scarlet <8144>** thread on his hand, saying, This one came out first.*



The scarlet cord represented the hope of redemption from sin and death through the sacrifice of Jesus. It was hung out her window and saved her and her family.

Joshua 2:17-18,21: (NASB) ¹⁷*The men said to her, We shall be free from this oath to you which you have made us swear, ¹⁸unless, when we come into the land, you tie this cord of **scarlet <8144>** thread in the window through which you let us down, and gather to yourself into the house your father and your mother and your brothers and all your father's household. She said, According to your words, so be it. ²¹So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the **scarlet <8144>** cord in the window.*

The word for **scarlet** in both instances:

Scarlet: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8144 *shânîy*, of uncertain derivation; crimson, properly, the insect or its color, also stuff dyed with it: crimson, scarlet (thread)



Another word used that is directly related to **scarlet**:

Scarlet: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #8438 *tôlā'*, to-law'; a maggot (as voracious); specifically (often with ellipsis of #8144) the crimson-grub, but used only (in this connection) of the color from it, and cloths dyed therewith: —crimson, scarlet, worm

"often with ellipsis of #8144" - Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ellipsis as: the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied to make a construction grammatically complete.

These two Hebrew words *shânîy* and *tôlā'* are used together in such a way as to be grammatically correct. *Shânîy* refers to the color the worm makes, and *tôlā'* is the worm from which the dye is made. The context determines if it means the color, the worm, or the dye from the worm. "I am a worm and not a man" would not read, "I am a scarlet and not a man."



The TOLA WORM

Coccus ilicis, also known as *Kermes ilicis*, oak woodlice or oak mealybug
Photo credit: berniedup at <https://flickr.com/photos/65695019@N07/19551723743>

Let's look at one powerful use of this worm. The entire chapter of this Psalm prophetically expresses the thoughts and heart of Jesus:

Psalm 22:6: (NASB) *But I am a worm <8438> and not a person, a disgrace of mankind and despised by the people.*

Worms in the Bible do not have a great reputation:

- Gehenna, where the worm never dies. Mark 9:48 quoting from Isaiah 66:24
- Job likened himself to a worm, the lowliest of all creation. Job 25:6
- King Herod was eaten by worms. Acts 12:21-23

Why would Jesus be described as a **worm**?



There is a significant (and amazing) hidden meaning.

- The blood of the scarlet tola worm is unique in that it neither coagulates nor changes color.
- The scarlet worm plants its body into the trunk of a tree to give birth. It will never again leave the tree and will die there.
- It lays eggs under its shell, protecting the young until they can live on their own.
- As the worm dies, it releases scarlet fluid that stains the children red. They receive their identity as scarlet worms by the death of the one who gives them life.
- After three days, the body of the mother turns white and falls from the tree.



(Source: <https://www.joydigitalmag.com/words-of-wisdom-post/symbolism-rahabs-scarlet-cord/>) From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might 'bring many sons unto glory.' Hebrews 2:10.

The scarlet cords of Tamar and Rahab came from this scarlet worm. We see Jesus represented in both accounts.

But further, we see both the beginning and end of his life. With Tamar, the scarlet cord on the baby's wrist showed how Jesus was born to the Jewish nation. With Rahab's scarlet cord saving her and her family, we see the sacrifice and deliverance aspect of Jesus' life.

This worm and its red dye aptly picture our crucified Lord Jesus and his shed blood of redemption and the resulting salvation. It unequivocally ties these two accounts together.



- Both women had no foundation of holiness on which to stand when hard experiences came. Tamar's only exposure to following the God of Abraham was whatever her father-in-law Judah showed her, and we know that was certainly flawed. Rahab lived in an evil society and learned of God from whispers of the news of the day.
- Both women can be easily misunderstood and misrepresented because of their experiences.
- The lineage of Jesus is marred with the sins of flawed people. But both women became valuable in the sight of God - IN SPITE OF their sins. Their names would be mentioned in Jesus' genealogy, a list that includes only five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba in Matthew 1:1-17, and of course his mother Mary.
- Both women are an example of what God can do with a broken and lost life if we let Him. We sin, but with repentance, obedience and Jesus' sacrifice, it can turn into blessing.

Both women are infamously known for certain behaviors, but look at how God used them for good.

IMMORAL BEHAVIOR IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S BLESSINGS:



GOD HATES SIN, BUT HE LOVES HUMANITY. TAMAR AND RAHAB ARE TWO SHINING EXAMPLES OF HOW GOD'S PROVIDENCE CAN TAKE SINFUL PEOPLE, FIND THE GOOD IN THEM AND USE THEM FOR HIS PURPOSES. AS WE STRIVE TO BE RIGHTEOUS IN HIS SIGHT, LET US ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT LEFT TO OUR OWN DEVICES WE ARE MERE SINNERS NEEDING JESUS!



We are generally inclined to look at the flaws, bad choices and immorality of these women. God, however, saw their potential for obedience and faithfulness. It is a lesson for us when looking at both ourselves and others. We want to see with the eyes of Jesus - with love and compassion. This is what Tamar and Rahab show us.

*So, why would God bless two immoral women?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on May 30, 2022
Ep. 1231: What if I'm Not Good Enough for Heaven?

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Study QUESTIONS

Ep.1230: Why Would God Bless Two Immoral Women?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1230-tamar-rahab/>

See:  **CQ.Rewind**
SHOW NOTES

Tamar: Genesis, chapters 37 and 38

1. Who is Judah? What had Judah been involved in during the previous chapter in Genesis? Who were Judah's sons? What happened to Er and Onan? Who was Tamar? (See Genesis 37:18-36, 38:1-10)
2. Explain Levirate marriage. What was the purpose of this practice? Why would Onan not want to father a child for his brother? Why would Judah not want Shelah to marry Tamar? What was Tamar's status at this point in her life? Why did this severely limit her life?
3. Was Tamar guilty of any wrongdoing at this time? Who should have been her protector(s)? How did Tamar decide to improve her situation? Why might this have appeared to be a solution to her problems? Was this a good choice of action? Did God chastise her for this choice?
4. What happened when her pregnancy was discovered? What did Judah say was her punishment? What was Judah's punishment for getting her pregnant? Who does Judah say is in the wrong? Do we see growth in Judah over the course of his life? Explain.
5. Who were Tamar's children? What was odd about their birth? How do the twins foreshadow a much greater event at the time of Jesus? How was Tamar blessed? (See Genesis 49:10, Romans 10:19, 1 Peter 2:10, Hebrews 12:22-23)
6. How did Joseph view his slavery at the hands of Judah and his other brothers? Why might this story have been inserted in the middle of Joseph's story? (See Genesis 50:20)

Rahab: Joshua, chapters 2 and 6

7. How was Rahab, a Canaanite, involved with the Jews? What was Canaanite worship of their gods like? How did this story unfold?
8. What caused Rahab to connect with and protect the Hebrew spies? What did this reveal about her heart and her judgment of the Hebrew God? How is this an important lesson (and comfort) for us?
9. How were Rahab and her family delivered from the destruction of Jericho? How was the city defeated? What does the scarlet cord remind us of? How might it indicate Jesus' life and death?
10. What were the blessings of Rahab? What happened to Rahab after she was saved from Jericho?
11. How do the stories of Tamar and Rahab give you comfort and inspiration in your Christian life?