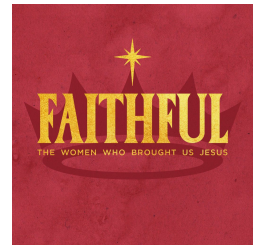


Rahab - Faithfulness through a confession.

Joshua 2:1-24

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



The reality of Rahab's story is that of God's glorious grace to redeem any person. For the Christian, Rahab represents the example of one who confesses God's historic acts of redemption and receives salvation. The confession of faith becomes the means to salvation (Rom. 10:9, 1 John 4:15).¹ If salvation can come to Rahab and her household, then what stands in the way for you or me? The truth is this if we ask God to remember us and save us from our sins, he will. Even for the most unlikely character. The story of Rahab confirms God's welcome to all people, whatever their condition. Christ died for all the world, and the opportunity is available for all to come to him through faith, even the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Like Paul, Rahab exhibits faith and understanding of the God who saves her. She becomes part of the family line that leads to the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:5) and a model of faith for all Christians (Heb. 11:31).² Redemption is the melodic line of Advent.

If in the story of Tamar we see the depth of God's salvation, in Rahab's, we see its breadth. Salvation can come to anyone, and salvation is for everyone, even the most unlikely characters. Rahab's name means "He enlarges" or "He widens." While she would not see the incredible outcome of her salvation, Matthew saw it in part in the life of Christ and just had to list her! Through Rahab and ultimately through Jesus, we see the Kingdom of God enlarged, and no one is too impossible to enter it. In other words, **God's redemption is limitless.**

1. Grace – The best gift of Christmas

- a. Advent is all about grace. → How so?
 - i. Literally meaning "coming" or "arrival," this term refers to the coming of Jesus Christ to earth to provide salvation by his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - 1. **We remember when God fulfilled his promise to send his son.**
 - ii. Christians now anticipate a second advent when Christ will return to earth in bodily form to receive the church and to judge the nations.
 - 1. **We look forward in hope and expectancy for Jesus' promised second coming.**
 - iii. It is a season of increasing light.

¹ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 101.

² Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 89.

1. The Advent wreath has five candles. The candles represent:
 - a. Hope – Love – Peace – Joy – The Messiah
2. Each week a new candle is lit, and with it, the light increases until on Christmas Eve, we light the final candle, the Messiah's candle.
 - a. **As the light increases, we remember the moment the light of the world came into the world.**
3. See the addendum for visual pictures of the Family lines of Jacob, Judah, and Jesus.
- b. **Who is Rahab?** → Last week, we looked at Tamar's story, and this week, we will look at Rahab's.
 - i. She is a Canaanite woman.
 1. The general geographical limitations of the ancient term "Canaan" are the territories of the modern states of Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and a portion of S Syria.³
 - ii. She was an innkeeper. → This had different implications for her context than it does for us today. Think brothel and not Holiday Inn Express.⁴
 1. **This house was more likely a tavern, hostel or way station, which could be used by visitors, than a brothel.** There is evidence for such overnight places of accommodation and their use by traveling caravans and royal messengers in Canaan of the fourteenth to twelfth centuries BC.⁵
 - a. The name of Rahab was known in Canaan during the centuries before Israel appeared in the land.⁶ → There is evidence in the Taanach text no.4 for this.⁷
 - b. **Josephus and the Targums⁸ also relate the tradition that Rahab was an innkeeper, as well as a prostitute.⁹**
 2. The reality of her profession and her housing allows the spies to "hide in plain sight."
 - a. I.e., It would not have been uncommon for strangers to come and go.
 - b. **Very important** – The spies did not stay there for sexual engagement.
 - c. **The text carefully avoids implying a sexual liaison between the spies and their hostess.** There is a common expression for going into buildings of all sorts (cf. Judg. 9:5; 2 Sam. 12:20; 2 Kgs 19:1). It does not imply sexual relations with a prostitute. If the intention was to imply sexual relations, there would be no intermediate term, such as *the house of*, used when Samson visited a prostitute and 'went in to spend the night with her' (Judg. 16:1).¹⁰
- c. **God's grace preceded his judgment for Rahab and all those in Jericho. (vv. 10-11)**
 - i. One of the more uncomfortable questions that we ask as modern readers is the question of the justness of God's actions in the period of conquest.

³ John Day, "Canaan, Religion of," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 831.

⁴ Joseph Coleson, "Joshua," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 47.

⁵ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 92.

⁶ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 92–93.

⁷ D. Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis and Glossary of the Northwest Semitic Vocables in Akkadian Texts of the 15th–13th c.B.C. from Canaan and Syria*, AOAT 214 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984), p. 264

⁸ In biblical studies a "Targum" is an early Jewish translation of the Bible into Aramaic. (via Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary)

⁹ Joseph Coleson, "Joshua," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 47.

¹⁰ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 91–92.

1. **How could a good God allow and enable the displacement and judgment of historic people groups?**
 - a. I.e., Is God ethical in his actions here?
 - b. This is a fair question when we come to text.
 - c. The answer comes surprisingly in Rahab's confession.
- ii. **Rahab's confession... don't miss the timeline in her statement.**
 1. She cites the parting of the Red Sea... that was over forty years before the spies knocked on her door!
 - a. I.e., **Rahab and her neighbors had been talking about the power and ability of the God of Israel for 40+ years!!!**
 2. The second and third clauses which begin with *that* describe the reaction of the Canaanites. **The great fear was prophesied in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:16) as coming upon all the inhabitants of Canaan** (the same verb and preposition are used, 'to fall on'). It appears as a divine promise at the end of the Covenant Code, where God is portrayed as sending forth 'fear of myself' (Exod. 23:27). In Rahab's confession, it is *a great fear of you*, i.e. of the Israelites, which has stirred the inhabitants of Canaan. *Melting in fear* occurs in the Pentateuch in the Song of the Sea (Exod. 15:15). The phrase is virtually identical, with 'Canaan' replacing *this country*. **Thus Rahab confesses that what was foretold by the celebrants of the exodus has come to pass.**¹¹
 - a. Fear in this passage can have two connotations:
 - i. Cowering fear – Being afraid of something.
 - ii. Reverence or respect – Acknowledging the right supremacy of a being or thing. (cf. Prov. 9:10)
 1. **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."**
- iii. **God did not leave the people of Jericho or in the larger land of Canaan without excuse.**
 1. This is an important reality for us to acknowledge, while we also acknowledge that the way God demonstrated his power, authority, and ability to redeem may not be in line with our cultural expectations or perceptions.
 - a. Important: This text is not centered or occurring in our context.
 2. **In the ancient near east, the power of a "God" was one of the most convincing apologetics / arguments for that "God's" legitimacy.**
 - a. cf. Elijah and the prophets of Baal – 1 Kings 18:20-40
 - b. cf. Daniel and the Lion's Den – Daniel 6
 - c. cf. Pharaoh and Moses – Exod. 7-11
- d. God's grace precedes his judgment, and Christmas is a brilliant reminder.
 - i. There is a time coming when God will judge all and hold them accountable.
 1. **1 Peter 4:5 – ⁵ but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.**
 2. **2 Tim. 4:1 – I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom...**
 3. **Acts 17:31 - ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."**

¹¹ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 96–97.

4. Rev. 20:11-15 - ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
- ii. **Grace makes truth palatable. → I.e., We need both grace and truth.**
 1. Truth without grace is unlivable and unrelenting.
 2. Grace without truth is a vacuum of relativity that ends in a void of nothingness and life that is meaningless.
- iii. God made himself known to Rahab and her neighbors through the events of the exodus.
- iv. God has made himself known to us through the sending of his Son, Jesus.
 1. **Jn. 1:14 - ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**
 2. **Col. 1: 15 - ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.**
- v. **God has extended grace because his purposes and desire is for man to experience redemption.**

2. Redemption – The melodic line of Advent

- a. This story reflects the great redemption that God offers us.
 - i. **If in Tamar's story, we saw the depth of God's redemption, in Rahab's, we see the breadth of God's redemption.**
 1. Tamar – God's redemption is so deep that even the most unrighteous can be included.
 2. Rahab – God's redemption is so wide, that even those who are outside of the family line of Abraham can be grafted in.
 - a. I.e., All people are welcome.
 - b. **Rahab is not just grafted in, but she becomes an integral matriarch of the line of King David and Jesus.**
 - ii. Redemption is a gift of grace and is the main theme of Advent.
- b. **Grace is... Getting what you don't deserve and couldn't earn.**
 - i. This is the point of the genealogy of Matthew... we didn't deserve Jesus yet, he came for the downtrodden from the downtrodden.
 - ii. Matthew took the opportunity to set forth more than a genealogical pedigree. He not only slipped in little asides, but structured the list of names in order to make vital points. **He thus transformed what might have been a dull recital into a thought-provoking introduction to his Gospel.**¹²
 - iii. The *third* and most intriguing feature of the genealogy is the mention of four women: Tamar (1:3), Rahab (1:5), Ruth (1:5), and Bathsheba ("Uriah's wife" 1:6). **Most Jewish genealogies did not include women.** More important, the choice of *these* particular women, instead of such

¹² D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 10.

great matriarchs as Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah, proves **Matthew was giving us something more than merely biological information.**¹³

1. Matthew's main point → Jesus is the rightful King who came to save his people from their sins. (cf. 1:21)
 - a. ²¹ **She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."**
- iv. What did / do we deserve?
- v. We deserve the unbearable weight of the freedom we demanded from God in our sin and rebellion.
 1. **cf. Rom. 1:24-32** – In these verses, Paul notes three times that "God gave them up to..." their disordered desired. This does not mean that God abandoned them to those things, but more accurately that God permitted them to have the consequences of the freedom they demanded.
 2. This is what we deserve, because it is what our actions warrant.
- vi. **Yet, God sent his Son for us so that any who believe in him would have eternal life and life abundantly. → I.e., The melodic line of Advent is redemption.**
 1. **cf. Jn. 3:16-17; Jn. 10:10; Lk. 19:10; Rom 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9**
 2. This is what the prophet Isaiah long foretold to king Ahaz. – God would be the one to rescue and redeem his people.
 - a. **Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel"**
 - b. A symbolic name meaning "with us [is] God," found in Isa 7:14 and 8:8; it is alluded to in 8:10. Isaiah 7:14 is cited in Matt 1:23.¹⁴
- c. **Rahab's confession led to the redemption of her whole family.**
 - i. It is important to see the solidarity of the family, a concept that in this case ensures blessing and salvation for many in addition to the believer. **As an oath of fealty, this covenant would bring Rahab's family into Israelite society. As would happen with the Gibeonites, so Rahab and her family here ceased to be Canaanite and became part of Israel's family.** Rahab is acting as spokeswoman and agent for the family. A female, rather than a male, leads this extended family and her faith delivers it.
 1. **Rahab's statement was her personal confession of faith in Yahweh.** It may be translated in full, "Yahweh your God, He is God in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath" (2:11). Her faith declaration, proven genuine by her aid to Joshua's scouts, brought Rahab into the people of God, despite her Canaanite birth and her occupation.¹⁵
 2. From Israel's entrance into Canaan, Rahab and her family were just the first of many who would join Israel. Though Canaan as a whole was under judgment (cf. Gen 15:16), some were delivered by their faith in Israel's God.¹⁶
 3. Rahab's faith was memorialized centuries later in the New Testament tradition. In Jesus' genealogy (Matt 1:5–6) Matthew celebrated Rahab as the wife of Salmon, mother of Boaz, and great-great-grandmother of David, ancient Israel's greatest

¹³ D. A. Carson, *God with Us: Themes from Matthew* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 12.

¹⁴ Joseph Jensen, "Immanuel (Person)," ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 392.

¹⁵ Joseph Coleson, "Joshua," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 49.

¹⁶ Joseph Coleson, "Joshua," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 49.

king. **Together with Sarah, Rahab was one of only two women mentioned by name in the great faith “hall of fame” recital (Heb 11:31).** Perhaps most amazingly, James held Rahab up together with Abraham as an example of living faith demonstrated by works (Jas 2:25–26).¹⁷

- ii. **For the Christian, Rahab represents the example of one who confesses God’s historic acts of redemption and receives salvation. The confession of faith becomes the means to salvation (Rom. 10:9, 1 John 4:15).**¹⁸
 - 1. We also are God’s people, called to journey with God by faith, called to assail the strongholds of the enemy with the liberating Good News of redemption in Jesus Christ. How often have we trembled in fear, not realizing or not remembering that our adversaries quake before the mighty deeds and the amazing grace of “the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below” (2:11).¹⁹
- iii. When redemption is experienced, it gives way to joy.
 - 1. **As joy is experienced, it leads to perseverance.**
 - 2. In this way, joy is the blessing of faithfulness.

3. Joy – The blessing of faithfulness

a. The joy of faithfulness. → What is joy?

- i. Closely related to gladness and happiness, although joy is more a state of being than an emotion; a result of choice. One of the fruits of the spirit (Gal 5:22–23).
 - 1. Having joy is part of the experience of being a Christian.
 - 2. I.e., **It is a state of resilient contentment rooted in something deeper than my current circumstances.**
 - a. **This is why we can have joy even when we are not happy.**
- ii. **For the biblical writers, joy is rooted in God and what he has done for people in general and his people in particular.**²⁰
 - 1. Rahab’s faithfulness is remarkable, but what we see in her is the blessing of faithfulness, that is, joy.
 - 2. She is confident about the future, because of what God has done in the past.
 - 3. This confidence enables her to persevere / endure through a very difficult situation with hope.
 - a. **cf. Hebrews 11:31 - ³¹ By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.**
- 4. **What about the lie she told? → Is she moral / ethical?**
 - a. The inhabitants of Jericho stood under God’s judgment. Besides, **the Bible never condemns Rahab, but admires her faith (Heb. 11:31). Nor does the Bible excuse lies because the person lied to is morally reprehensible.**

¹⁷ Joseph Coleson, “Joshua,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 49.

¹⁸ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 101.

¹⁹ Joseph Coleson, “Joshua,” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2012), 49.

²⁰ Kenneth D. Litwak, “Joy,” ed. Douglas Mangum et al., *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

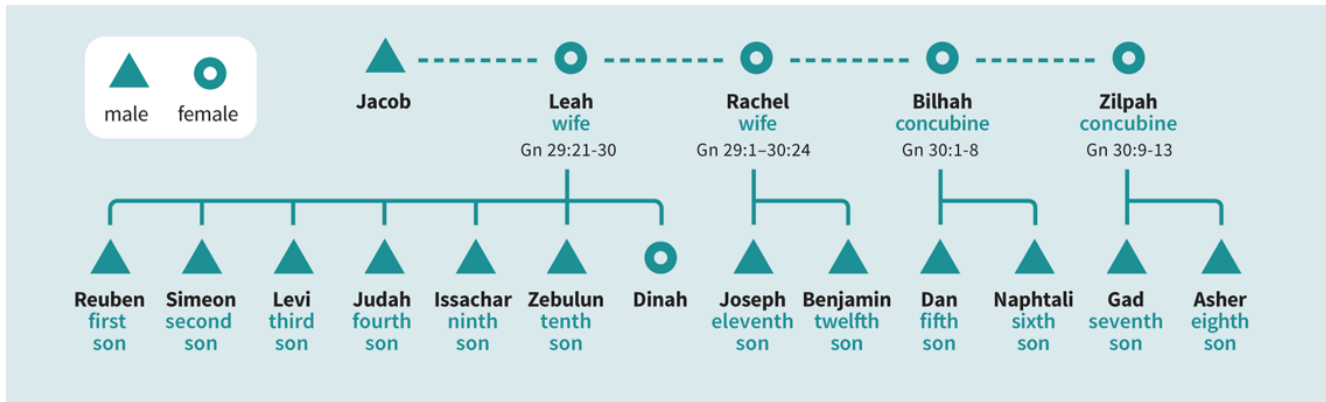
- b. The ethical issue is not the concern of the narrative. It stresses the deception, not in order to condemn Rahab but to magnify her personal risk in hiding the spies. After all, she could have said nothing and allowed the agents to search her house. By pointing in another direction, she risked being caught, but in the end she delivered her new-found friends.²¹
- b. **Faithfulness leads to joy through the confidence of obedience.**
 - i. Rahab's confession is powerful and inspiring, but the substance of it is made real through action.
 - 1. Her oath of fealty, not just to the spies but ultimately to God, is done through the expectation of a joint obligation.
 - 2. The importance of *hesed*. → I.e., A joint obligation / loyalty.
 - a. **cf. James 2:25 – ²⁵And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?**
 - c. Joy enables perseverance.
 - 1. This was the conclusion of Paul in Philippians: **“¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”** (Phil. 4:12-13)
 - ii. Dr. Karl Barth once said to the San Francisco Chronicle (1962) said this: “What God wills for man is a helpful, healing, uplifting work, and what [God] does with him brings peace and joy.” ... **“The God of the gospel is the God who mercifully dedicates and delivers himself to the life of all men—helping, healing, uplifting, bringing peace and joy.”**
 - 1. “Dr. Barth made it clear that he considers man's problems in the modern world much the same as they have been since the beginning of time.... He told reporters that the function of the church today is to announce simply and clearly the doctrine of God's love for man, not man's love for God. **The message, he said, is that man is not left alone, that God is not apart from him or against him, but forever with him.**” ²²
 - a. This is the message of Rahab and the message of Advent.
 - b. **God is not far off and life with him leads us to experience a redemption that is limitless and one that leads to persevering joy.**

²¹ Richard S. Hess, *Joshua: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 6, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 95.

²² Karl Barth, *Barth in Conversation, 1959–1962*, ed. Darrell L. Guder and Eberhard Busch, trans. The Translation Fellows of the Center for Barth Studies, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 227.

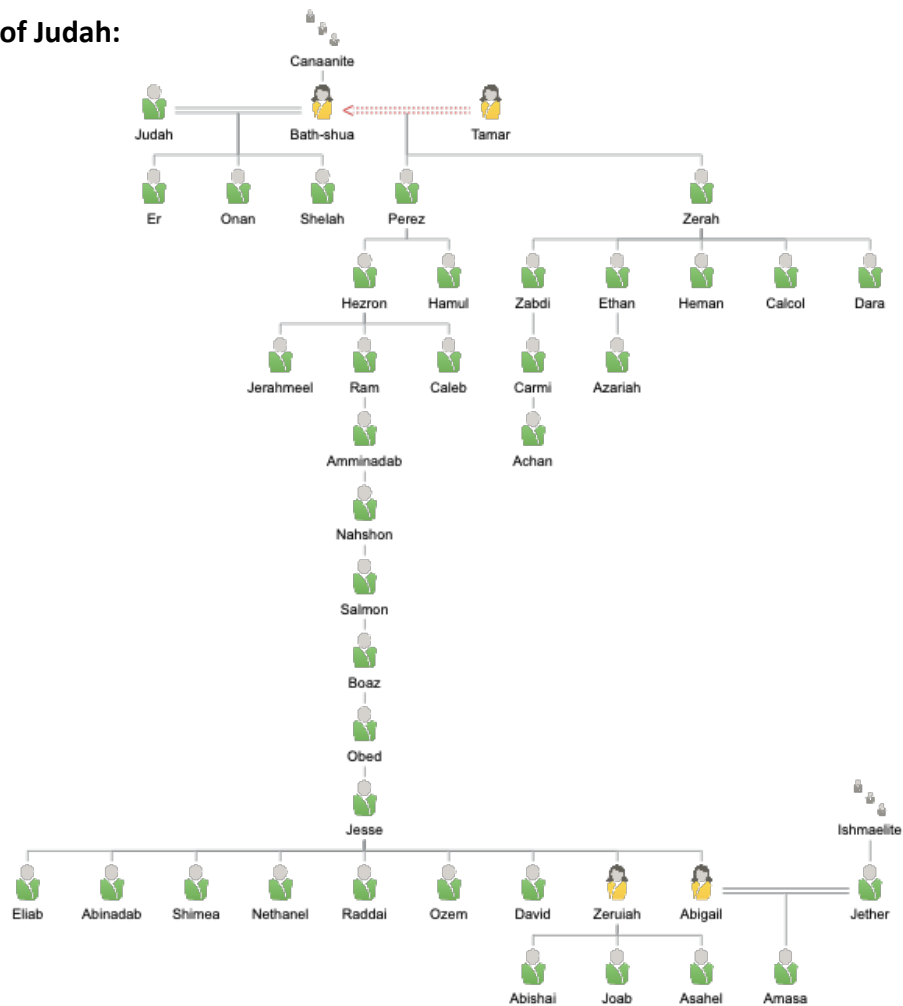
Addendum: Genealogical pictures of Jacob, Judah, and Jesus.

The family line of Jacob:



Judah to David (1 Chronicles 2:3-17)

The family line of Judah:



The family of Jesus from David:

Jesus' Family Tree According to Matthew (Matthew 1:1–17)

