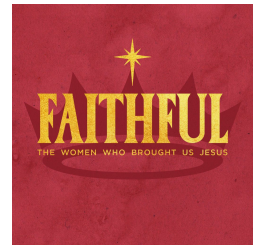


Bathsheba – A painful memory.

2 Samuel 11

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



When Matthew refers to Bathsheba, he does so in a way that forces us to be reminded of the kind of details most families would like to forget. David wasn't her first husband, and their union wasn't one of celebration. Solomon wasn't their first son but was the first of their official union. Even Solomon's inheritance of the kingdom wasn't drama free. Yet here we are again, a faithful God working through sinful, rebellious, and unfaithful people to bring about the glorious gift of salvation. Even when our stories include details we'd like to forget, we find ourselves in good company with those God used in the Bible.

This story is painful and hard for us to digest as modern readers. We are greeted with a front-row seat to the affair of David and Bathsheba and the ensuing fallout and destruction of David's actions. The text is clear there is only one party to really blame in all of this, David. The greatest guilt rests upon David, that he, a man upon whom the Lord had bestowed such grace did not resist the temptation to the lust of the flesh but sent to fetch the woman. Not only does David not resist sin, but then he compounds sin with more sin in the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. The text repeatedly refers to Bathsheba as "the wife of Uriah" so as to remind us of the significance of David's actions. David took what wasn't his and then murdered a righteous man to try and cover it all up. Matthew brings all this back up when he, too, refers to Bathsheba as "the wife of Uriah." But, he did it to remind us of God's glorious grace extended over broken people and brought about through broken people. That is, this broken family line would eventually bring forth Jesus, the Messiah. When we look at the story of David and Bathsheba, we are reminded of the truth that **more sin is never the solution to our pain.**

1. Not how you want to be remembered.

- a. Matthew's reference is as juicy as the typical plot of a daytime soap opera!
 - i. **The Bible not only pulls back the curtain on real-life situations, but it also pulls back the curtain on its heroes.**
 - ii. So often, we create heroes in our stories, movies, and songs that are truly aspirational. They are people we hope to be but realize that we never could.
 - 1. Even when our heroes have a tragic flaw, they still have some power or ability that separates them from everyday people.
 - a. Marvel – The Avengers are not "normal people."
 - b. Disney – Frozen is the closest we have come to a "just like you and me" hero in Anna, not Elsa (the ice and snow-wielding queen).

- c. Greek mythology – Achilles, even for his one fatal flaw, had been given powers and abilities far beyond any other mortal.
- iii. Matthew brings back up all the drama that everyone who could have claimed David as an ancestor wanted to forget. I.e., It was a painful memory.
 - 1. **There is something gracious and beautiful for you and me that Matthew draws out in his mentioning of this painful memory; if God brought fulfilled his redemptive promise through this family line, he could use mine!**
 - 2. We should be thankful for hard passages like this that pull back the curtain on the heroes of the Bible.
- b. **This should never have happened.**
 - i. David should have been with his men.
 - ii. David should not have sent for Bathsheba.
 - iii. David should not have slept with Bathsheba.
 - iv. David should not have murdered Uriah.
 - v. The list could go on about what David should not have done!
- c. **What is the setting for this whole situation? → Joab is at war with the Ammonites.**
 - i. This verse is connected with 2 Sam. 10:14, where it was stated that after Joab had put to flight the Aramaeans who came to the help of the Ammonites, and when the Ammonites also had fallen back before Abishai in consequence of this victory and retreated into their fortified capital, Joab himself returned to Jerusalem. He remained there during the winter or rainy season, in which it was impossible that war should be carried on. At the return of the year, i.e., at the commencement of spring, with which the new years began in the month Abib (Nisan), the time when kings who were engaged in war were accustomed to open their campaign, David sent Joab his commander-in-chief with the whole of the Israelitish forces to attack the Ammonites once more, for the purpose of chastising them and conquering their capital.¹
 - ii. During the inclement weather of the winter months, hostilities normally ceased, only to be resumed *in the spring of the year*, when traveling became bearable. It may have been just a year before that David had sent his envoys to offer his condolences to Hanun. Joab led the total Israelite forces against Rabbah, having defeated the Ammonites in the field. ***But David remained at Jerusalem is the all-important circumstance, anticipating all that follows***, including the final outcome of the battle (2 Sam. 12:26–31). While others spent themselves and risked their lives, he was ‘killing time’, acting like one of the kings of the nations round about, and exercising a kind of *droit de seigneur* (sexual liaison).²
 - iii. Everything about the setting should draw a highlighter over the importance of a person’s character to God. → original readers would have known the absurdity of David not being with his men.
 - 1. Again, if the Bible pulls the curtain back on its heroes, it does so for a reason.
 - a. **The biblical writer is more concerned about the character of the man God chose to head up the dynasty in Jerusalem, and the way God dealt with him, than with his splendid military achievements or wealth.**³

¹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 623.

² Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 247.

³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 247–248.

- b. That means God is deeply concerned about my character as a follower of Christ.
- 2. My character is revealed not in my intentions, but in my actions. And not only in my righteous actions, but also in my sinful actions.
 - a. How are we supposed to approach sin?

2. When we linger a little too long.

- a. Who is Bathsheba, and what was she doing?
 - i. She is the wife of Uriah the Hittite. → This means that she, too is likely a convert to Judaism.
 - 1. A fact that we see in this story noted by her ceremonial washing. (v.4)
 - 2. **It was common for bathing to take place on the roof of a house. Whether this was the exact location or not, she was in a location that David from his vantage point of the palace, was able to see her.**
 - ii. She is home alone with her husband off on a deployment fighting with Joab.
 - 1. The account of what happened is brief and objective. The king has an afternoon siesta, followed by a stroll on the *roof*, which of necessity involves going backwards and forwards, getting nowhere, a sense conveyed by the Hebrew verb form.⁴
 - 2. Towards evening David walked upon the roof of his palace, after rising from his couch, i.e., after taking his mid-day rest, and saw from the roof a woman bathing, namely in the uncovered court of a neighboring house, where there was a spring with a pool of water, such as you still frequently meet with in the East. *"The woman was beautiful to look upon."* Her outward charms excited sensual desires.⁵
 - 3. **We do not know how long their affair went on. The text briefly and bluntly records for us the reality of the affair and the resulting consequence of the pregnancy.**⁶
 - iii. She was not pregnant when David sent for her, but eventually becomes pregnant from their affair.
 - iv. She is remorseful and mourns the loss of her husband. (v.26)
 - 1. Again, let us stress, this never should have happened. While Bathsheba has a part to play in all of it, the responsibility is placed squarely and completely on David. He is the king and a devoted man of God. He not only knew better, but should have done better.⁷
 - 2. **What is the first lesson we come to see in all of this? → How we approach sin matters.**
- b. **Our approach to sin should be to give no quarter.**
 - i. David does not resist sin in this passage at all!
 - 1. Not only does he not resist, he lingers and inquires about the object of his desire.
 - a. What does the Bible tell us about what happens when we linger a little too long with temptation and un-Godly desire?
 - b. James 1:15 - **¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.**

⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 248.

⁵ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 624.

⁶ Richard R. Losch, *All the people in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture*. Eerdmans (2008), 59-60.

⁷ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 624.

2. James words are striking, and in the face of this story and the reality of what happens to Uriah and the child born to David and Bathsheba, we should be cautious not to miss the point of this passage. → **Sin is never a good solution!**
- ii. **The glance becomes the gaze. Enquiries identify her family and her husband. Ignoring the fact that she is the wife of one of his serving troops, and aware only of his own desire (which he does not yet identify as lust),** he overrides her personal feelings in the matter by sending messengers to take her. The bald facts are stated, including the detail that she was not pregnant when she came to David. Indeed, *she was purifying herself* when he took her: 'Opposite the man who is the prey of blind passion stands Bathsheba, and by contrast her purity receives an emblematic aspect.'⁸
- iii. **Paul reminds us of the reality that sin is escapable!**
 1. **1 Cor 10:13 - ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.**
 2. We all experience temptation and we will all fall short, that is we will all struggle with sin. → However, that doesn't mean that the resistance of sin is futile and should be abandoned because it is hard.
 3. Paul tells the Corinthian church that was struggling with a myriad of sins that not only are the temptations they experienced common but that God provides a way out!
 - a. This is good news for us! → Your struggle is not just yours alone, there are others that can sympathize with you.
 - b. Your struggle does not have to define you. Why? Because God is faithful and provides a way out.
 4. **We have to ask the question, how many of us linger with temptation a little too long?**
- c. How many of us linger with temptation... we try to find the line of savoring sin without sitting down to the whole meal deal.
 - i. In other words, how many of us are like David in this passage and we
- d. Our goal is not to be "moral" people... our goal is to be like Christ.
 - i. The pharisees were moral people.
 - ii. David made a habit of repenting.
 - iii. We are to make a habit of being like Jesus. → 1 Jn. 2:6
 1. **⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.**

3. More bad decisions don't lead to good decisions.

- a. Compounding bad decisions rob us of peace in the short term. → There would be consequences for the sin of David and Bathsheba.
 - i. There will be greater consequences for David's next decision... the cover-up.
- b. A cover-up appears to David to be the obvious way forward, so he sends to the battle lines for *Uriah the Hittite*; the reader notes that he is not a member of Israel's covenant community. What sort of person will he prove to be? He is received at court, asked about the welfare (Heb. *šālôm*) of

⁸ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 248.

Joab, the army and the battle, but, as Fokkelman notes, ‘The answer Uriah gives is not included in the narrative—a significant gap which symbolizes that David just lets him talk, not paying any particular attention to his account.’ By contrast, direct speech is used for what really matters to David (v. 8). A royal gift is meant to encourage Uriah to consider himself specially favored, and therefore to relax and enjoy his opportunity to go home and be with his wife.⁹

c. **Uriah’s righteousness and integrity stand in complete contrast to the actions of David in this moment!**

i. *But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house ... and did not go down to his house*, choosing instead to remain *with all the servants of his lord*. Three times the point is made that Uriah did not go home, for, despite what the king had said, Uriah knew where his duty lay; he was not on leave. **David had expected and hoped that Uriah would prove to be like himself; instead he proved to be a man of integrity, whose first loyalty was to the king’s interests rather than to his own pleasure.**

ii. At the risk of arousing Uriah’s suspicions, David asked why he had not gone home, and he answered, *The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths ... Astonishingly, this Hittite mentions the covenant symbol before everything else that has influenced his behavior.*¹⁰

iii. Even after a night of partying - But no; once again he spends the night *with the servants of his lord*, faithful still to his sovereign (*’ādôn*) and to his own high resolve. **The cost of such loyalty will prove to be high: he insists on what is right and loses his life.**¹¹

1. **Another tragedy of this story** – a man who is so honorable and commendable... a man the king should be so grateful to have in his company, loses his life for his fidelity.

d. The reality of sin is that it causes pain and shame.

i. **The cycle of sin.**

1. Sin causes pain and shame.
2. Shame causes us to hide.
3. Hiding magnifies our pain.
4. Pain seeks relief.
5. Unless we seek relief in Jesus, we will seek relief in sin.
6. When we seek relief in sin... we find ourselves in David’s shoes and experience compounding pain, shame, and regret.

ii. The good news of Advent / Christmas is that it doesn’t have to stay that way.

1. God sent his Son so that we could be called the children of God.

a. **Jn. 1:9-13 -⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹²**

iii. **We also must realize that sin is a distortion of a good gift that has been given to us by God.**

⁹ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 248–249.

¹⁰ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 249.

¹¹ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 249.

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:9–13.

1. James 1:16 - ¹⁶ **Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.**
 - a. Following his statement on the ramifications of sin, James reminds us that good gifts come from God.
2. If we want to have victory over sin, maybe we should spend some time considering what “good gift from God” are we trying to take for ourselves?
3. If we want to have victory over sin, we should also consider what deficiency or need am I trying to meet?

4. God offers us lasting peace.

- a. The closing of this chapter brings us full circle to the pain that Bathsheba feels, and chapter 12 will show us the pain that David will feel.
 - i. **The wife of Uriah: she is referred to not by her name but by her status in this passage.** In this way the writer detaches himself from the new liaison and pays his respects to *Uriah her husband, who was dead*.
 - ii. **At no point is the reader permitted to gather that Uriah’s death was regarded as a matter of indifference.** Once the mourning period was over David sent as he had done once before (2 Sam. 11:4) to bring her *to his house*, but this time *she became his wife*. Their son was born; time passed and, so far as appearances went, everything went on as before.
 - iii. Ministers close to the king knew what injustice had been committed, and yet it apparently went unpunished, though not for long, because *the thing that David had done displeased the Lord* (cf. David’s very word to Joab in v. 25). **The Lord in his infinite grace had allowed David’s attempt at cover-up to fail, and was about to confront him.** The writer is able confidently to make this statement because of the revelation he is about to record.¹³
 - iv. **The truth is that sin robs us of peace.**
 1. **The wonderful reality of Advent is that we don’t have to remain harassed and helpless.**
 2. The very reason Jesus came was to bring us lasting peace through an abiding union with our Father.
- b. Lasting peace through Jesus is the lasting solution to our pain.
 - i. Isaiah 9:3, 7 - **The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. ... Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.**
 - ii. Matt. 9:35-36 - ³⁵ **And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.**
 1. Lasting peace is available to all who place their faith in Jesus as Savior!
- c. **More sin is never the solution to our pain.**
 - i. We learn this important truth in this story, but we also see the significance of God’s grace.

¹³ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 251.

- ii. Matthew reminds us of the painful reality that was the start to the union of David and Bathsheba. But, he doesn't stop there, he continues to trace God hand over human history to bring about his redemptive purposes. ... Even through a family with a past to hide.
- iii. From David & Bathsheba will come, Solomon.
 - 1. From Solomon → Rehoboam → eventually Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Josiah, Azor, Zadok → eventually Joseph who will be wed to Mary.
 - a. **Matt. 1:12-16 – ¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.**
 - 2. Joseph and Marry will become the earthly parents of Jesus... the long promised Messiah.
 - 3. Their story (David and Bathsheba) included significant pain, but Jesus would come from this family line and bring lasting peace.
 - a. **Do I believe that Jesus can bring lasting peace to my pain?**
 - b. **Even when my story includes details that I would like to forget, do I believe that God can still do something significant through me? → This story says, yes.**

12:13

- Immediately came the astonishing response: *The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.* This was the turning-point in the life of David, and the clearest indication that he was different from Saul in the most essential relationship of all, that of submission to the Lord God. For that reason he found forgiveness, whereas Saul never accepted his guilt or the rejection that followed from it. Psalm 32, traditionally accepted as expressing David's thoughts on this occasion, is exuberant over the joy of knowing forgiveness in place of guilt, restoration of fellowship after the pain of conviction of sin. In place of death he has new life, so freely does he enter into the grace of God.
- This transforming experience does not mean, however, that the judgments which the Lord has announced through the prophet have been annulled. The consequences of David's having *scorned the Lord* still have to be faced, and of that, one further consequence will be a sign: *the child that is born to you shall die.* With that the prophet has fulfilled his mission; he departs, and the interview ends.¹⁴

12:15ff – The death of David and Bathsheba's first child.

- This is one case in which Scripture associates illness with the sin of a parent (cf. John 9:2), but, as in the case of the man born blind, the purpose was the glory of God. The biblical writer does not hesitate to attribute directly to the Lord the sickness of this child, in accordance with the prophet's word.¹⁵
- There is nothing merely perfunctory about the prayer of David on this occasion. His love for the child, who is not even named, is so great that he will fast for a week and go without sleep in order to give himself to prayer. This passionate man understood the meaning of the word 'love' in the light of the Lord's love to him, and longed for the baby to be spared. When the child dies, for his prayer receives a negative answer, no one dares to tell him the news for fear of his reaction, but they had misinterpreted the king's mind.¹⁶
- This is a very difficult passage in Scripture. And it is one that is deeply uncomfortable for us as modern readers. The most important feature for us to understand this passage is David's response.
 - First, David is not angry with the Lord. He is convinced and aware that it is his sin that is being judged. In that way, the death of his child is his responsibility, and God is right to hold him accountable.
 - Second, David is convinced of the eternal destiny of his child. Yes, his child will not experience life on this side of heaven for long, but God, in his mercy has granted the child eternal life. We see this clearly in David's response in v. 23.
 - ²³ But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."
 - Now that the child is dead, however, the answer is final: *I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.* David comes to terms with his own mortality, and even in that finds hope, because he looks forward to being reunited with his child. The Lord who had sent Nathan to David had had the last word, and though David was bereft, he was content.¹⁷

¹⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 255–256.

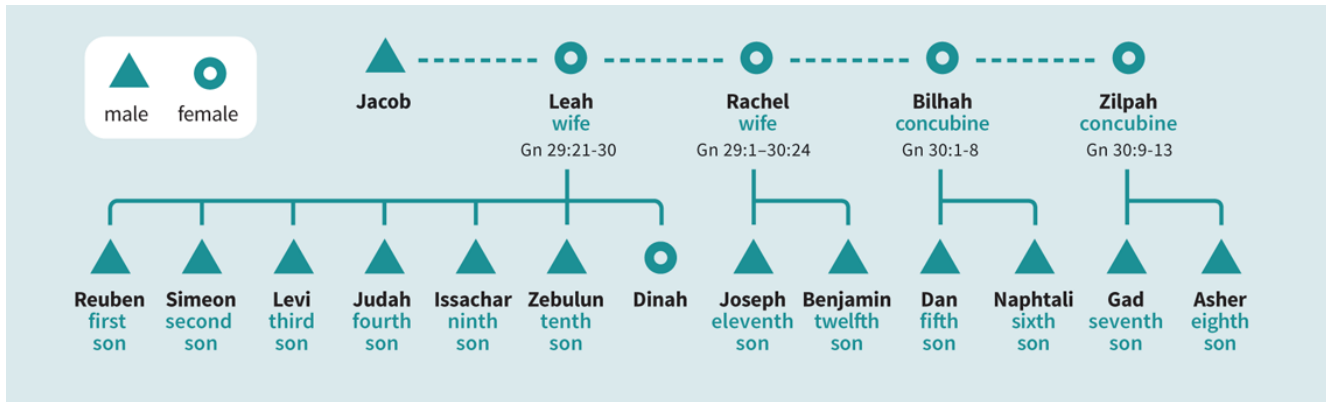
¹⁵ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 256.

¹⁶ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 256.

¹⁷ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 257.

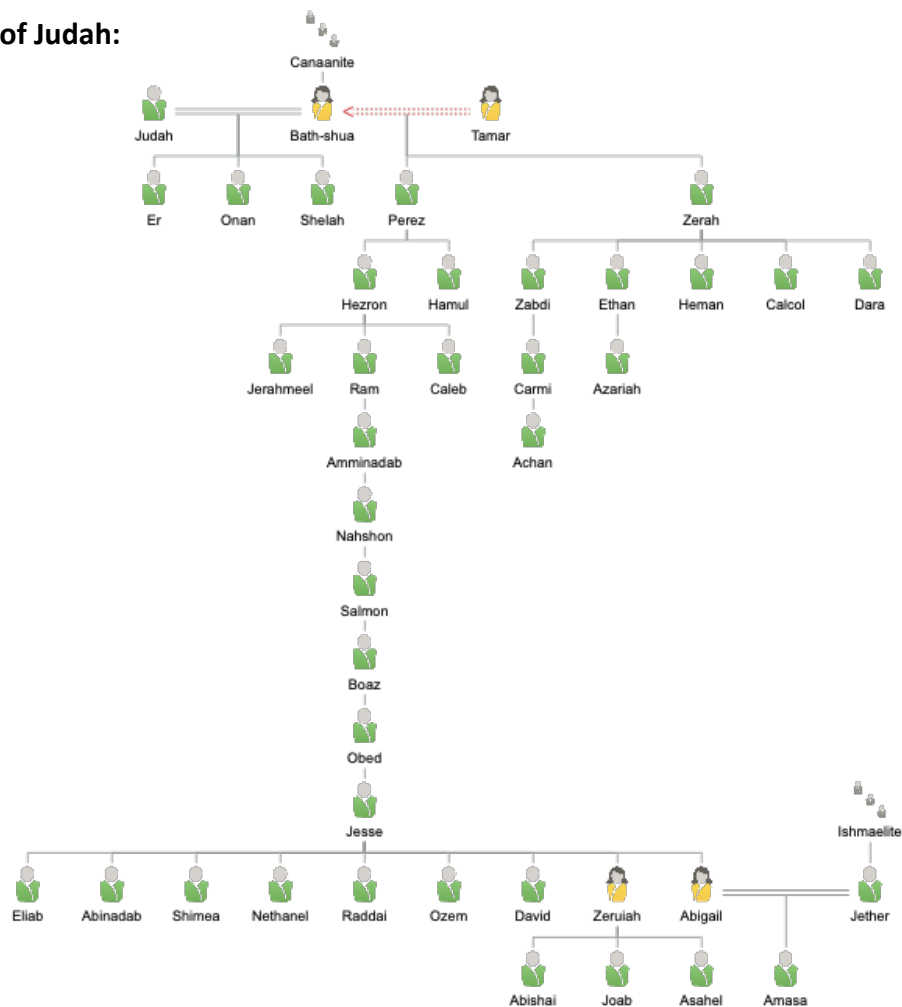
Addendum: Genealogical pictures of Jacob, Judah, and Jesus.

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)

