

WOMEN IN JESUS' EARLY GENEALOGY

Women's History Month is an annual occurrence that highlights the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. It is celebrated during March in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, corresponding with International Women's Day on March 8. This commemoration began in 1978 as Women's History Day in Sonoma County, California. Championed by Gerda Lerner and the National Women's History Alliance the celebration grew to a nationally recognized week (1980), and then a month (1987), before spreading internationally. (Wikipedia.org.)

Reflecting on this celebration and googling the genealogy of JESUS, our Lord and Savior, I became curious about the women in his family tree. I wanted to know what the BIBLE had to say about them. After all, records of these women were written in the Bible by God's inspiration and are worthy of recording in our learning. This writing is limited to a very brief discussion of Tamar and Rahab.

TAMAR, a Canaanite, disguised herself as a prostitute to seduce and trick Judah, her father-in-law, into sleeping with her. This successful plot resulted in the birth of twins, one of whom is the ancestor of Salmon who married another woman in Jesus' genealogy, Rahab. This story appears in Genesis 38. There was a distinction during these times between public and private prostitutes. Public ones served Canaanite goddesses and religious cults where fornication was encouraged. Private prostitutes were sometimes punished when caught. Throughout scripture, prostitution is condemned as a serious sin.

Tamar had been married to Er, Judah's oldest son. Er was wicked, and God took his life. Customs of the time required the widowed Tamar to remarry her brother-in-law, and her first born son would be Er's heir. Onan refused to marry Tamar. The Lord considered this a wicked act and took Onan's life. This left Judah as the only male who could produce an heir for Er. Tamar's faithful adherence to family obligations is important in this story. Tamar's actions gave Judah legal heirs. Judah and Tamar became ancestors of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-6).

RAHAB's story appears in Joshua 2 and 6:22, 23. She is also mentioned in Mathew 1:5, Hebrews 11:31, and James 2:25. She was a prostitute and innkeeper in Jericho. She lived in a house built into the city wall. She provided both lodging and favors to travelers. This was a natural place for the Israelite spies to stay as they would be mistaken for Rahab's customers. Rahab lived on the edge of society and rejection. Yet, she became a wife.

Rahab gave birth to Boaz, and thus is an ancestor of David and Jesus. She is one of only two women listed in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11. She was resourceful and willing to risk her life to help others. Rahab turned to the Lord for her salvation, and she did not let fear override her faith in God's ability to deliver her and her family. As Jericho fell, Rahab was saved because of her faith.



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