

Broken Pieces

Whether you are rich or poor, male or female, Asian, African, European, Native American or a mixture of many, there is one thing every person on earth has - we all have family trees. They represent a mosaic. A mosaic is a picture or decoration made up of diverse, multi-colored small pieces. This is all of us.

Every birth is another piece in the mosaic. No one is an accident. Everyone is valuable. The family tree that produced Jesus is a very interesting, even scandalous mosaic of characters. It is breathtaking to see the hand of God in the birth of Jesus Christ. In Matthew, we see the genealogy of Joseph, the adoptive father of Jesus. Because of this branch of the family tree, Jesus was legally the son of David and thus was qualified to be the Messiah.

There are names in this list that are shocking. Jesus' family tree looks more like a Hall of Shame rather than a Hall of Fame. It reads more like a police line-up than who's who list. In fact, the list includes a few wonderful comeback stories.

Romans 8:31-39

Matthew 1:3, 5, 6

The first thing that would catch the attention of any Jew would have been the fact that women were included in the list. It was highly unusual. Every morning a Jewish male would thank God that he had not made him a Gentile, a slave or a woman. The list includes five women. Today, we are going to examine three of them, each scandalous.

God accepts us where we are - Tamar

- Her story is found in Genesis 38. This chapter portrays one of the most perverse, lurid, sinful events in the Bible. It has everything - seduction, deception and incest.
- Life is too often uncertain and dangerous for little girls and women in general. Men, who are charged with the responsibility of protecting children, specifically girls, are often the most dangerous towards them!
- Of course, boys and men have also been mistreated and abused. Today's emphasis is on females.
- Tamar, a Canaanite girl, a pagan, was chosen by Judah to be married to his son Er. **Genesis 38:7 NLT** - But Er was a wicked man in the LORD's sight, so the LORD took his life.
- The law required that if a woman became a widow with no children she be to be given to one of the husband's brothers to bear children in order to carry on the family name.
- She was given to Onan, whose duty was to produce an heir for his brother!
- **Genesis 38:9-10 NLT** - But Onan was not willing to have a child who would not be his own heir. So whenever he had intercourse with his brother's wife, he spilled the semen on the ground. This prevented her from having a child who would belong to his brother. But the LORD considered it evil for Onan to deny a child to his dead brother. So the LORD took Onan's life, too.
- Judah told Tamar to remain a widow until his younger son Shelah is grown. Shelah grew up, but Tamar was NOT given to Shelah as a wife. Their superstitious belief was that the other sons died because of Tamar! It had nothing to do with their own wickedness!
- Judah committed great fraud against Tamar. Frustrated and childless, Tamar concocted and unbelievably evil scheme.

- She disguised herself as a prostitute, put a veil over her face and waited for her father-in-law by the side of the road. Judah fell for her deception, slept with her believing her to be a prostitute.
- Out of this despicable sexual sin twin sons were conceived - Perez and Zerah. Perez became one of the ancestors of Jesus Christ!
- So, despite prostitution and incest, God's grace fell on all of these undeserving persons and produced the Jewish Messiah. God does not approve of sin and hates evil, but His grace is greater.
- The overwhelming story of the Bible is redemption. God's grace is greater than our sin!

God transforms lives - Rahab

- **Joshua 2:1 NLT** - Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, "Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho." So the two men set out and came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there that night.
- Outside of Matthew, every time Rahab is referred to in scripture, she is referred to as "Rahab, the prostitute." It's almost as if God does not want us to forget what she was and who she became.
- Again, she was a Canaanite, the mortal enemies of Israel. They worshipped Baal. Rahab was a prostitute, pagan, outcast woman.
- After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites were finally ready to enter the Promised Land. Joshua sent spies to scout out the city of Jericho. Not wanting to be discovered, they came upon Rahab and asked her to hide them. She did hide them and lied to protect them.
- Believing that the Israelites were going to conquer Jericho, she bargained with the spies to save her family. They agreed to spare her and her family if she would hang a scarlet thread from the window of her house.
- That is exactly what happened. God's amazing grace and favor gave Israel victory and saved Rahab and her family. She abandoned the gods of the Canaanites and became a follower of the one true God.
- A prostitute became the great-great grandmother of King David, and became part of the family tree of Jesus.
- God used a pagan prostitute to save a nation and become part of the royal family of Jesus Christ. What God did for her He can do for you!

God uses who we are - Bathsheba

- **2 Samuel 11:1-3 NLT** - In the spring of the year, when kings normally go out to war, David sent Joab and the Israelite army to fight the Ammonites. They destroyed the Ammonite army and laid siege to the city of Rabbah. However, David stayed behind in Jerusalem. Late one afternoon, after his midday rest, David got out of bed and was walking on the roof of the palace. As he looked out over the city, he noticed a woman of unusual beauty taking a bath. He sent someone to find out who she was, and he was told, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite."
- David lusted after Bathsheba and committed adultery with her. This one-night-stand could not be hidden, because she became pregnant. David called her husband home from war, in the hopes of covering his sin. Uriah refused to be comforted by his wife while his comrades were still in battle against their enemies.
- David devised a plan to put Uriah at the front of an impossible-to-win battle, knowing he would be killed. David committed murder to cover his own sin!

- To add to their shame, David and Bathsheba were married. This story is as despicable and disgusting as any in the Bible. David repented of his sin and got right with God. Even though the baby died, Bathsheba deceived again and bore a son named, Solomon!

Closing

- The pieces of the messianic mosaic are a display of the grace of God.
- God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves - picking up broken pieces and putting them back together, taking broken lives and making them whole again.
- God makes something beautiful from the brokenness of our lives.
- Every sinful barrier was broken down by the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Antonio Stradivarius was an Italian violin maker who lived over 350 years ago. His violins are now the most prized violins ever made because of the rich and resonating sound that they produce. The unique sound of a Stradivarius violin simply cannot be duplicated. You may be shocked to learn that these precious instruments were not made from treasured pieces of wood; they were carved from discarded lumber. Stradivarius was very poor and he could not afford fine materials like others. He got most of his wood from the dirty harbors where he lived. He would take water-logged pieces of wood to his shop and clean them up and from those pieces of trashed lumber he would create instruments of unbelievable rare beauty.
- It has since been discovered that while that wood floated in those dirty harbors, microbes went into the wood and ate out the center of those cells. This left just a fibrous infrastructure of the wood that created resonating chambers for the music. From wood that nobody else wanted, Stradivarius produced violins that everybody wants and very few people can afford.
- What that violin maker did in transforming trash into treasure, God can do for us. God can take broken, throwaway, dirty, filthy pieces and use them to form the mosaic of His family held together by His grace and by His love. That really is the message of the family tree of Jesus.

Altar Call