

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 30 October 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **Prodigals, Prostitutes, and Patriarchs—Redeemed!**

### **Matthew 1:2-5**

About ten years ago, Katie and I set out on a quest to find out more about our family histories. As we went online, and stumbled onto various websites, we made some big breakthroughs; and we traced my lineage all the way back to the 400's A.D.! I was fascinated by our discoveries. We found out that I am descended from a pastor named James Finley, who personally knew, and worked with, the evangelist George Whitefield, the inventor Benjamin Franklin, and many of the other founding fathers of America. We found out that the first draft of the Declaration of Independence was written in James Finley's house, and that he was one of the earliest senators of the state of Pennsylvania. We found out that many of my ancestors in the Middle Ages were bishops, thanes, earls, and other high officials in Scotland. However, we also discovered that the founder of the Finley surname, a man named MacBeth mac Finleigh, was none other than the infamous king of Alba (you know, the villain of William Shakespeare's play, *MacBeth*—the guy who was a traitor, murderer, and tyrant)! Now, as it turns out, MacFinleigh didn't actually assassinate King Duncan (as Shakespeare portrayed it), but rather defeated him in a battle, which Duncan had waged against him. However, there is good evidence that MacFinleigh *did* assassinate Gille Coemgáin (the previous governor of the province of Moray), and took his position. As we traced back further, we found out that MacFinleigh's ancestors were kings in Scotland and Ireland; and many of them were treacherous murderers!

If we could all trace our family lines back far enough, we would all discover that our lineages are “messy”—that they are filled with dark, embarrassing episodes. Though some of us may be descended from kings, we are all descended from traitors. Why? Because we are *all* traitors and rebels against God; and so are our ancestors. Doing evil is as natural to us as breathing, because we have inherited a sin nature from our father Adam. Yet, there is one Man in history of whom this is not so: and that Man is Jesus Christ. Though Jesus is a true son of Adam, He did *not* inherit Adam's sin nature, because he did not have a human father. God created a holy Seed in the womb of a virgin named Mary; and the holy Child whom she bore is the sinless Son of God.

Now, as you know, we are studying the book of **Matthew**; and Matthew's purpose in writing his Gospel was to prove to his Jewish brethren that Jesus is the Son of David—the King of Israel. He starts off his book by calling Jesus “*the son of David, the son of Abraham*”; and from there, he goes down through the lineage, and shows that Jesus is, by adoption, a direct descendant of every king of Israel from David to Jechonias. Now, many of Jesus' ancestors were wicked people. Even King David himself was guilty of adultery and murder. Nevertheless, there is a scarlet thread of redemption that runs down through the family line. These people were direct *ancestors* of the Redeemer of the world; and many of them were *personally redeemed* by placing their faith in the coming Redeemer! This morning we will examine the accounts of several of Jesus' ancestors, whose lives were “messy”; yet, they were redeemed through the precious blood of Jesus! The title of this message is “***Prodigals, Prostitutes, and Patriarchs—Redeemed!***”

### **Matthew 1:2-5**

#### **I. Judah—the “lion's whelp”**

In our last message, we learned about the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We learned about the ugly episode in Jacob's life when he deceived his father, and stole the birthright blessing from his elder brother Esau. We also saw how the Lord turned Jacob's evil around for good, and reconciled him to his brother Esau. Most importantly, we saw how God brought Jacob to the point of fully surrendering his heart, mind, and will to Him. God even gave Jacob the new name "Israel," which means "prince with God." Yet, if Jacob were here today, he would admit to you that he was not worthy of being given that name. In his prayer to God at Peniel, Jacob said, *"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant."*

Now, if *Jacob* wasn't worthy of being in the bloodline of Christ, the next man in the bloodline was even less worthy! **Judah**, the fourth son of Jacob, was the one whom God chose to be the ancestor of the Messiah. Yet, of Jacob's 12 sons, Judah was probably the *least* worthy of that honour! Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, is the one who *would* have had the birthright privilege—if he hadn't blown it. He forfeited his birthright when he had an incestuous relationship with Bilhah, one of his father's four wives. Yet, Judah was scarcely any better than Reuben. In fact, in some ways, he was worse! Let's zoom in on the first recorded incident from Judah's life, and see what kind of character he had.

### **Genesis 37:3-4, 13, 18-33**

At this point, it appeared that God's promise of the coming Messiah was just about dead and buried. Jacob's 10 oldest sons were rotten to the core. Though they all went through the outward rituals of worshipping Jehovah, it is obvious that not one of them knew or loved God. There was only *one* son, at this point, who knew God, and loved him—and that was Jacob's eleventh son, Joseph. That is why Jacob made a coat of many colours for Joseph, and put him in charge of going to Shechem to make sure that all was well with his brothers. He was training Joseph to be the ruler of the family. Joseph was the one whom Jacob intended to give the birthright; and the dreams that God gave to Joseph seemed to confirm that one day, he would rule over all of them. However, all those dreams *appeared* to die on the day when the ten brothers came back from Dothan, and showed their father Joseph's torn, bloodied coat, and told him that a wild beast had killed him. For 22 years Jacob believed that lie, until he finally found out that Joseph was alive and well, and that he was now the governor of Egypt! Yet, who was the one who initiated this whole plot? We don't know for sure whose idea it was to *kill* Joseph; but *Judah* was the one who hatched the plot to sell him into slavery. Even Reuben had more compassion than Judah did. He at least *intended* to free Joseph, and send him back to their father. But Judah was a traitor *par excellence*. Judah's very name, *Jehudah* (from which we get the name "Jew") means "praise"; but instead of bringing praise to God, he brought disgrace. Yet, it gets even worse. Let's fast-forward to another event in Judah's life, sometime after Joseph went down to Egypt.

### **Genesis 38:11-30**

This event is the "all-time low" of Judah's life. Morally, he had hit the bottom. First of all, he had failed as a father. He had failed to bring up his sons in the ways of the LORD. His two oldest sons, **Er** and **Onan**, were so wicked, that God slew *both* of them prematurely. Then, Judah failed to give **Tamar**, the widow of his oldest son Er, to his youngest son **Shelah** to marry. According to the Hebrew custom, if a man died, his younger brother was to marry his widow, and raise up children in his name. Well, both Er and Onan had died; and Tamar had been married to each of them, for a short time. Thus, Judah was supposed to give Tamar to his

youngest son Shelah. However, he was delaying to consummate this marriage. He probably felt that somehow or other, Tamar had brought some kind of “curse” upon his sons. Therefore, Tamar decided to trick her father-in-law into thinking she was a prostitute, so that she could have a child through him. Judah, who had recently become a widower, himself, was happy to have this non-committal “companionship” with a harlot for one night; but little did he know that this harlot was his own daughter-in-law! When he found out that she was pregnant, he was outraged. He hypocritically judged that she should be put to death, since she was, after all, betrothed to his son Shelah. (Even under the pagan code of Hammurabi, death was the penalty for adultery.) However, when Judah found out that *he* was the father of Tamar’s twin boys, he was horrified—and greatly humbled. How could he condemn Tamar, when his sin was far greater than hers? He couldn’t. Therefore, he did the right thing: he owned these boys as his own; and from that point onward, he treated Tamar as a daughter.

This was, apparently, a major turning point in Judah’s life. From this point onward, something changed in Judah’s heart. It’s called “repentance.” Up to this point he had known all *about* his father’s God; but he did not *know* God. He had heard all about the covenant that God had made with his great-grandfather Abraham, and with his grandfather Isaac, and his father Jacob; but it wasn’t real to him. He lived in sin, and he loved his sin. Now, however, there was a change of heart and mind. He owned up to his sin, admitted his guilt, and turned his heart to God in faith. The Bible says, ***“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”***

At some point after this event, Judah became part of the *spiritual* “family of God.” In God’s sight, Judah was forgiven, and redeemed. He was saved because he believed God’s promise that the Redeemer was coming to take away his sin. His life was now changing, because God was now with him. However, one huge sin from his past was still unresolved down here on earth; and that was his betrayal of his brother Joseph. His nine brothers had come to the same place in their lives, as well. One by one, they all turned to true faith in their father’s God; yet, they were still hiding that terrible secret from their father. However, the day came when their sin was brought to light; and they had to confess it. When the great famine forced them to go down to Egypt to buy grain for their family, they had to stand before the governor of Egypt, to make their request; and the governor was none other than their brother Joseph, whom they had sold as a slave 22 years earlier. And who was the one who took the spiritual leadership at they stood before Joseph? It was Judah!

### **Genesis 44:14 – 45:3**

Though Judah was not the firstborn of the family, he had clearly risen to the position of leadership. He was acting as the spokesman for his brethren. Before he and his brothers went down to Egypt, Judah had promised his father that he would act as *“surety”* for their youngest brother Benjamin, and would *“bear the blame forever”* if any harm should befall him. Judah was now keeping that promise. He willing to be a slave in Benjamin’s place. As far as *Judah* knew, his little brother Benjamin *was* guilty of theft, as he had been accused of; yet, he was willing to suffer *“instead of the lad.”* This is a beautiful picture of Judah’s great Descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was willing to suffer in our place, even though *we* are guilty!

The Bible says in **1 Peter 3:18** that Christ ***“hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.”*** Just as Judah was willing to suffer for his little brother Benjamin, so Jesus, “the Just one,” *actually* suffered in the place of His brethren.

When I say “brethren,” I don’t mean merely the *Jewish* people: I mean “the whole world”! Jesus is part of *our* race. Though He is God Almighty, He took on a human nature, and became one of us. He is our “big Brother”; and He took our punishment for sin on the cross, so that we might be redeemed, and go free! Yet, He doesn’t force redemption on any of us. We must choose to receive it, by simply placing our faith in Jesus alone, and repenting of our sin in our hearts. Have *you* done this? If not, please do so today! Stop trying to justify your sin. Stop playing the “blame game,” and passing off your guilt on someone else. Admit that you cannot save yourself, and ask Jesus to forgive you, and save you!

Judah had clearly become a spiritual leader in his family. Yet, how and when did he receive the privilege of the “birthright”? Let’s fast-forward another 17 years, to the day of Jacob’s death, and find out.

### **Genesis 49:1-2, 9-10**

Just before his death, Jacob prophesied over all 12 of his sons. He told a little something about the future of each of his sons’ families; but the prophecy of **Judah’s future** was unique. Jacob prophesied that the “*sceptre*” (the right of kingship) would belong to Judah. He prophesied that a long line of rulers and lawgivers would spring from the tribe of Judah, until the *ultimate* Ruler would be born. This Ruler is called by the name “*Shiloh*.” The word “*Shiloh*” means “to whom it belongs.” This is another title for the Messiah. Jesus is the one to whom the right of kingship belongs. He is a *blood* descendant of Judah and King David through his mother, Mary; and He holds the *legal* right to the throne through the line of his adopted father, Joseph. Jacob prophesied that unto Shiloh “*shall the gathering of the people be*.” In Hebrew, the word “people” is actually plural (“peoples”). This means that the King from the tribe of Judah will rule not only over the people of Israel, but over all “peoples” of the earth! One day, during the future 1,000-year Kingdom, Jesus, the great son of Judah, will reign over *all* the nations of the earth! That is why the Bible calls Jesus “*the lion of the tribe of Judah*.”

Why would God use a man like Judah to bring all this about? And for that matter, why would He use a woman like Tamar? For the same reason that He uses *any* of us! It is all of His grace. In His grace and mercy, He saves, and enlists in His service, any sinner who will repent of his sin, and believe in His Son. Judah was a wicked man; but God changed him when he repented. As for Tamar, she was a Canaanite, from an idol-worshipping background; yet, apparently, she actually *believed* in what she had heard about God’s covenant with Abraham: and she yearned to be part of that covenant. She actually desired to be in the bloodline of the Messiah; and since Judah wouldn’t give his son to her in marriage, she decided to go straight to Judah to get the child! Amazingly, God granted her desire—even though she had done a very wicked thing. I’m sure that as Tamar learned more about the ways of the true God, she repented of this wickedness. Yet, God allowed her to be a matriarch of the Messiah, right alongside her father-in-law, Judah. God *could* have used Joseph to be in the bloodline of the Messiah; yet, he chose wicked Judah, and wicked Tamar. Why? Because He delights in using unworthy people, whom He has redeemed.

None of us is worthy to be saved or used by God; but He uses us, anyway! The Bible says, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” Christian, perhaps you have a “messy” past, just as Judah and Tamar did. Perhaps guilt still hangs over you at times. If so, cling to God’s

promise. The Scripture says, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

## II. Rahab—the scarlet woman delivered by a scarlet cord

**(Read Matthew 1:2-5 again.)** The next man in the bloodline of the Messiah was Judah’s elder son, **Pharez**. Now, we don’t know anything about Pharez, other than his name, and his descendants. Pharez was the father of **Esrom**, who was the father of **Aram**, who was the father of **Aminadab**, who was the father of **Naasson**, who was the father of **Salmon**. These men all lived during the 215 years between the time when Jacob and his family went down to Egypt, and the time when the children of Israel *left* Egypt under the leadership of Moses.

Now, as I say, we don’t know anything significant about any of these men; but we *do* know one important thing about Salmon. It’s not Salmon himself that we know anything about: it is his *wife*, **“Rachab,”** that we know about! This **“Rachab”** is the same **Rahab** that we read about in **Joshua 2**—the Canaanite woman who hid the two Israelite spies!

### Joshua 2:1-21

The year was **1451 B.C.**; and the conquest of Canaan was about to begin. The Israelites were encamped on the east side of the Jordan River; and Joshua sent out two spies to go into Jericho, and search it out. However, as they reconnoitred the city, they nearly got caught. The authorities heard reports that two Hebrew spies were among them; and they heard that they had been seen going into the house of the harlot Rahab.

Now, under ordinary circumstances, a woman in Rahab’s position would surely have turned in these men. After all, she had everything to lose if she were suspected of being a traitor. In the wicked Canaanite culture, prostitution was not only normal: it was a *sacred* profession (especially for the Temple prostitutes). Rahab wasn’t a down-and-out “street” prostitute; she evidently had a large house, and wealth. Yet, this Canaanite woman, reared in idolatry, risked everything, and hid the Israelite spies in her house. Why? Because she had come to believe that Israel’s God was the true God. She didn’t merely think that the Israelites *might* destroy her city: she was convinced that they *would* destroy it. The people of Canaan had heard all about the mighty acts that God had done for the children of Israel since they had left Egypt; but unlike the others around her, Rahab had come to believe, in her heart, that Israel’s God was *the “God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath.”* We aren’t merely guessing that Rahab became a believer in Israel’s God: we *know* it to be so, because Paul tells us so in **Hebrews 11**. In **Hebrews 11:30** Paul says, *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

What was the reward for this woman’s faith? **Life** (both eternal life with God, and *physical* life in this world)! The spies instructed Rahab that when the time came for Israel to besiege Jericho, she was to let down a scarlet cord from the window of her house (which sat on the top of the wall), so that they would know which house was hers; and anyone in her family who wished to be saved was to remain *inside that house*, until Israel had conquered the city.

Well, you know the story: after seven days of the Israelites’ marching around the walls of Jericho, God supernaturally caused the walls of Jericho to fall down; and Israel went in and destroyed the Canaanites. However, there was *one section* of the wall that didn’t fall down; and that was the section where Rahab’s house was. By the way, archaeology has confirmed

the Israelites' destruction of Jericho! The walls of Jericho from that time period did, indeed, fall down, and all the city *was* burned, just as God commanded the Israelites to do; yet, there is one section of wall, and one house, that clearly did *not* fall! Archaeologists have even found pots of barley from the spring barley harvest, completely untouched. Why would any invader destroy a city, yet *not* take their food? Because God had commanded Israel *not* to take any spoil from Jericho, because it was the “firstfruits” for the Lord. (By the way, Christian, there's a principle in this: God deserves the *first and best* of everything in your life!)

Well, once again, we find that God singled out an immoral woman (and a *Gentile*, to boot), and went out of His way to mention that this woman was in the bloodline of the Messiah! If it were up to one of *us* to write this Gospel, we probably would have kept this little “skeleton in the closet” hidden away, and not have mentioned that our Lord Jesus Christ is the direct descendant of a former prostitute. Yet, God didn't hide it. He mentioned it prominently, in order to show us that He saves undeserving sinners, and uses them for His glory. Jesus didn't come to call righteous people to Himself, because *none of us* is righteous. He came to call “***sinner*s to repentance.**” When you place your faith in Jesus, you are like Rahab and her family, who took refuge inside the house with the scarlet cord. That “scarlet cord” is a picture of the blood of Jesus, and of the redemption that He purchased for us with His blood. All who place their faith in *His* blood will be saved from the eternal wrath of God! My friend, are *you* hidden in Christ? Are you trusting in His redeeming blood?

### III. Boaz—the “kinsman redeemer”

(Read Matthew 1:5 again.) The next man in the bloodline of the King of Israel is **Boaz**. However, once again, it is not only the *man* who is mentioned in the genealogy; his wife, **Ruth**, is mentioned, as well. **Boaz**, the son of a one-time harlot named Rahab, turned out to be not only an ancestor of Christ, but a *type* of Christ; and his wife, Ruth, is a beautiful picture of all who have been redeemed by Christ. Ruth is especially a type of us *Gentile* believers, who have spiritually been grafted into the family of Abraham by faith.

Now, let's examine the story. Israel had been in the land of Canaan for a couple generations; but already, the people had turned from God, and were worshipping idols. Therefore, God brought a great famine upon the land, so that Israel would repent and turn back to Him. It was during this time that a man named **Elimelech**, and his wife **Naomi**, left their town of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, and immigrated to the country of Moab, where there was bread to eat. Though Elimelech was a believer, this was *not* a step of faith on his part; and in time, God chastened his family for their lack of trust in Him. Ten years after they had moved to Moab, Elimelech died; and shortly afterward, his two sons, **Mahlon** and **Chilion**, died too.

Now, both Mahlon and Chilion had married Moabite women, named **Orpah** and **Ruth**; and both of these women had professed to believe in Israel's God. However, when Naomi, now a widow, decided to pack up and go back to Bethlehem, only *Ruth* stayed with her mother-in-law. Orpah went back to her people, and to her false gods; but Ruth desired to go to Israel, because she had *truly believed* on the God of Israel. Ruth told her mother-in-law, “***Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried.***”

Well, after they returned to the old homestead in Bethlehem, Naomi instructed her daughter-in-law to go out into the fields and gather grain from the edges of the fields, so that they could eat. God had commanded, in the Law of Moses, that when the landowners harvested their fields, they were to leave some of the grain along the edges of the field so that the poor could

gather it, and have food for their families. At this point, this was their only means of survival, since both their husbands were dead. However, God had *another* plan for their provision!

### **Ruth 2:1-12**

As Ruth was gathering grain in the field, she met the kindest man she had ever met—Boaz. When she went back home that evening, and told Naomi about Boaz, Naomi told her that this Boaz was a near kinsman of theirs. This meant that Boaz just might be qualified to marry Ruth! God had command that when a man died, his brother, or his nearest kinsman, was to marry his widow; and Boaz met that requirement. Not only that, but it appeared that Boaz had his eye on Ruth. Though there was an age gap between Boaz and Ruth, Boaz was drawn to Ruth because of her godly character. And so, Naomi decided to play “matchmaker”!

### **Ruth 3:1-13**

### **Ruth 4:1-10, 13, 17-22**

My friends, there are a couple important truths we can learn from this beautiful story of Boaz and Ruth. First of all, if you are single, I urge you to wait patiently, until God brings the right person along. Be sure to marry a Christian—and not only a Christian, but one who really loves the Lord, and is committed to serving Him with his (or her) whole heart. Boaz was not young when he met Ruth; but this woman was worth the wait! **Proverbs 31** says, *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies...Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”* The Bible also says, *“Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.”*

Now, the second important truth that we can “take home with us” is this wonderful prophetic picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Boaz is an unmistakable type of the Lord Jesus. For one thing, Boaz was the great-grandfather of David, and was in the direct lineage of Christ. He was also from the same town where Jesus would be born—Bethlehem. But most importantly, Boaz was Ruth's *“kinsman-redeemer,”* who bought back the family inheritance that Naomi had been forced to sell because of debt. As part of that transaction, Boaz took Ruth to be his bride. Do you see the picture of Christ in this? Christ is the one who purchased our eternal life. Our eternal life with God was forfeited because of our sin; but with His blood, Jesus redeemed *us* (bought us back); and if *we* will have *Him*, He will make us part of His Bride!

Are *you* part of Christ's beloved Bride (His people)? Have *you* been “bought back” to God through Christ's redeeming blood? There *is* a condition, on your part, for being in God's family; and that condition is *faith in Christ*. Remember what Boaz said to Ruth? He said, *“A full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”* That word *“trust”* is key! The virtuous *works* that Ruth had done were the product of her new-found *trust* in the God of Israel. She had left her family in Moab not simply because she loved her mother-in-law, but because she had truly renounced her old gods, and had placed her faith in the true God. The other daughter-in-law, Orpah, loved her mother-in-law; but she didn't personally know or love God. Ruth's *personal faith* in God was what made the difference. Her virtuous conduct was the product of her salvation. Such it always the case with true believers. When you truly place your faith in Christ, you will also *turn* your heart and mind from sin to God. This is called “repentance.” Faith and repentance result in

salvation; and from salvation spring godly works, which "follow" the believer.

**Conclusion:** As we close this morning, I would ask: “Do you personally know the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ? Have you taken refuge in the house with the scarlet cord—that place of redemption in Christ? You’ve been “bought” by Christ’s blood, because Christ shed his blood for the whole human race; but, have you chosen to have *Him* as your Kinsman Redeemer? If not, I urge you to believe on Jesus Christ today, and be saved! If you are saved already, I would ask: How much do you love your Redeemer? Do your works (or *lack* of them) reveal that that passionate love that you once had for the Lord has cooled down? If so, let go of the things of this world that have caught your eye, and fall back in love with your Saviour today!