

Three Women in Scripture

One of the keys to the Word of God's interpretation is that scriptures must be read in their context to get the proper understanding.

Whenever a phrase, a verse or a passage is taken out of the context in which God has placed it in His Word, there is no guarantee that it will have the same meaning that God intended. For instance, someone may point out that Psalm 14:1 says "there is no God" but fail to point out that the phrase that immediately precedes this. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God". That entire phrase certainly carries a far different meaning than just the partial "there is no God".

Usually, when we think of the context, we think in terms of the verses immediately preceding or following the verse or passage in question. But there are some passages in Scripture where the context is more remote. It can be chapters removed from the passage in question or even more remote than that. Perhaps the highest level of context is to see the entire Bible as the revelation of God's plan of redemption – why man needed redemption; what God did to bring about redemption; and what still needs to be done to fulfill that redemption.

I want to share with you today some passages of Scripture that can only be truly appreciated in the light of God's plan of redemption (which of course, centered on Jesus Christ). Incidentally, I first shared this at a fellowship in the Quillens home years ago. But now, with the capacity to record and preserve teachings on the Faithful in Christ website, I thought it would be beneficial to repeat this and get it recorded. We are going to be reading the records of three different women, so I have titled this "Three Women in Scripture". We begin in the book of Genesis.

Chapter 37 of Genesis begins the record of Joseph, and that record is picked up again in Chapter 39. The entirety of Chapter 38 is a figure of speech called a digression. It is inserted here right in the middle of the story of Joseph and the casual Bible reader might well ask “Why is this in here?”. As we will see when we read Chapter 38, it does not appear to add much to the ongoing narrative, and it surely does not present the people involved in the best light. But, we are introduced to the first of our three women: Tamar.

Genesis 38:1 – 30.

So, there is the 38th chapter. It leaves us with some questions – perhaps the biggest question is “Why is this included?”. We will hold on that for now and go to the record of our second woman: Rahab.

Joshua 2:1 – 24

Joshua 6:22 – 25

Again here, after reading these passages, there are some questions. Perhaps one question would be “Why so much detail about Rahab?”. We all agree that she was brave, but it seems to be detail out of proportion to what she contributed. There is more about Rahab than there is about the actual invasion of Jericho. But again, we will leave that for now and go to our third woman: Ruth.

Ruth 1:1 – 22

And so, begins the beautiful story of Ruth. It is a wonderful record of love, loyalty and God’s providence. We are introduced to Boaz, who unlike the kinsman that is nearer than him, buys the field from Naomi and also the hand of Ruth the Moabitess. But it is not until the end of the Book of Ruth that we start to put all that we have read together in our understanding.

Ruth 4:18 – 22

Pharez, remember, was the son of Tamar back in Genesis 38. When the record of Joseph began there, it is important to remember that Joseph was not in the Christ line. Neither were Moses, Aaron or Joshua. So Genesis 38 showed us Pharez being born and now Ruth 4 picks that up and takes it all the way to David. This IS the Christ line and now we have one more passage to read to tie it all together.

Matthew 1:1 – 6a

Tamar, Rahab and Ruth – other than Mary the actual mother of Jesus Christ – are the only women named in this royal genealogy of Jesus Christ. When you read about Boaz in the Book of Ruth, it doesn't mention that his mother was Rahab. But now we see why the records of those three women were included in the Old Testament. To really understand those passages, one needs context very far removed from the original passages.

A couple more points before we close: there was a nearer kinsman than Boaz with the right to redeem the fields and marry Ruth. He refused because he did not want to mar, put a blemish on, his inheritance by marrying a woman from Moab. Perhaps one reason that Boaz went ahead and took Ruth is that his mother was Rahab, also not an Israelite.

Also, there is nothing in those OT records to indicate that these three women viewed their lives as being especially significant. One, Tamar, had been rejected by the family she had married into. Rahab had seen her hometown destroyed and was now what we would refer to today as a war refugee. Ruth's husband had died, and she was now what we would call an immigrant. And yet, God saw their lives as significant enough to name them in the royal genealogy of Jesus Christ. They were significant to the plan of redemption.

Those are Three Women in Scripture.