

The Son of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba
Matthew 1:1-17

Slide 1

Did you know that there are no credentials Jesus' genealogy. In almost every setting, in almost every culture, credentials are important. We call these resumes.

A resume tells where you studied, what degrees or licenses you have, your accomplishments or work experience, the people under whom you've studied or apprenticed, and your references.

When you want a position, a job, or an interview, you usually give the people your resume. They look at it and, if it is impressive, they'll say that they want to interview you further.

However, in ancient times, your resume didn't count for much. It was your genealogy that was all-important. That's why such meticulous records were kept about one's genealogy.

In ancient times, if you wanted a position, you would point to your genealogy that would tell of your ancestors, who they were, who your family was, their place in society, and their character. Your genealogy was vitally important.

That is why Matthew started his Gospel with a genealogy. He wanted people to know who Jesus' ancestors were.

Most people just skim over this list of names, but it's really a fascinating list.

The first two names on the list, David and Abraham, are revered men, but some of the other names in Jesus' genealogy are shocking.

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Matthew began his Gospel with these words, *“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham.”*

Then, in verse 17, Matthew concluded Jesus’ genealogy with, *“Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.”*

There are 42 generations listed in this genealogy, but you have to understand that some names were skipped over or omitted.

Nevertheless, there are all kinds of people listed here, some righteous and others not so righteous.

What I want you to notice today is that there are four women in this genealogy before we get to Mary, the mother of Jesus, but just who were these women? Let me tell you about them.

The first woman mentioned is Tamar. Matthew 1:3, *“Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.”*

We learn about Tamar in Genesis 38. One of Jacob’s sons was Judah who had a son named Er.

When Er was a man his father Judah found him a Canaanite wife named Tamar, but, because of Er’s wickedness, the Lord put Er to death.

Judah then told his second son, Onan, to have a child by Tamar, which was the custom in those days.

Onan didn’t want to father a child by Tamar, so, because of his wickedness, the Lord put Onan to death as well.

Judah then told Tamar to wait until his other son, Shelah, reached maturity at which time he would be given as her husband, but Judah, for some unknown reason, didn't give him to Tamar.

Eventually, Tamar tricked her father-in-law into an intimate encounter. She got pregnant with twin boys named Perez and Zerah. It was this Perez who became part of Jesus' genealogy.

The second woman in the genealogy of Jesus is Rahab. Matthew 1:5a, "*Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.*"

We learn about Rahab in Joshua chapters 2 and 6 when the Israelites entered the Promised Land.

Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who lived in the city of Jericho. She hid two of Joshua's spies and prevented their capture because she had come to believe that the Lord was the one true and living God.

In exchange for her protection, Rahab and her family were spared from death and destruction when the city of Jericho fell.

She became part of God's people and married Salmon and had a child named Boaz, who became the husband of Ruth which brings us to the third woman in the genealogy of Jesus.

Matthew 1:5b, "*Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.*" We learn about Ruth in the book of Ruth.

There we read about a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi who had two sons named Mahlon and Chilion. Because of a famine in Israel, Elimelech and his family left Israel and went to Moab.

While they were there, the sons each married a Moabite girl. Their names were Orpah and Ruth. Eventually, all the men died, and Naomi decided to go back to Israel since the famine had ended.

Orpah remained in Moab, but Ruth went to Israel with Naomi. That's where Ruth met Boaz. They married and had a son named Obed. Their grandson was Jesse, and their great-grandson was David the king.

The fourth woman in the genealogy of Jesus is Bathsheba. Matthew 1:6, *“And Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife.”*

We learn about Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 when King David was living in Jerusalem.

At this time in his life, he had trusted generals who could handle local battles, so he sent his army to battle against the Ammonites while he stayed home.

Late one afternoon, as David was walking on the roof of his house, he saw a beautiful woman bathing. Her name was Bathsheba. She was the wife of one of his officers, Uriah the Hittite, and probably a Hittite as well.

In any event, David called for her, seduced her, and she became pregnant. When David learned of her pregnancy, he tried to cover up his sin by recalling Uriah from the frontline of battle.

But Uriah was a righteous man and wouldn't go home to his wife while his fellow soldiers were still on the battlefield. So, David arranged for him to be killed in the battle.

Then David took Bathsheba as his wife. Because of his sin, the child from that union died at birth, but another child was given to David and Bathsheba, Solomon, who was enfolded in the genealogy of Jesus.

Are you starting to understand how the gospel turns things upside down? None of these women were Israelites. God does have a sense of humor.

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Matthew didn't sugar coat Jesus' genealogy since he included these women, but what you need to understand is that it was uncommon for women to be included in a genealogy.

Normally, one's fathers rather than one's mothers were listed since it was a patriarchal society, and men rather than women were normally listed in the family tree.

The other Gospel author that listed a genealogy was Luke. Interestingly, there are no women listed. So, why did Matthew include women in his?

Matthew deliberately included these four women because they were outsiders. So, what do I mean by outsiders.

First, they were gender outsiders. Like I mention a few minutes ago, genealogies in those days almost always just consisted of men. So, it was highly unusual to have women listed in a genealogy.

Second, they were ethnic outsiders. Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites. Ruth was a Moabite and Bathsheba was probably a Hittite. None of these women were descended from any of the twelve sons of Jacob.

So, thin about that for a moment. This means that Jesus Himself was not ethnically "pure." There were all kinds of Gentile blood mixed into the blood of His ancestors.

And third, they were moral outsiders. Tamar tricked her father-in-law into a sexual relationship with her. Rahab was a professional prostitute.

There is no record that Ruth was immoral, but she was raised a Moabite, so she probably worshiped their gods at some time.

Bathsheba was involved in an adulterous relationship with David. It could be argued that she was overpowered by David's position and that she had no voice in the matter, regardless it was a sin.

Now, here's where the moral outsider gets interesting. You noticed that I keep calling the fourth woman by her name, Bathsheba. However, that's not how she's listed in Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew 1:6b, *"David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife."*

Matthew called her *"Uriah's wife,"* not "Bathsheba." At least three times in the Bible, Bathsheba is not called "Bathsheba" but rather *"Uriah's wife."* Why?

This wasn't a slam against Bathsheba but against David. Remember, David's name was at the head of the list in Jesus' genealogy.

If you wanted one name on your genealogy, it was David, a man after God's own heart. We saw that in our Scripture reading this morning.

David was the ultimate insider. He was a male. He was descended from Judah. He was chosen by God Himself to become king over His people.

He was the greatest king in Israelite history. David was definitely the first person you'd like to have on your family tree, but Matthew masterfully did not write "Bathsheba" but *"Uriah's wife."*

He did that because he wanted his readers to remember the story that brought Bathsheba into the family tree. Not only was she seduced by David, but David had her husband murdered.

David was no better than any of these outsiders. His sins were greater than any of these women.

Pastor Tim Keller makes an astute observation when he says, *“Matthew is saying David the king had no more of a right to go into the presence of a holy God than a prostitute. Yes, immoral, irreligious people don’t deserve God’s blessing, or life with God forever, but neither do religious, moral people.”*

Matthew wanted his readers to understand that the Gospel turns things upside down and one way he indicated that was by including these four women in Jesus’ genealogy.

Slide 4 II.

Another thing you need to understand is that the Gospel is not good advice but Good News. Advice is something that’s offered which you can take or leave.

When I was diagnosed with prostate cancer several years ago, I was offered a lot of advice. It was all well-meaning.

Don’t eat this food. Don’t drink this beverage. Take this medicine. Have it removed, don’t have surgery, get radiation. It was overwhelming.

In the end, it was still up to me to choose what I wanted to do based on all the advice I received.

On the other hand, Good News is about something that has already happened. In 1939, Germany invaded Poland. There were rumors that Hitler wanted to conquer Europe.

At first, it was unbelievable. Soon, people realized that they had better prepare for war. And prepare they did, and a good thing too, because war did come. A very bloody war.

At that point, all kinds of advice was given about how to prepare for war, how to fight the war, and so on. But, eventually, in 1945, the war ended.

And the news—the good news—was announced all over the world. There was nothing that people had to do to prepare for the news.

They simply had to receive it and believe. That's the difference between advice and the Gospel.

Many religions in the world just give advice. They tell their adherents, *"This is what you must do to get right with God:"* pray so many times a day or go to worship so you can appease God or follow these laws, and so on.

That advice only tells people what they must do to please God and earn their way to heaven. Christianity is completely different. It's Good News.

It's the Good News that the battle against sin and Satan has been won. Jesus came to earth from heaven. He lived a perfect and righteous life. He went to the cross and died there to pay the penalty for all our sins.

He defeated sin on the cross. He defeated Satan on the cross. He won the victory by His life and death.

We know that to be true because three days after His crucifixion, death, and burial, God the Father raised Him back to life.

That is Good News. The Gospel is not good advice but Good News.

Slide 5

Conclusion

Since the genealogy of Jesus includes all kinds of people, we must reach out to all kinds of people with the Good News of the Gospel.

The family tree of Jesus contains all kinds of people who were considered outsiders. It shows us that the only way to relate to God is by grace through faith in Jesus alone.

So many people in Jesus' family tree had significant issues that would make one consider them outsiders. They were all equally lost, but God brought them all into Jesus' family tree.

So, let me address those of you who may feel that you don't belong in God's family. Women and men are both in the family tree of Jesus.

Black and white are both in the family tree of Jesus. The prostitute and the king are both in the family tree of Jesus.

It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done. You can belong to the family of God. Ask God right now to give you faith in Jesus and ask Him to enable you to turn from your sin.

Most of you know that you already belong to Jesus. So, let me encourage you to reach out to your family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and strangers with the Good News that Jesus has won the victory over sin and Satan.

Tell them that Jesus wants them to be in His family too.