

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 2

The Genealogy of Jesus

When most people read the Bible and they come to genealogies, their eyes tend to gloss over and most opt to skip over these passages.

A few years ago, I joined Ancestry.com and started building my family tree. While there is nothing on my father's side, there is plenty of information on my mother's side. Originally, I thought that my maternal grandparents had come from Spain. As it turns out, I was able to trace back 5 generations of the Rodriguez clan, all in a town called Hormigueros. Then I did my DNA test and I discovered that not only did it have Spanish DNA, but also Portuguese and among other strands I also had Taino blood. The Tainos were the original settlers of the island Puerto Rico or Boriquén as they called it.

This was important information to me.

For two of the four authors of the Gospels it was important to include Jesus' family tree. While we won't go verse by verse, but today I want to highlight 5 people that were included in Matthew's account and their significance.

The Genealogy of Jesus

Matthew's introduction echoes the language of Genesis. The word translated "genealogy" in the Greek is "genesis" (beginning, origin, birth, family tree). In the Greek the first book of the bible is titled "Genesis" implying that it is a book of beginnings.

Matthew divides his genealogy into 3 groups of 14 that take us from Abraham to David, from David to the Captivity, and from the Captivity to Jesus.

While Luke starts from Joseph and works his way back all the way to Adam, Matthew starts with Abraham, as the father of the people of Israel and works forward to Jesus. Both follow the genealogy of Joseph even though Joseph was not his natural father.

Luke makes this distinction in:

Luke 3:23

being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph,

Jews kept extensive genealogies to establish a person's heritage, legitimacy, and rights. Matthew demonstrates Jesus' legal claim to the throne of David, emphasizing his legal descent from David and Abraham, while Luke focuses more on His biological descent from Adam and David.

Matthew starts by saying this:

Matt 1:1

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

By doing this he implies that he is not only talking about the beginning chapter is his Gospel, but as a title for the entire story to follow: a new beginning with the arrival of Jesus the Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

For a Jewish audience this opening had special significance as it was inseparably intertwined with the covenants God made with Israel. While his everyday historical name

is Jesus, His Hebrew name is Yeshua which means "Yahweh saves". The title of Christ, or anointed one, points back to David as the anointed king of Israel.

First, we need to understand that looking at the narratives of the Gospels, some claimed that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary. After all, Mary became pregnant when she was but engaged to Joseph who had not yet had intimate relations to her. That is why Matthew focuses on His legal descendancy because being a legal descendant of Joseph ties Him to the throne of David. Starting the genealogy linking Jesus to Joseph's family tree give Jesus' legitimacy.

One thing that makes Matthew's genealogy unique is that he includes five women. This is something that was unheard of back then as it was strictly a patriarchal structure.

Tamar

As we look at the first grouping of Jesus' genealogy we find the first woman, Tamar.

Gen 38:6-26

6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death. 8 Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." 9 But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother. 10 And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also. 11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up"—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house.

12 In course of time the wife of Judah, Shua's daughter, died. When Judah was comforted, he went up to Timnah to his sheepshearers, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13 And when Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep," 14 she took off her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, wrapping herself up, and sat at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she had not been given to him in marriage. 15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. 16 He turned to her at the roadside and said, "Come, let me come in to you," for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" 17 He answered, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." And she said, "If you give me a pledge, until you send it—" 18 He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. 19 Then she arose and went away, and taking off her veil she put on the garments of her widowhood.

20 When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite to take back the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. 21 And he

asked the men of the place, "Where is the cult prostitute who was at Enaim at the roadside?" And they said, "No cult prostitute has been here." 22 So he returned to Judah and said, "I have not found her. Also, the men of the place said, 'No cult prostitute has been here.'" 23 And Judah replied, "Let her keep the things as her own, or we shall be laughed at. You see, I sent this young goat, and you did not find her." 24 About three months later Judah was told, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has been immoral. Moreover, she is pregnant by immorality." And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." 25 As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant." And she said, "Please identify whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." 26 Then Judah identified them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah." And he did not know her again.

If not for Tamar, the line of Judah would have come to an end. While what she did was in some ways questionable, and certainly a deception, it was necessary as Judah had not kept his word. At first Judah wants her burned, but as the whole truth comes out, he changes his mind and says, "she is more righteous than I". Thus, Matthew finds her worthy of inclusion in his genealogy.

Tamar thus becomes the first of five women included in the genealogy of Jesus.

Rahab

The two spies sent by Joshua from Shittim came into her house and lodged there (**Josh 2:1-20**). She refused to betray them to the king of Jericho, and when he demanded them, she hid them on the roof of her house with stalks of flax that she had laid in order to dry. She pretended that they had escaped before the shutting of the gate and threw their pursuers off their track. She then told the spies of the fear that the coming of the Israelites had caused in the minds of the Canaanites - "Our hearts did melt for Yahweh your God, he is God in heaven above, and on earth beneath" - and asked that the men promise to spare her father, mother, brothers and sisters, and all that they had. They promised her to spare them provided they would remain in her house and provided she would keep their business secret. Thereupon she let them down by a cord through the window, her house being built upon the town wall, and gave them directions to make good their escape.

For her belief in God and the help she provided the spies this is what the New Testament has to say about her:

Heb 11:31

1 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

James 2:25-26

And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

So here a woman who was a prostitute show her faith through her actions, gains salvation, and gets included in Jesus' genealogy.

Ruth

The history lies in the period of the Judges, at the close of a great famine in the land of Israel. Elimelech, a native of Bethlehem, had, taken refuge in Moab from the famine, with his wife Naomi and two sons. There, after an interval of time which is not more precisely defined, he died (1:3), and his two sons, having married women of Moab, in the course of a further ten years also died, and left Orpah and Ruth widows (Ruth 1:5).

Naomi then decided to return to Palestine, and her two daughters-in-law accompanied her on her way (1:7). Orpah, however, turned back and only Ruth remained with Naomi, journeying with her to Bethlehem, where they arrived "in the beginning of barley harvest" (1:22). The godliness and loyalty of Ruth are demonstrated in the course of the narrative. She refused to abandon her mother-in-law, although she was exhorted three times to do so by Naomi herself, on account of her own great age and the better prospects for Ruth in her own country. Orpah yielded to persuasion and returned to Moab; but Ruth remained with Naomi.

At Bethlehem Ruth employed herself in gleaning in the field during the harvest and was noticed by Boaz, the owner of the field, a near relative of her father-in-law Elimelech. Boaz gave her permission to glean as long as the harvest continued; and told her that he had heard of her loyal conduct toward her mother-in-law. Moreover, he directed the reapers to make intentional provision for her by dropping in her way grain from their bundles (2:15 f). She was thus able to return to Naomi in the evening with a whole bundle of barley (verse 17).

In answer to Naomi's questioning, she explained that her success in gleaning was due to the good-will of Boaz, and the orders that he had given. She remained accordingly and gleaned with his maidens throughout the barley and wheat harvest, making her home with her mother-in-law (2:23).

Naomi was anxious for the remarriage of Ruth, both for her sake and to secure compliance with the usage and law of Israel; and sent her to Boaz to recall to him his duty as a close male relative of her late husband Elimelech (Ruth 3:1 f). Boaz acknowledged the claim and promised to take Ruth in marriage, failing fulfilment of the legal duty of another relative whose relationship was nearer than that of Boaz himself (3:8-13). Naomi was confident that Boaz would fulfil his promise and advised Ruth to wait patiently.

Boaz then adopted the customary and legal measures to obtain a decision. He summoned the other relative before ten elders at the gate of the city, related to him the circumstances of Naomi's return, with her desire that Ruth should be married and settled with her father-in-law's land as her marriage-portion, and called upon him to declare his intentions. This relative, whose name and degree of relationship are not stated, declared his inability to undertake the charge, which he renounced in legal form in favor of Boaz according to ancient custom in Israel (Ruth 4:6 ff). Boaz accepted the charge thus transferred to him, the elders and bystanders bearing witness and pronouncing a formal blessing upon the union of Boaz and Ruth (4:9-12). Upon the birth of a son in due course the women of the city congratulated Naomi, in that the continuance of her family and house was now assured, and the latter became the child's nurse. The name of Obed was given to the boy; and Obed through his son Jesse became the grandfather of David (compare Matt 1:5-6; Luke 3:31-32).

Thus Ruth, who was not a Jew, became an ancestor of Jesus and worthy of being noted in Matthew's genealogy.

Bathsheba

Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah. David had spied on her from a rooftop while she was bathing and then convinced her to sleep with him. She had illicit intercourse with David while her husband was absent at the siege of Rabba. Uriah was slain as a result of an underhanded strategy of David, who had sent him to the front to die. After a period of mourning for her husband, Bathsheba was legally married to the king (11:3-27). The child that was the fruit of her adulterous intercourse with David died, but in time she became the mother of four sons-Solomon, Shimea (Shammua), Shobab, and Nathan (2 Sam 5:14; 1 Chron 3:5). When Adonijah, who was David's eldest son, before he became King of all Israel, attempted to set aside in his own favor the succession promised to Solomon, Bathsheba was employed by Nathan the prophet to inform the king of the conspiracy and received from him an answer favorable to Solomon who was her oldest son.

Bath-sheba is said by Jewish tradition to have composed and recited Prov 31 by way of admonition or reproof to her son Solomon on his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. The rabbis describe her as a woman of vast knowledge and a highly-cultivated mind, to whose education Solomon owed much of his wisdom and reputation, and even a great part of the practical philosophy embodied in his Proverbs.

Thus, this adulteress is also included in the lineage of Jesus.

Mary

Of course, the lineage which leads to Joseph, includes Mary the mother of Jesus.

Conclusion

The inclusion of these five women is unusual, since descent (At that time) was usually traced through men as the head of the family. Rahab and Ruth were Gentiles. Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba were women of questionable character. The lineage is comprised of men, women, adulterers, prostitutes, heroes and Gentiles.

Jesus, who comes from all of them will be the Savior of all, regardless of background.