

THE WOMEN IN MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY

The Gospel of Matthew's genealogy of Jesus with its inclusion of four women (five when including Mary the mother of Jesus) give those who believe in the virgin birth an opportunity to promote the incorrect view that women were considered when determining whether someone, such as Jesus, was of the kingship lineage. Those that hold this view seem to be suggesting that these women are part of the direct Judaeon lineage, although they often would not openly say so, because to do so would cause uncertainty in the authenticity of Matthew's genealogy. Why does it seem church clergy think nothing of creating uncertainty in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus? Because Matthew's genealogy of Jesus through his father, Joseph, weakens the theory of the virgin birth. This tract will examine this issue.

Matthew presents the lineage of Jesus from the time of Abraham to whom God made the promise that through his seed would God's chosen people be called out and through to King David to whom God made the subsequent promise of the Messianic kingship proceeding directly from his bloodline. The lineage of Matthew continues from King David right through to the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. This lineage of the Messiah was promised by God to come from the progeny of these men. We should be aware that Matthew (or Levi), who was one of the twelve called out by Jesus, had walked, talked and was a constant companion of the Messiah of God. Some imply that Matthew was a biased person in his writings for the benefit of the Jewish readers by 'making' Jesus' genealogy come from David, thus making it more acceptable to the Jews. Those who push the notion that Matthew was biased should realize they are actually defaming the writings of one of the twelve foundations of Christ's Church. Read Ephesians 2:19, 20: ***“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”*** Another scripture that describes Matthew's relationship with Jesus and the church is from Revelation 21:14: ***“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*** Based on these scriptures, Matthew, who was one of the twelve disciples, should be considered to have been a man of integrity, thus, would have wrote with accuracy in his genealogy. We should not second-guess the integrity of the writer when many of us have our own conceived biases and agenda. Everyone that is listed in the Matthew genealogy is of Judaeon bloodline with the exception of four of the five women, who were Gentiles. Even the fifth woman, Mary, although Hebrew, may have come from the tribe of Levi rather than the tribe of Judah because of her kindred with Elisabeth, who was a 'daughter of Aaron'.

Churches that promote doubt about Matthew's genealogy should be wary of what they are doing as they demean this disciple whom the Son of God chose and who had faithfully followed his Teacher, having learned directly from him, and is one of the very foundations of his church. Due to Matthew's position in the church, there should be no question about his integrity and his knowledge of Jesus' background. As a former tax collector, he was a man that would have expertise in the keeping of accurate records. He was also Jesus' constant companion for over three years.

Let us now delve into the women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy. The first woman mentioned in his genealogy of Jesus is Tamar, in Matthew 1:3: ***“And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar...”*** (or Tamar). The story is found in Genesis 38. Judas (or Judah) descended from Abraham and was the father of the tribe of Judah. He took a Canaanite wife, the daughter of Shua, and she bore Judah three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. Judah took a wife (Tamar) for his first born son Er, who died suddenly. Judah then instructed his second son, Onan, to marry his dead brother's wife and raise seed up to him, but Onan also died soon after. Then Judah told Tamar to return to her father's house until Shelah, Judah's third son, was grown.

As time passed, Judah's wife died. Tamar heard that her father-in-law's wife was dead and that Judah was coming to Timnah to shear his sheep. Tamar, at the appointed time, sat by the way to Timnah, having covered herself with a veil. She saw Shelah, Judah's third son, and saw that he was grown. Judah saw this woman by the road way and thought her to be a harlot because her face was covered. Judah went in unto her for the price of a kid from his flock, and he pledged his promise of a kid from his flock by giving Tamar his signet, bracelets and staff. Later, when Judah sent his friend with a kid to fulfill his pledge, he returned without fulfilling Judah's pledge because he could not find her (ie. Tamar). Time passed and a message had come to Judah that his daughter-in-law had played the harlot, and she was now with child. Tamar had conceived the child by Judah. Unaware that it was his child, Judah said: ***"Bring her forth and let her be burnt."*** Genesis 38:24. When she came forth, she presented the signet, bracelets and staff that Judah previously gave her and said: ***"By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff."*** verse 25. Judah acknowledged his pledge. When the time came that she gave birth, twins were born unto Judah and they were named Phares and Zarah. Phares continued to carry the seed down to his descendant, David.

There are those who suggest that Tamar was a harlot. It should be pointed out that the scriptures does not say she was a harlot, it says that ***"When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot..."*** Judah only thought she was a harlot because she was disguised with a veil. In verse 21, it states: ***"Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way side? And they said, There was no harlot in this place."*** Judah's friend could not find Tamar because where Judah consummated with Tamar, the men of that area didn't know of any harlot there. This further supports that Tamar was not an actual harlot. The important point for consideration is that Judah was the father of the tribe of Judah from which our Lord, Jesus was prophesied to come out of, and Tamar had the blessing of conceiving the seed that came from Judah.

The second woman mentioned in Matthew's genealogy is the Canaanite, Rahab, who was known to be an actual harlot. Her story is in the book of Joshua, chapter 2. Joshua had sent two men to spy out Jericho, and they lodged at a harlot's house named Rahab. The king of Jericho was informed about spies lodging at the harlot's house. She told the king that the men had slipped out during the shutting of the gates at dark, but in reality, she had secretly brought them up to the roof of the house and hid them. While the king's servants searched for them outside the city gates, the men had laid down to rest. Rahab spoke to them of the many things she had heard that God had done for their people. In return for her help, she asked them to swear to save the lives of her family. Rahab's house was located on the city wall, and she helped them down with a cord through the window after instructing them to go to the mountains before the king's soldiers returned. After three days, the two men left the mountains and returned to Joshua. Shortly after, Joshua besieged the city with seven priests leading the army while they blew their ram horns (read Joshua 6). They circled the city once a day for six days, and then on the seventh day, they compassed the city seven times, and on the seventh circling of the city, the people shouted with a great shout, as they had been instructed, and the city wall fell down flat. With the wall down, the army then went in and everyone that was in the city of Jericho was utterly destroyed, both men and women. However, Joshua had arranged for the two men who had spied on the city to fetch Rahab, her father, mother, brethren, and all her kindred and brought them out. Then Joshua had the city burned. The husband of Rahab was the Judaeon, Salmon (Matthew 1:5), the descendant of the seed of Judah, the father of the tribe of Judah. Salmon was descended directly from Abraham by the succession of seed. Rahab was a Canaanite woman and had no descent from Abraham, but she was blessed, as was Tamar, for the honour of bearing children of that bloodline which gave us our Messiah.

The third woman spoken of in Matthew's genealogy is Ruth. Her story is in the book called after her which is found in the Old Testament. An outline of her known history follows. A man named Elimelech from Bethlehem of Judah, went to the country of Moab during a famine in Judah, and with him was his wife, Naomi, and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Naomi's husband died, leaving her with the two sons. Soon after, the sons took wives of the Moabite (ie. Gentile) women and their names were Orpah and Ruth. After ten years, Mahlon and Chilion died, leaving Naomi alone with her daughter-in-laws. In time, Naomi decided to return to Judah upon hearing the famine was over and that conditions in Judah were good. She then told her two daughter-in-laws to return to their mother's houses, so Orpah then kissed her mother-in-law and went back to her people and their gods. But Ruth said to Naomi: ***"Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee: for 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 be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."*** Ruth 1:16, 17. The two women, Naomi and Ruth, went out from the land of Moab and came to Bethlehem of Judah. Ruth went and gleaned ears of corn in a field that belonged to Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi's husband, Elimelech. Boaz was also from the tribe of Judah, and a Bethlehemite, who was well-known and an important man of wealth. Boaz met Ruth and provided help for her, as he had heard good reports about her. When Ruth told Naomi the name of the man in whose field she gleaned, Naomi recognized the man, and in joy told Ruth that Boaz was her kin. Ruth continued to glean in the field with Boaz's other working maidens until the end of the barley and wheat harvest. When Boaz was winnowing barley, Ruth came near but stayed a distance and after he had ate and drank, he laid down and slept. Ruth came in unto him, uncovered his feet and laid down at Boaz's feet. At midnight, he awoke: ***"And he said Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid for thou art a near kinsman."*** Ruth 3:9. Then Boaz told Ruth there was a kinsman nearer than he, but if that kinsman would not perform his part unto her (ie. redeem her), then he would do the part of a kinsman. Boaz then went with ten elders and sat down at the city gate with the kinsman he spoke of to Ruth. The kinsman said to Boaz that he did not want to redeem the land of Naomi for himself, and he told Boaz to redeem his right for himself. Then the kinsman took off his shoe to confirm the changing and redeeming, and then Boaz bought all the land of Naomi and her deceased sons before the witnesses. Then Ruth became Boaz's wife and she conceived and bore a son named Obed: ***"Now these are the generations of Pharez: Pharez begat Hezon, And Hezon begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab, And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon, And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David."*** Ruth 4:18 to 22. Much has been written about Ruth, a Gentile woman, because of her great loyalty to Naomi, and also because of her great love for God's people and of her leaving her own kin to become one of God's people. However, she was not born of the Judaean lineage. She was a Moabite by birth, but she was blessed to conceive through Boaz, who was a Bethlehemite of Judaean lineage, offspring that would bring forth God's promised Messiah.

The fourth woman mentioned in Matthew's genealogy is Bathsheba. Scripture refers to her only as the wife of Uriah in Matthew 1:6. Uriah was a soldier of Hittite origin in David's army, so Uriah was not of Judaean blood. Why he is probably mentioned in the genealogy is because of the wrong done against him by David. In the war with Ammon, while David had stayed in Jerusalem, he had sent Joab to destroy Ammon and Joab now laid siege to the capital, Rabbah. One evening at dusk, David saw from his roof a beautiful woman washing. He had an inquiry made of who the woman was and was told that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. David arranged to have Bathsheba brought to him and he laid with her and then in the morning, she returned to her house. From this encounter, Bathsheba became pregnant and when David became aware of it, he had Joab send Uriah to him. After a short stay, David sent Uriah back with a letter for Joab, saying in it: ***"Set ye***

Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him that he may be smitten and die.” II Samuel 11:15. Joab followed David's instruction and Uriah died in battle.

When Bathsheba had finished the mourning period for her husband, David brought Bathsheba into his house and she became his wife. The child which she had with David, conceived in adultery, was born a boy, and subsequently died. Nathan the prophet was sent unto David and he spoke a parable to him of a rich man and a poor man. In the parable, the poor man had only one little ewe lamb in contrast to the rich man who had a large flock. A traveller came to the rich man's house, and the rich man, instead of using one of his own lambs, took the poor man's lamb for the traveller to eat. When David heard this, he became very angry against the rich man in the story and said that the rich man should die and the poor man restored fourfold for his stolen lamb. Then Nathan said to David: ***“Thou art the [rich] man.”*** David had, while Uriah lived, forced his wife to commit adultery and then arranged to have Uriah killed, thereby breaking God's Commandments. David repented for what he had done and Nathan the prophet informed him that ***“The LORD also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”*** II Samuel 12:13. The events of this story are found in II Samuel 11:1 to 12:23. Given this was a notable event within Israel's history, Matthew's readers would have better clarity into the Gentile personages he cited in his genealogy, such as Uriah and his wife.

For those who project the notion that because certain women are mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, it is a deviation from the promised seed lineage, this type of notion is a flagrant attempt to deceive because in each of these cases, the seed of the man carries the bloodline, not the Gentile women that were their wives. The wives mentioned were known for the important roles they played in Jewish history.

In the cases of every one of the four women described thus far, they were not of the Judaeon lineage, nor even Hebrew by descent. While Joseph's wife, Mary, was definitely Hebrew, we do not know for certain if she came directly out of the line of Judaeon descent. Many of the persons in Luke's genealogy are not recorded anywhere in the Old Testament. And because of these unknown (ie. unrecorded in the Old Testament) descendants from David's son, Nathan, we have no true knowledge of the offshoots. But we do know that Mary's pedigree is more than likely affiliated with the tribe of Levi because of her relationship with Elisabeth, who was her cousin (Luke 1:38). Some people say this does not necessarily make Elisabeth of the tribe of Levi, just because she was the wife of Zacharias. But let us remember: Zacharias was very righteous and dedicated to his Jewish faith, therefore, as a faithful Jew, he would have picked a woman of the Levi lineage to be his wife, thereby, fulfilling Mosaic law and tradition. Furthermore, for Mary to be a cousin to Elisabeth, this means one of Mary's parents was the brother or sister to Zacharias' father. The verse that cannot be rebuked concerning this matter of heritage is found written by the hand of Luke: ***“...a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.”*** Luke 1:5. It is evident that Elisabeth belonged to the lineage of the priesthood and her cousin was Mary, the wife of Joseph, and Joseph's lineage was from David. There is actually very little in the scriptures about the life of Mary, outside of the birth of Jesus. There are instances where Mary encounters her son, Jesus, during his ministry and crucifixion but no details of her personal life are known. Following are some texts that mention appearances of Mary that you may want to read: Luke 2:41 to 51; John 2:1 to 10; Luke 8:19 to 21; Mark 3:31 to 35; Matthew 12:46 to 50; Matthew 13:54 to 56; John 6:41,42; Mark 6:3,4; Acts 1:13,14, and John 19:25 to 27.

The criticism of Matthew's genealogy is unfounded, since it is more accurate in the knowledge of known people than Luke's genealogy and it follows the Judaeon lineage of the kingship from David, which is essential for establishing that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Remember that in establishing one's ancestry, lineages were traced through the father, not the mother. Luke's genealogy is not that of Jesus' father, but is of Mary's, and where it speaks of

Joseph as being the 'son' of Heli (or Eli), the text should read 'son-in-law' (Luke 3:23). Luke did not get his information by direct acquaintance with those who actually played a part in the life of Jesus, such as Matthew, who had direct experiences with the Messiah and his fellow disciples. Luke, we are told, received his information from men who were eye-witnesses to Jesus' life. The crux of the matter is all the women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy were not included by Matthew to suggest the bloodline went through them since it was their husbands, who were of the tribe of Judah, that were included in the genealogy to show the unbroken bloodline from King David, through to Jesus' father, Joseph. Remember that the promised seed was to come out of David's descendants, and the tribe of Judah.

In summary, the forementioned women from Matthew's genealogy have no bearing on the ancestral bloodline of Jesus, other than they were the wives of Judaeans, through whom Jesus' bloodline was determined. The contribution of those women was the blessing that came from conceiving of seed and giving birth to those counted in the Judaeans' kingship line. One would assume that there could be no greater joy and blessing for a woman, especially a Gentile woman, than to carry the seed which would eventually bring forth the everlasting King and Saviour of mankind.