

**GRACE TO SINNERS**  
**December 10, 2017**  
**Matthew 1:1-21**

Matthew wrote to demonstrate to a Jewish audience that Jesus is their Messiah foretold by their prophets. He included at least 40 Old Testament quotations, and various Jewish assumptions. For example, he began with a genealogy. What book would begin with a genealogy? One written for first-century Jews. Genealogy was vital for tribal identity, which determined land ownership, vocation and the privileges pronounced by Jacob upon each tribal forefather and his descendants (Genesis 49). To demonstrate that Jesus is King of the Jews, Matthew began by tracing His descent from Abraham through King David, establishing Jesus' royal, Jewish pedigree.

Matthew was not the first gospel written. But its "Jewishness" put it first in order of New Testament books, connecting the Hebrew Old Testament to its New Testament fulfillment in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The genealogy begins with Abraham and concludes with "Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (v. 16). Upon this Hebrew foundation Matthew introduces the King of the Jews, His teaching and His work.

The genealogy is arranged in three 14-name groups—another Jewish assumption. Three represented divine perfection and seven spiritual perfection. Fourteen is seven compounded. Forty names were included—40 the number of probation and trial. Hereby Matthew sets forth Christ's birth as the culmination of divine and spiritual perfection, terminating Israel's long "wilderness" of anticipation.

Only four women are named in this genealogy, and they are our focus this morning. Why did Matthew name only four? Why these four? What is their significance, and what instruction is there in his focus upon them?

**Tamar** was a Canaanite of whom Judah, father of the kingly tribe, said, "she hath been more righteous than I" (Genesis 38:26). Her commitment to God-approved Hebrew custom preserved the tribal heritage of Judah when he was reckless regarding its continuance. Thereby she ensured its kingly legacy, which was fulfilled in David, in the king's descendant from David, and especially Christ, fulfilling God's covenant with David: "I will set up thy seed after thee . . . I will establish his kingdom . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (II Samuel 7: 12, 13).

**Rahab** was a Canaanite, remembered perpetually as "Rahab, the harlot." Although her actions were less than righteous, they were expressions of faith by which Israel's spies were protected and enabled to possess the land God promised to them. Graciously, God brought her into Israel's inheritance, and made her a mother from whom Christ came. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not" (Hebrews 11:31).

**Ruth** was a Moabite, remembered for her conversion unto Israel's God, expressed in her memorable covenant, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1:16). Leaving her homeland and her family, she became a mother in Israel through whom Christ entered humanity.

**Bathsheba** was the wife of a noted warrior in David's army. David committed adultery with her, then had her husband put to death (II Samuel 11). Yet God turned hers and David's sin unto His own honor, graciously making her the mother Solomon, and a mother in the line of Christ.