



From Unholy to Holy: The Four Female Ancestors of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew

Ruth Mellinkoff, Christine Petra Sellin

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Among the forty ancestors of Jesus Christ listed in the Gospel of Matthew (1-17), in addition to Mary, four women are mentioned. They are Tamar (not King David's daughter raped by Amnon, but the widow Tamar of Gen. 38), Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, each with a questionable reputation. Having lost two husbands, both sons of Judah, Tamar poses as a prostitute in order to be impregnated by her father-in-law and thus perpetuate his line; Rahab, a prostitute of Jericho, hides Joshua's spies; Ruth, a widow, manipulates herself into marriage with Boaz, a kinsman of Naomi. Finally, there is Bathsheba, the "wife of Uriah," whom King David takes in adultery and eventually marries, and who ultimately bears Solomon, the future king. These four women do not appear in the other gospels or in other early Christian texts-with the exception of commentaries and exegeses attempting to explain why Matthew chose to include them. In the Jewish world of Matthew, genealogies rarely included women. What then was his intention? And why, if he wanted to include women, didn't he include those with irreproachable reputations, such as Sarah or Rachel?

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