

# Unlikely

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We all know about:

- Joseph and Mary
- the Inn of Bethlehem
- the manger
- the angels
- the shepherds
- the star
- the wise men

They're all part of the wonderful story we remember and tell this time of year. There's more to the story, though. Obscure and often overlooked, buried in Matthew's genealogy and leading up to the birth of Christ are four women.

**Matthew 1:1-6** – <sup>1</sup> The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: <sup>2</sup> Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. <sup>3</sup> Judah begot Perez and Zerah by **Tamar**, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. <sup>4</sup> Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. <sup>5</sup> Salmon begot Boaz by **Rahab**, Boaz begot Obed by **Ruth**, Obed begot Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by **her (Bathsheba) who had been the wife of Uriah.**

Most Christians don't get excited about the genealogies; they are the sections of Scripture that we typically skim over. But there's something very unique about the inclusion of these four women.

It was not customary in those days for women to be a part of such listings. As a matter of fact, women then had little or no legal rights, and were merely the possession of their fathers or husbands.

In the regular form of morning prayer, a Jewish man thanked God that He had not made him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.

Consider these four women—all ancestors of Jesus—that Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, included in his Gospel: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba.

**TAMAR** (Genesis 38)

This woman was married to one of the sons of Judah. Her husband died, leaving her childless. She married his brother (according to a custom of that day), but he died, also leaving her childless. Judah told her to wait for his youngest son, but really had no intention of having them marry (he probably considered her to be “bad luck,” the cause of his first two sons’ deaths). Tamar then posed as a prostitute and had a sexual encounter with Judah, her father-in-law. Another of Jesus’ ancestors (Perez) was born of this illicit act.

### **RAHAB**

Rahab was a Canaanite woman and **a prostitute** in Jericho. However, she came to recognize Jehovah as the true God, saved the Hebrew spies, and through faith, found the favor of God and became a part of God’s covenant people. She said, “...the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (Joshua 2:11). The “scarlet cord” she tied in her window to bring safety and deliverance to her family is considered to be a type of the blood of Christ (Joshua 2:15-21). Rahab is listed in the great “Hall of Faith” (Hebrews 11:31) and is also mentioned by James as an example of faith (James 2:25). Rahab later married an Israelite and became an ancestress not only to Jesus, but (according to rabbinic tradition), an ancestress **to eight of Israel’s prophets, including Jeremiah.**

### **RUTH**

**She was a woman of Moab, a despised and outcast people.** The Moabites and the Ammonites **had their origin through incest** when Lot’s two daughters got their father drunk and became pregnant by him (Genesis 19:30-37). Deuteronomy 23:3 says, “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever...” Though not part of the commonwealth of Israel, Ruth displayed courageous love and unshakeable loyalty (Ruth 1:16-17), became the great-grandmother of King David, and took her place in the lineage of Christ.

### **BATHSHEBA**

The woman David had **an adulterous affair** with before he put her husband, Uriah, to death. After marrying David, she became the mother of Solomon and, like the other women mentioned, is an ancestress of Jesus.

These women were outcasts and outsiders! They had either engaged in shameful actions, or they were from shameful backgrounds.

What is amazing is that Matthew made no attempt to cover any of this up! The Bible doesn’t “candy coat” the facts. Instead, he highlighted these four women in an age when women were typically ignored.

Further, he neglected to mention any of the other women in Jesus' lineage, even "respectable women" such as Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah.

***William Barclay said of these four women***, "If Matthew had ransacked the pages of the Old Testament for improbable candidates he could not have discovered four more incredible ancestors for Jesus Christ. But, surely, there is something very lovely in this. Here at the very beginning of the gospel we are given a hint of the all-embracing width of the love of God. God can find his servants amongst those from whom the respectable orthodox would shudder away in horror."

**Jesus has broken down the wall of separation!**

- The outsiders have become insiders.
- Rejected ones have been accepted.
- People who were put down have been lifted up.
- Those that were cast out have been brought in.
- The forsaken have been embraced.