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## **Women in Jesus Genealogy**

**Shanthi Nehemiah, M.A., M.Phil.**

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*Frailty, thy name is woman* – says the famous dramatist Shakespeare. But five in the Bible have disproved this statement.

Women, who are considered fragile and were looked down upon, are appreciated much by their Creator. God treats everyone equally regardless of who they are. When women were treated with contempt, the Savior of humankind, Jesus, gives a special place for women. Yes, He looks only at the heart of His creations.

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the *LORD* does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16: 7

## **An Important Place for Women in the Genealogy of Jesus**

Women have a very special place in God’s heart. Contrary to Jewish tradition, some women have been given importance in the genealogy of Jesus. Along with men in Jesus’ genealogy, these women are given a special mention for their faith and firm stand which they took in the time of adversity.

The reference to five women in the genealogy of Jesus has doubly raised the importance and position of women in Jewish society.

## **Five Women in the First Chapter of Matthew’s Gospel**

We meet five women in the first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel in the New Testament. There were thousands of women in the genealogy of Jesus but only five have been mentioned. All these five women, namely, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, and Mary the mother of Jesus share many things in common which make them shining stars in the genealogy of Jesus. The mention of these five women in the first page of New Testament is something special and amazing.

## **The Old Testament Convention**

In the Old Testament, in every genealogy, it is the men’s names that are mentioned, but, in the New Testament, we see some women mentioned in Jesus’s genealogy. What a wonderful privilege!

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Women in Jesus Genealogy

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers. Judah begot Perez and Zerah by **Tamar**, Perez begot Hezron, and Hezron begot Ram. Ram begot Amminadab, Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon. Salmon begot Boaz by **Rahab**, Boaz begot Obed by **Ruth**, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been **the wife of Uriah**. Solomon begot Rehoboam, Rehoboam begot Abijah, and Abijah begot Asa. Asa begot Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat begot Joram, and Joram begot Uzziah. Uzziah begot Jotham, Jotham begot Ahaz, and Ahaz begot Hezekiah. Hezekiah begot Manasseh, Manasseh begot Amon, and Amon begot Josiah. Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel begot Abiud, Abiud begot Eliakim, and Eliakim begot Azor. Azor begot Zadok, Zadok begot Achim, and Achim begot Eliud. Eliud begot Eleazar, Eleazar begot Matthan, and Matthan begot Jacob. And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of **Mary**, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ. Mathew 1: 1- 16

## **Tamar**

The story of the first woman **Tamar** is seen in the Book of Genesis 38. Tamar had the ability to overcome all odds and harsh situations in her life and pursue her goal successfully. In people's eyes Tamar would have been a woman of bad and immoral character. She defied all odds when she made decisions quite unacceptable to society. This is how the story goes.

Tamar was married to a "wicked" man called Er. She had undergone unspeakable trauma which might moved God to defend her cause. God removed Er from Tamar's life once for all. Onan, the younger brother of Er, marries the young widow to fulfill God's law. But this Onan was more cruel than his brother Er, for he refused to let Tamar bear children so that the lineage of Judah would continue. In the end, he also died. Tamar underwent great agony and humiliation. The trauma takes a turn for the worse when Judah, her father-in-law, sends her away to her father's place.

Then Judah said to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father’s house till my son Shelah is grown.” For he said, “Lest he also die like his brothers.” And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house. Gene 38: 11.

Thus, Judah prevented her from getting married. Robbed of her youth, pleasure, right, Tamar desired to continue the lineage and she was so strong that she took a bold and an unusual step. How much pain she would have undertaken to hide her identity from her father-in-law! Judah has slept with her but still couldnot recognize her personality or voice.

What a fantastic masquerading it must have been? Through this bold and courageous step Tamar fulfilled God’s promise and prophecy and had prevented the tribe of Judah from extinction. In verse 26, we see Judah’s confession,

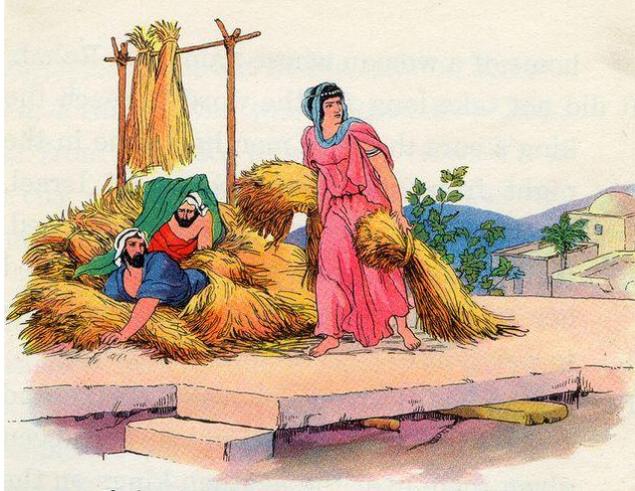
So Judah acknowledged them and said, “She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son.”

## **Rahab**

The second woman is in the book of Joshua, where we read about the story of **Rahab**. Rahab is a woman who earned her livelihood by prostitution. She was a heathen. She did not have a good past. She may have been driven into this type of lifestyle because of poverty or a dire need. Rahab may have sinned.

There was only one thing she did right in her life. She hid the two men sent by Joshua to spy on the land especially Jericho. These men were being pursued.

Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate. (Joshua 2:4)



This one right act that she did, had undone all her wrongs. Rahab dared to hide the men. The bold step to help people in trouble had saved her family, and all the generations that followed her, and had even earned her an everlasting place in the Bible.

The tenacity of Rahab needs to be appreciated. When others would fear and dread to do such a thing, she came out of her way, ignoring the threat of her authorities, power and government, to stretch her helping hand. Without any hesitation or doubt she readily agreed to hide the men. By faith she knew what was coming to the evil king of Jericho, and took a bold step in favor of righteousness and justice.

Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token,<sup>13</sup> and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”  
Joshua 2: 12

Rahab's belief in was highly rewarded. Her love for her family, a typical woman quality is seen in her readiness to rescue men from the pursuers. The focus here is on a woman's heart. It is her pure, undefiled heart that has earned a place for her in Jesus' genealogy.

## **Ruth**



The third woman is **Ruth**. Her reward is seen in the naming of a biblical book after her name, though it is one of the most sorrowful stories, initially. The story of Ruth is one which bears the stamp of many Indian traits, especially the family set up. Once a girl is married she is destined to be with her in-laws' family. Whatever happens, she has to stay and stick on to her in-laws.

Elimelech's entry into Canaan is something disgusting. When we go away from God's will and territory, there is sure devastation and destruction. Elimelech died, his both sons also died leaving their wives orphaned and widowed. When Chilion's wife, following Naomi's advice, went back to her homeland, Ruth strongly stuck back on to her mother-in-law. Howsoever Naomi persuaded her, Ruth was so strong and determined not to go back to her father's place. She was not ready to turn back from the plough where she got united through marriage.

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you,  
*Or to turn back from following after you;*  
For wherever you go, I will go;  
And wherever you lodge, I will lodge;  
Your people shall be my people,  
And your God, my God.

Where you die, I will die,  
And there will I be buried.  
The LORD do so to me, and more also,  
If anything but death parts you and me.”  
When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she  
stopped speaking to her. (Ruth 1: 14-18)

Unlike the other daughter-in-law, Ruth was not ready to abandon her poor, helpless mother-in-law. The future before her was dark, for Naomi could not give her another son to carry on the lineage, but, still Ruth was so loving and concerned that she left everything behind and saw only her helpless mother-in-law.

How true and apt it is said of Ruth that she is more than seven sons.

... for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons. Ruth 4: 15

She was considered greater than seven sons. What made people to comment so? It was her tenacity, will power and determination to stand by Naomi in times of adversity. Ruth had risen to the occasion, for now she saw it is her duty to be the bread winner for both Naomi and herself. She was a woman of courage because she dared to enter a foreign land and made it hers. What a strong mind she had!

She is really a source of mental power. If we consider anything foreign and strange, it will remain so. Ruth had the broad mind to accept the strange things as her own by which she enjoyed a blessed and happy life. She considered Naomi, her people, her land as her own. As she accepted and owned what was given to her, she enjoys even now a blessing as a member of Jesus' genealogy.

When we are obedient to God and His words, what a blessed life we inherit eternally! The book of Ruth started with a heavy heart where we see people going away from God's land and incurring curse and death upon themselves. The book ends on a happy note where the helpless women find a family life again. Everything is been restored to them. In Ruth chapter 4, we could see Ruth was blessed with a husband, Boaz, Naomi received a grand child as a gift from God. When we return to God, he restores in double measure of what we have lost in our past.

## **Bathsheba**

The fourth woman is **Bathsheba**. She was a woman with a shady past, linked with adultery. In II Samuel 11:4, Bathsheba was introduced as a beautiful grand daughter of Ahitophel , political counselor of King David. As a daughter of a warrior, Eliam and wife of a faithful military soldier Uriah, Bathsheba was not too far from the political influence in

her life. Such a member of an elite warrior family, she readily accepts the invitation of King David and goes to him. “David sent messengers to get her, and she went ...” throws light on the character of Bathsheba at that time. This line suggests that she was young, ambitious and strong-willed enough to seize her chance.

After that affair, she returns to her house and later becomes the wife of David, after Uriah’s death. With the help of the prophet Nathan she plans to seize the throne for her son. She was very conscious that her son should succeed David and not Adonijah, who was the legal heir. In a brilliant speech, she verbally manipulated David to suspect his own son. We could see Bathsheba as a capable, subtle and gifted woman in turning the heart of David from Adonijah. After David’s death, her son Solomon became the king and Bathsheba accepted the title of Queen Mother, She was the first woman to hold such a powerful title in the history of Israel.



*Bathsheba persuading King David to make Solomon his heir to the throne*

The story of Bathsheba is much more complex and difficult to comprehend than the life stories of other women in the genealogy. One feels that she was given to worldly pleasures, or eager to get King David entrapped in affairs with her. She sounds vile and calculative. King David’s actions that relate to Bathsheba also are not above board. But, ultimately, the repentance of King David and the legalization of his marriage with Bathsheba change the progress of the story. It may look as if Solomon was chosen to be the successor to King David because of Bathsheba’s perseverance. Solomon’s pre-eminence later on as a King certainly reveals the hand of God in deciding on the succession issue, much more than the emotional pleas of a mother on behalf of her son.

The tactics of Bathsheba influenced David in making a crucial decision not only for her son but also for herself through her son. Another facet is seen in her caring nature and her

ability to foresee things. She was very calculative and was sure of her security. She was the one who grabbed the situation and chance to safeguard herself and her family. It is her conscious and determined spirit that paved the way for Solomon and Uriah into the list of Jesus' genealogy.

## Mary



The last but not the least is **Mary**, the mother of Jesus. A wonderful character who is worth mentioning is Mary. The first person in New Testament to surrender solely and wholly to God's plan was Mary. She was a righteous woman and described by God as "highly favoured".

And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1: 28- 33)

Mary was an ordinary woman whom God chose to use in an extraordinary way.

”Blessed is the womb that bore and the breast at which You nursed” (Luke 11: 27).

What made people to comment like this ? It is her undoubted obedience and surrender with full humility.

The plight of Mary and the agony which she would have undergone when she experienced the conception cannot be described. A virgin, who was betrothed to Joseph, has conceived before their marriage. What a shame and false accusation she would have met and faced. The people of her time, even her own family members, would not have understood but criticized her if she had explained it all. But she kept everything in her heart and ruminated over it. No one would have believed her if she had shared that she would deliver the Saviour. Because the Saviour was expected to be born in a palace or in a royal family and not in an ordinary family like Mary’s. Mary was sure of God’s words and plan.

Again this woman was also so determined and strong-willed. “Come what may, I’m going to bear this son of God even if the whole world stand against me” was the attitude of Mary. What a staunch stand for a young virgin girl to take at that time? She needs to be saluted and followed for her sheer obedience to the purpose of God at any cost.

Though nothing is said of Mary after the Book of Acts, she deserves our respect as the earthly mother of Jesus. Mary sets the example for us, directing her worship, adoration, and praise to God alone, when she sings:

### **The Song of Mary**

And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name.  
And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted *the* lowly.  
He has filled *the* hungry with good things,  
And *the* rich He has sent away empty.  
He has helped His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of *His* mercy,

As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever.” (Luke 1: 46-55).

### **The Model Testimony of These Women**

All the five women in Jesus’ genealogy need to be praised and these people stand as a testimony to how God looks at people. Certainly he does not go by the appearance but by their attitude and desire. The common thing in the lives of all these women is that they are determined to do something good. They stood strong, unshaken by their decision. They were ready to yield themselves to the cause by all means. They trusted God and men. They were faithful in fulfilling their task. They have led a purpose-driven life, which made the history and the Bible readers to turn to them.

### **The Common Things**

The women from the Old Testament in Jesus’ genealogy are not of Jewish family. Tamar was a Cannanite. Rahab was a heathen. Ruth was Moabite. Bathsheba was also not a Jew. Moreover, what we see in the history of these women is, either they indulge (by the demand of situation) in relationships that were not lawful or they were born out of such relationship. Tamar begot Perez through her relation with her own father-in-law. Ruth was from the lineage of Lot, who had incestuous relation with his own daughter in his drunken state. David begot Solomon, a son through another man’s wife called Bathsheba. All these women had a disgusting, shameful history. Yet, our Lord and Saviour chose this lineage to show the world many things.

### **The Heart of Our Savior**

Why did our Saviour Jesus Christ choose such a shameful race and lineage to come into this world? He has demonstrated that he loves all and he has come not for the righteous but for the sinners to repent from their sins. By His choice of this lineage, He also has raised the level of women in a society where they were doubly marginalized and looked down upon. He has raised them from a degraded position which the Jewish society had given them.

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*Through the Bible with Zac Poonen.*

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Shanthi Nehemiah, M.A., M.Phil.  
Department of English  
Karunya University  
Karunya Nagar  
Coimbatore  
Tamilnadu, India