

Fresh Start

By Jerry Bader

Hiding in Plain Sight

October 28, 2018

I wrote recently on Fresh Start that I read 15 minutes of the Gospels most days and that each time through, I discover something new. I just started a new cycle, returning to Matthew 1:1; the genealogy of Jesus. In past trips, I (very) quickly skimmed Jesus' family tree or skipped it altogether. I saw no value in studying a litany of Old Testament names. This time was different because, since my last read of Matthew, I learned something fascinating about the genealogy. First, it includes five women. It was nothing short of remarkable that women would be listed in a patrilineal genealogy (fathers and sons). And who the women are is also notable:

Tamar

The first woman mentioned earned a spot on the Jesus family tree by disguising herself as a prostitute, seducing her father-in-law, Judah, and becoming pregnant.

Rahab

A Gentile, Canaanite prostitute.

Ruth

A Gentile, Moabite whose own family tree traces back to the incest committed between Lot and his oldest daughter.

Bathsheba

She entered the genealogy by becoming pregnant by King David. (The Bible is unclear whether he forced himself on her. He also arranged her husband's death.)

Mary

The fifth, of course, is the young woman God had chosen to give birth to Jesus.

I'm hardly the first to point out the presence of these women in Jesus' genealogy or their pasts. But as I meditated over the list, something occurred to me. Many people have members of the family tree that we prefer not to discuss. At least some of these women could fall into that category. Yet they are not hidden, they are included on a list that doesn't usually include women.

Consider this – Jesus had an option we didn't. He could have chosen any lineage he wanted by which to arrive on earth! There didn't have to be any skeletons in the Savior's family closet. God decided they belonged there! The only perfect human being ever born came from a very imperfect line. And not by chance.

Perhaps it was a foreshadowing of Jesus not rejecting anyone, which would be the case during his time on earth. Perhaps it is a message to us not to judge too harshly or use as excuses people in our family history. Or perhaps it was God's final act of redemption and grace for women on the list who needed it. I'm guessing it's all the above (and maybe some reasons I haven't thought of yet). In any event there they are, hiding in plain sight in Jesus' genealogy.

This is another fine example of why it's a good idea to visit the Gospels often and not to assume that anything you find there isn't worth a closer look.