

Matthew 1:1-6 | The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ² Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, ³ and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, ⁴ and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, ⁵ and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

Matthew 1:1-6 | Advent: Bathsheba

This is the third week in our Advent series. Advent is a time of looking back on Christ's coming in the flesh and looking forward to Christ's promised return. When the Son of God took on humanity he did not just take on the appearance of man, but took on all that it means to be human. He did not spawn full grown in the middle of the desert. That is not where humans come from. Humans come from humans. We all have a lineage and so too does our Lord. The one who is eternally existent having no beginning and no end has taken upon himself an origin story. Matthew, therefore, begins his gospel with a genealogy.

There are many interpretive threads that we could pick up in Matthew's genealogy but this Advent we are following the thread of the four women; Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. These four women stand out amidst the repeated refrain, "the father of" and raise the question of why Matthew included these four women in particular. There are two similarities that each of the four women share, the first is that they are all gentiles and the second is that they all intervene directly to preserve the promise and the kingdom at critical points in Israel's history. Jesus brings their stories explicitly into his story and we see that their stories, just like ours, find their highest meaning in Christ's story. This week we look at the story of Bathsheba.

1. Bathsheba in the Genealogy

Matthew 1:5-6 | and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

First you'll notice that Bathsheba is not mentioned by name as the other women are. Perhaps to merely mention her without mentioning Uriah would have seemed to gloss over one of the most famous sins of one of the most famous people in scripture. David is not the father of Solomon by his own wife but by the wife of Uriah. Uriah was Bathsheba's husband who David famously killed. Likewise the naming of Bathsheba as primarily the wife of Uriah rather than the wife of David, which she later became, shows us an important point in the genealogy. There is a sense in which the heir of David is not his heir but is the heir of Uriah.

Now its time for me to correct a mistake regarding Bathsheba, the first of two I've made in preaching her story. Firstly, I've said that the similarity between the four women in Matthew's genealogy is that they intervene to protect the line of the king and they are all gentiles. But Bathsheba is not a gentile. My assumption was that Bathsheba was a gentile because she was the wife of Uriah who was a Hittite. Bathsheba was not a gentile but she married Uriah a gentile convert.

Bathsheba's story is one of almost unimaginable hardship that culminates with her preservation of the line of promise and her sitting at the right hand of the king. And here it is that I think a new insight breaks through regarding Matthew's Genealogy with a similarity between the women that is perhaps more important than them all being gentiles, although deeply related. Their lives raise the question, who can be the true husband to the bride? Tamar experiences having no true husband, Rahab the prostitute is a picture of having no true husband, Ruth is a story of losing and gaining a husband, and Bathsheba is a story of losing and gaining a husband. The Genealogy of Christ is at least in part a cry for the true husband of his bride the church, Jesus Christ. Let us look together at Bathsheba's story.

2. Bathsheba, Uriah, David, Solomon

2 Samuel 11:3 | And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

This famous inquiry is made by David of the men in his court as he lounged on his own roof and spied Bathsheba bathing upon hers. The men of the court know precisely who she is and even phrase their answer as though David ought to have known who she was as well. Why ought David to have known who Bathsheba was?

Well she was the daughter of Eliam, one of David's 33 Mighty men, and the wife of Uriah, another one of David's mighty men. These 33 men had been with David since he was pursued by Saul and had no kingdom. It is unthinkable that they didn't know nearly everything about each other. And more than that, seeing that she is the daughter of Eliam means that she was also the granddaughter of Ahithophel (2 Sam 23:34). Ahithophel was David's closest military advisor. It is reported that the words of Ahithophel were like the words of God himself to David (2 Sam 16:23). Ahithophel, father of Eliam, Eliam the father of Bathsheba, Bathsheba the wife of Uriah.

Uriah was a young Hittite who converted under the pastoral guidance of David. It must have been such an obvious marriage. Eliam proud to marry his daughter to a man of such caliber, a brother in arms. Yes a Hittite by birth but among the truest of all Israelites in character. Bathsheba was young, raised in the court of David, her beautiful marriage to Uriah would have been celebrated among all the mighty men. How blind could David

have been to have thought to inquire who she was? This is the type of blindness that must be deliberate. Now to my second mistake in preaching Bathsheba.

The Bible does not hide rape. The story immediately following the story of David and Bathsheba records the rape of Tamar, David's daughter, by Amnon David's son. Her resistance is recorded in detail. But the story of Bathsheba records no resistance. The first time I preached through this story I took this to mean she consented and therefore this was not rape. Yet I confess I had merely adopted the secular framework of consent as the standard of rape. However after working through the details of Bathsheba's lineage, the reality of her youth being spent in the court of King David, the likelihood that she had heard him teach the glories of God to her husband and father and herself. David the one who was thought of as like the very angel of God (1 Sam 29:9). Why no evidence of the young girls resistance? It's not like Bathsheba had her own Torah, she had the teaching of David. Could David not simply have said, "I'm not like other men, you see these many wives of mine? It is not adultery with me." I'm arguing that there is no possibility of consent for a young woman like Bathsheba and King David. This is rape.

After taking Bathsheba for himself she conceives David's child. David seeks to cover his tracks by tricking her husband Uriah. Uriah's character is too strong so David murder's Uriah. David does not abandon Bathsheba but marries her. Their first child dies 7 days after being born. They conceive a second son together named Solomon, Solomon was reported by Nathan the prophet of the Lord to be "the beloved of the Lord." It is likely by the word of this prophet that David and Bathsheba receive the announcement,

1 Chronicles 22:9 Behold, a son shall be born to you who shall be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies. For his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.

Bathsheba is the mother of the child of promise. She clearly understands this and deeply grasps what the child of promise means. Like Eve before her Bathsheba becomes the picture of wisdom as she looks forward to the promised son and by her trust in God through the prophet Nathan, she preserves the kingdom for the child of promise. Now don't we see here more clearly why Matthew's Genealogy calls Solomon the son of David by the wife of Uriah. Is this not the pattern of Levirate marriage we saw with Tamar and Ruth? Her husband was dead, would her next child not be for Uriah's line.

3. Bathsheba's Persistence

By David's sin against Uriah his whole house nearly crumbles. One of his sons Absalom rebels against David, gathering his own army of resistance and pursuing David out of the capital of Jerusalem. Not everyone sides with Absalom but his victory is almost assured because Absalom has an ace in the hole. His chief military strategist is Ahithophel. David's old chief military strategist. The man whose counsel was like the very words of

God to David. Why does Ahithophel side with Absalom against David? Remember, Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather. Could you possibly imagine the pain and inexplicability of Bathsheba's position? Remaining alongside David as her grandfather seeks the destruction of him and his kingdom. Modern commentators relay it as merely Stockholm syndrome. But it wasn't. It was faith. Faith in the promise of God for her son.

At the end of David's life a similar coup is mounted by David's son, Adonijah. He gathers before him a military force and with David nearly dead from old age claims David's throne. But Nathan the prophet, the one who rebuked David coming to the defense of Bathsheba and her late husband, the one who pronounced the blessing upon Solomon, will partner with Bathsheba one final time to see to it her child of promise becomes king.

1 Kings 1:11-12 Then Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king and David our lord does not know it? ¹² Now therefore come, let me give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon.

They hatch a plan, like Rebekah and Jacob, to ensure the right passing of the promise, although this time speaking plainly with no deception. Bathsheba informs David of Adonijah's rebellion. She reminds David of the promise given by God to Solomon, the promise David relayed to her for her son. Nathan comes in after Bathsheba and reinforces the same thing. David rightly calls Bathsheba to himself.

1 Kings 1:30 | as I swore to you by the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, 'Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' even so will I do this day."

Solomon is given the throne by the intercession of Bathsheba. In the next scene we see Bathsheba once again.

1 Kings 2:19 | So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him on behalf of Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her. Then he sat on his throne and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right.

Seated at the right hand of the king.

From the wife of Uriah the Hittite will come the king who will be a true husband to his bride. He will not take her but he will give himself for her that he might raise her up to be seated with him in the heavenly places. With Bathsheba we look to the promised son, that we might be redeemed, and seated with him. Bathsheba rounds out the four women in Matthew's Genealogy but of course there is a fifth. Next week we look at Mary on Sunday morning, and finally on Sunday evening we see the Son.