

“Nations and Nobodies” – Matthew 1:1-17

Brandon Holiski
Southern Oaks Baptist Church
July 4, 2021

[What follows is the transcript of a sermon. It was originally intended to be heard, not read, so the tone is more conversational than academic. It has only been loosely edited, so forgive any grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. If you have questions please contact Southern Oaks Baptist Church through their official website, www.welovethegospel.com.]

Take a copy of God’s Word and meet me in Matthew 1...

Today’s sermon will be a stand-alone message. I didn’t feel like the timing was quite right for us to close our James series, given the holiday weekend and the fact that, historically, this is often the least attended Sunday of the year due to the amount of travel that is common.

As the week was winding down, it occurred to me that this Sunday marks the close of my seventh year at this church. It was this weekend, seven years ago, that I preached my first sermon here as lead pastor. It doesn’t feel like it’s been that long to me. It probably feels agonizingly longer to many of you. But I believe my calculations are correct.

When this was brought to my attention, as you can imagine, it has caused some introspection and a great deal of reminiscing. There have been hopes and dreams that have not been realized. Other developments that have far exceeded my imagination and estimation. Challenges and triumphs. And through it all I’m left with an enduring sense of God’s kindness to us and continued faithfulness. It has been such an undeserved honor to serve here these years and I love you more today than I did even in those earlier years.

I thought today it might be fun to revisit the first text that I preached here when I came to serve as pastor. It occurred to me a few days ago that the text is actually pretty fitting for us to consider given the holiday weekend that we find ourselves in. Today, of course, is the Fourth of July, Independence Day. I’m always thankful for our veterans on days like this and their role in protecting our freedoms. We are a blessed people, with many freedoms that most around the world do not have, not least of which the freedom to come and worship without fear of severe persecution or prosecution. It is good and right for us to remember this, even celebrate it, and recognize that, as James has told us, these good gifts come from the Lord. I’m glad we have holidays like this to slow down and reflect on freedom. That is a good thing. And there is a place for Christians to participate and be patriotic and seek to be good citizens, so long as we don’t lose sight of our Christian worldview in the process and veer into idolatry or wed Christianity to any form of nationalism.

American is a great country in many respects. In fact, if given the choice, this is where I would want to live. But, as Christians, our ultimate citizenship is not here, but in heaven. We are strangers and exiles. Pilgrims. This is not our home; we’re just passing through. And the kingdom that God has brought us into is trans-national, meaning it will include people from every nation, without hierarchical distinction. This is incredible. This is our story. Our truest story. So we gather in church not to celebrate the national holiday, but, as on every week, to worship a God who has made possible an even greater freedom from sin and the power of death through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what we will celebrate for all eternity, long after America (and every other nation) is forgotten.

I believe the first verse in the New Testament brings these truths into focus for us. And as some of us are entering into our eighth year together today, let’s consider this passage of Scripture where it all began. Matthew 1. I’ll begin in verse 1 and you can follow along as I read. This is God’s Word...

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, ⁷ and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, ⁸ and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, ⁹ and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, ¹⁰ and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, ¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. ¹² And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, ¹³ and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, ¹⁴ and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, ¹⁵ and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, ¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. ¹⁷ So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. (Matthew 1:1-17; ESV)

What we just read was basically a family tree of Jesus, which is usually called a “genealogy.” I suspect many people in modern times who encounter the New Testament for the first time are surprised to find that it begins with a list of names that seem so foreign and uninteresting to us. For this reason, many are inclined to skip over this section and get to “the good stuff.” We should resist that urge because this is “good stuff.” Lots of good stuff in fact. You can survey most of the Old Testament with these verses. It’s not merely a list of names. It’s Scripture and, therefore, it is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that we can be equipped for every good work, as Paul said (2 Timothy 3:16). That said, we will merely scratch the surface today of all that these verses have to offer.¹

The main thing Matthew is trying to communicate to us about Jesus has to do with His identity, which he summarizes through four designations in verse 1: “*Jesus*,” the “*Christ*,” “*Son of David*,” “*Son of Abraham*.” There are a variety of secondary things that Matthew is teaching us through this list, but all of those things connect to at least one of these titles. Among the four, the emphasis is on “*Son of David*.” There are sermons online where we spend our time discussing that title, its significance, its relationship to the title “*Christ*,” and Matthew’s infatuation with the number fourteen. I refer you to those sermons. Today, I want us to focus on the other two titles—“*Son of Abraham*” and his name, “*Jesus*.” But before we get to that, let’s take some time to understand how genealogies work and to make some observations about this genealogy in particular.

Beginning a book with a genealogy may seem strange to us, but it would not have been to Matthew’s readers. Chances are most of us can’t trace our family back beyond four generations, but that would not have been the case for most in the ancient world. Knowing your ancestry was important back then and particularly for the Jewish people because that governed your participation in the temple worship.

In a way, your ancestry was like a modern-day resume in that it would be given for some of the same reasons and it was typically selective.² On your current resume you probably didn’t put that job you were fired from in high school or that class you failed in college. Why? Because those things don’t sound impressive. They don’t highlight your awesomeness. So it’s generally the case that resumes are abbreviated and selective. As such, we select the things that put ourselves in the best light.

This was typically the case with ancient genealogies as well. They are not usually exhaustive lists of generations. Sometimes they were very brief. Most often only the prestigious and important names are mentioned. And, chances are, your crazy uncle would not make the list. Why? Because he’s crazy (!) and you’d rather not volunteer the information that you share some of the same genetic material as that guy. And if you are

sitting in your pew thinking, “I’m so glad I don’t have any crazy relatives,” that probably means you are the crazy relative. But I digress.

So with that in mind, it should not surprise us that Matthew has been selective and that there are names missing from this list. This is not exhaustive. He has left people out and arranged it in three lists of 14 for reasons I don’t have time to get into this morning. None of this would have surprised an ancient reader because that was normal. But when people today hear that we automatically are suspicious because (a) we are not familiar the normal practices employed in ancestry presentations and (b) because if something is left off, we assume it’s because it would have been something embarrassing. And, in fact, typically it would have been. But not so with Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. Even a casual reading demonstrates that he has intentionally *left on* the crazy relatives and even included individuals that no one on the planet would have included.

To be sure there are some prestigious names on the list. Make no mistake, to be able to demonstrate that you were a descendent of David, and part of the royal line, was impressive. And showing that you were a descendent of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob would have been vital for any Jew. Having men like Josiah and Hezekiah as your ancestors would have been seen as a great honor.³ So there are some big names.

But then there are some bad names. Some names that people would have understood if he had just assumed, but not stated, especially because the word that kept being translated “was the father of” is a word that could also be understood as “was the ancestor of.”⁴ Which means you can compress a genealogy with the same language, jumping between names as a way to summarize multiple generations at once. This is very common in ancient genealogies and is usually referred to as “telescoping.” But Matthew chooses to leave a lot of the bad names in there.

For example, Joram (1:8) was known for his wickedness and even murdered his brothers to eliminate any rivals (you thought your sibling rivalries were bad...). Uzziah (1:8) began well but fell into sin and pride and eventually died as a leper. Ahaz was a bad king, best known for ignoring the prophet Isaiah. He also has the dubious distinction of sacrificing his children on a pagan altar and it was during his reign that Judah became a vassal to Assyria and lost once and for all its freedom and independence. That’s like the opposite of the Fourth of July. How would you like to be that guy? Manasseh was one of the worst kings in Israel’s history and his son, Amon, was poised to be just as bad, but fortunately he only reigned for two years. You get the idea.

The point is, yes, Matthew has intentionally left off names (as was typically done), but he’s not doing it as a means of whitewashing Jesus’ ancestry. He’s not airbrushing history. Instead, he leaves the dirt and filth in there. And if ever we needed indisputable proof of this, it can be found in the fact that there are women in this genealogy...

Now ladies, I’m not a chauvinist pig. Nine out of ten times I’d say the woman is the better half in the relationship and, judging from the looks of things in this room that statistic is probably more like 10 out of 10 (amen, gentlemen?). But historically, in the first-century Greco-Roman world and in ancient times, women were considered little more than property. They had no legal rights. They could not inherit property. They were not even permitted to testify in the court of law in many cases. And so they definitely were not included in genealogies. That’s seems strange in today’s climate, but that was typical back then.⁵

But even if you wanted to buck the trend and list women on the genealogy, there are some great women to choose from in Israel’s history. I would have expected names of the great matriarchs of the people, like Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah. But no, they were not listed. Instead, four other women were: Tamar (1:3), Rahab (1:5), Ruth (1:5), and Bathsheba (1:6). Those are curious choices for inclusion.

Tamar is best known for the events of Genesis 38, where she entices her father-in-law into an immoral relationship through an act of deception. Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho before she helped the spies of Israel take the city in Joshua 2 and 6. Ruth was a figure we all love, but let’s not forget she was a Moabite and

therefore part of a people not even allowed near the assembly of the Lord, a people with a reputation for sexual immorality. Then there is Bathsheba, simply called “*the wife of Uriah*” in verse 6. She was, of course, the woman caught up in the most famous act of adultery in the Bible.

Matthew breaks custom to include these women on the list and doing so calls to mind all this sin. And in truth, even the so-called “good people” on the list call to mind horrible sins, don’t they? Abraham was an idolater before God called him and guilty of lies that put lives in jeopardy. Jacob was a swindler. Solomon was immoral. Hezekiah and Josiah fall into sin late in life. David was a murderer and an adulterer (possibly even worse, depending on the nature of that encounter with Bathsheba). And on and on we could go. No one on this list gets out with a perfectly clean reputation. As one writer put it, “It’s amazing to think that the great, great, great, great grandparents of Jesus hated God and were leading other people to hate him too.”⁶ The people call to mind sin and these women especially because these four women stand out the most (not because their sin was any more egregious, but because their presence on the list leaps off the page by virtue of their gender).

Yet this is the line God sovereignly chose for his Son to break into human history through...

And we scratch our heads and think, “Why? Why include these names? This genealogy, as it is written, doesn’t draw attention to Jesus’ awesomeness (and it distracts from it unnecessarily), doesn’t it?” That’s what many reading this in Matthew’s day may have thought. That may be what many of you are thinking. But wait a second! Not so fast there...it actually *does* highlight the awesomeness of Jesus. Just not the kind awesomeness that the world esteems. This list, with all the dirt it calls to mind, highlights the amazing grace and utter faithfulness of God! It screams to us that God’s ways are not our ways! And thank God that they are not! The sins of these people are acknowledged (even highlighted) “so that the divine grace that forgives them may be magnified (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9-10).”⁷

We can see this taught through every name on the list, but for the sake of time let’s look at the women mentioned since they also bring out some themes that are important to Matthew and because they are the most unusual and unnecessary names on the list. When we see women on the genealogy we were meant to ask “why?” And when we see these four women in particular, we should be asking “why them?” What is Matthew trying to teach us? What do these women have in common?

Various suggestions have been made and they are not mutually exclusive, they all could be intended by Matthew. Some have argued that all these women have some sort of sexual controversy attached to them. Tamar, as I mentioned, acted as a prostitute. So did Rahab. Bathsheba was caught up in David’s adultery. And Ruth, though not guilty of any sexual sin, did spend a night at Boaz’s feet. There is no reason to suggest that there was anything immoral in that scene. That said she was from Moab, a people who were born out of incest and had a reputation for sexual immorality, so you can see why some people may have wrongly accused her of such and how the gossip mills might have churned out such cynics. So, taken together, these four women bring to mind what some scholars have called a “theme of suspicion.”⁸ Why might Matthew want to highlight that? Because in the very next verses Matthew is going to tell the story of Mary and Joseph and her pregnancy, and the story she told was considered by many to be quite suspicious.

Yet it’s true. And Matthew may be reminding his audience that this would not have been the first time that God worked through peculiar circumstances to bring about key descendants. He may be saying, “You can’t rule it out just because it’s strange. Remember, God has worked in some strange ways and through some strange people in our past, just look at Rahab, Tamar, Ruth, and Uriah’s wife.” I think there is something to this suggestion.⁹ In fact, Matthew seems more concerned to defend Mary and Joseph’s actions than any other biblical writer. For example, I think the so-called exception clause for divorce in chapters 5 and 19 occur only in Matthew because he may be trying to help his readers make sense of Joseph’s initial reaction to the news of Mary’s pregnancy (but we will save that for later). The point is, Matthew may include the women so as to soften the resistance to Mary’s story that comes next.¹⁰

But there is another reason I think Matthew chose these women out of all the women he could have rightly included on the list. That reason is that each of these women has Gentile associations. The word “Gentile” just means “nations.” It’s a term used to distinguish between Jews and everyone else. There was the Jewish nation and then there was “the nations,” everyone else. So if you were not of Jewish descent you were considered a Gentile.

Tamar’s background is not clear, but based on the narrative of Genesis 38, many have concluded that she was a Canaanite or from Aram.¹¹ Rahab was a Canaanite from Jericho. By now you know that Ruth was from Moab. What about Bathsheba? We don’t know for sure, but her husband was a Hittite, so she was probably either born a Hittite or considered one when she married Uriah. Furthermore, Matthew may refer to her as “*the wife of Uriah*” (instead of by name) in verse 6 in order to bring that Gentile connection to the surface.¹²

Why would Matthew want to highlight this? Turn to the last verses of Matthew and I’ll show you. Matthew 28. This is probably the most famous passage in Matthew. The Great Commission. It’s one of our 3GCs, our core values, at Southern Oaks. This takes place after Jesus died on the cross and after He rose from the grave. He gathers with some of His disciples and He tells them this...verse 18.

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18-20)

So Matthew ends with Jesus calling His disciples to make disciples of “*all nations*.” That word for “*nations*” is the same word that is sometimes translated “Gentiles.” So we discover at the end that God’s saving purposes in Christ are not merely for Israel, not merely for the Jews. They are for all people groups. For the Gentiles too. So, you see, that’s where Matthew’s book is heading. And what he is doing in the opening genealogy by including those women in particular is hinting at this theme. This has been God’s plan all along.

In fact, even before he mentions the women, he’s already laying the foundation for the great commission when he calls Jesus “*the son of Abraham*.” The reason he mentions Abraham and David in verse 1 is because he’s trying to get into his audiences minds two central covenants that God made with Israel, which are fulfilled in Christ. The Davidic Covenant, we don’t have time to discuss this morning. But do you remember God’s covenant with Abraham?

The covenant is first made in Genesis 12 and then reiterated on a number of occasions in Genesis. One element of that covenant is that through Abraham’s offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed (e.g., Gen. 22:18). The question is how is that promised fulfilled? The answer is found in what the first and last verses of Matthew are anticipating. Jesus is the offspring *par excellence* whom Abraham was promised. He brings blessing to the nations because He came and laid down His life for sinners like us. His death on the cross was a substitution for sinners in which the punishment that we deserve because of our rebellion against God was poured out on Jesus on the cross. He rose from the dead and conquered death for us. And He offers to all who would believe in Him...turn to Him...trust in Him...He offers to save them; He offers forgiveness of sin and relationship with God and eternal life with Him forever. He offers that as a free gift to all who would turn from their sins and trust Him. That offer is extended not just to the Jews, not just to Israel, but to the nations. To us. To you. And if you have received that saving gift from Jesus then you’re a part of the story that stretched down through this genealogy and out to the nations. You are called by Jesus Himself to make disciple of the nations. We must get out there and tell people about what Jesus has done for us and can do for them!

So how does Jesus fulfill the Abrahamic covenant, that Abraham’s offspring would bless all nations? By entering human history in the incarnation and by dying in the place of sinners so that people from *all* nations might be saved and brought into the people of God!

So wrap your mind around this...most of us, if not all of us, are Gentiles. We are not Israelites (though some of those patriotic songs seem to wrongly appropriate biblical language of Israel and the Church as though it referred to America, but I digress). Which means, Christians, you are part of God's people because God remembered His promise to Abraham. Christianity is not your birthright. Our ancestors worshipped their ancestors, or Zeus, or Thor, or some other idol.¹³ We were outsiders of this covenant. We were strangers and aliens. The only hope we had was this promise God made to Abraham. We are made sons of Abraham, sons and daughters of the covenant completely by grace. The God of Israel is our God, even though our ancestors were German, English, French, Rwandan, Ugandan, Dutch, Irish, Spanish, Russian, Egyptian, Mexican, Thai, or whatever. Therefore, we most of all, should marvel at this grace! We should marvel at God's faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham, without which we would all perish. And "If we marvel, if we give thanks that we are included in the family of God, then we will include others and give thanks for their presence as well."¹⁴

You see biblical theology fuels missions! At least it can. When these things dawn on us we have at least a couple of options on how to respond. Daniel Doriani explains it this way:

"At some point, most of us have tasted the angst of waiting to hear if we gained entry into a desirable but exclusive group. It might have been a tree house club for ten-year-olds, a basketball team, a student government, an elite college. After people enter an exclusive club, they can turn one of two ways. They can think, 'What a great club—and they let a marginal character like me in. I need to welcome all the other marginal characters, all the folks who wonder if they will be accepted, so that they can get all the benefits I have.' Or they can think, 'If I got in, the standards must be slipping. I must ensure that our standards stay high, so this club stays exclusive.' We ought to take the first approach. What a joy to enter the family of God. Let us hold the blessing with humbly grateful hearts and pray, 'Thank you, Lord, for making me a child of Abraham. Thank you for including me in your family. Help me remember that your family is always open and help me to welcome all people, those who seem worthy and those who seem unworthy, into it. For I know that I am not worthy, but I am beloved. Let me share that love with others.'"¹⁵

Christians, that should be our reaction to this. But let me talk to some of you who are sitting there thinking either this sounds too good to be true or that Jesus would never save someone like me. You're thinking, "You don't know me pastor. You don't know what I've done. You don't know what I keep doing. What I think. What I say. There is just no way God loves me and Jesus wants to save me." Listen...you're right, I don't know you. But I know the people on this list. And the reason they're on the list is to teach us the extent of God's grace and the reach of His mercy. He came to save those kinds of people.¹⁶ He came to save people like us. People like you.

In fact, later in chapter 1 we are told that the reason the Son of God is given the name "*Jesus*" is because He came to save people from their sins (1:21). The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." Therefore, both of those names translate literally to, "The LORD saves" or "the LORD is salvation." So He is given the name "*Jesus*" precisely to remind you folks who are thinking those thoughts that He came to save you from your sins. Jesus saves bad people. In fact, He only saves bad people. From a human perspective the most righteous person on the list is probably Mary and even she needs a Savior. The angel who appears to her refers to her as "*graciously favored*" and she refers to God as her "*Savior*." Why? Because she's in the same boat. She needed grace. She needed a Savior just like us.¹⁷ You being a big sinner, doesn't put you out of the reach of His grace. It highlights the glory of His grace and the glory of Him as Savior. You are loved. He came for you, so trust Him. Don't run from Him. Run to Him. He will save you. Yes, even you. He came to claim a group of nobodies from among all the nations as His own. All nations. Any nobody.

I hope that you will see yourself relating to someone on this list so that you will know that Jesus would not be afraid to associate with you. And if you find yourself being drawn to Jesus and longing for him to save you and forgive your sins, put your trust in Him. Turn from sin. Acknowledge your need for Him alone to save you. Acknowledge that this salvation is only accomplished by His work on the cross and in His resurrection. And ask

Him to do just that. You won't walk away disappointed today. And we'd love to talk to you about that. Come visit after the service or fill out one of those cards in the pew to drop in the plate as you exit and we will connect this week.

Isn't God glorious in His grace? That's why we are here today!

Let's pray...

¹ The genealogy is introduced with the words "The book of the genealogy" (*biblos geneoseōs*) and, as Craig Blomberg, points out this phrase "would more literally be translated 'a book of the genesis' (or origin)." Just what content is governed by this heading has been subject to debate. "This phrase has...been taken to refer to the entire Gospel or to all of 1:1–4:16, but *genesis* is not a natural description of the contents of the whole book or of the events of Jesus' adult life. The NIV understandably limits this heading to the genealogy that follows, but *genesis* reappears in 1:18 with reference to Jesus' conception. In the LXX comparable phrases regularly refer both to genealogies and to the narrative material that follows them, but they do not generally refer to entire biblical books (see Gen 5:1a as the introduction to 5:1–9:29). The best interpretation of the opening words of Matthew thus views them as a heading for all of chaps. 1–2. They therefore carry the sense of *an account of the origin*." Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 52. Cf. Knox Chamblin, *Matthew, Volume 1: Chapters 1-13* (A Mentor Commentary; Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2010), 188; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 61-62; D. A. Carson, "Matthew" in *Matthew & Mark* (EBC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 86-87.

² See Carson, 88, and the sources he cites.

³ N. T. Wright notes, "Matthew has arranged the names so as to make this point even clearer. Most Jews, telling the story of Israel's ancestry, would begin with Abraham; but only a select few, by the first century AD, would trace their own line through King David. Even fewer would be able to continue by going on through Solomon and the other kings of Judah all the way to the exile." Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone, Part One: Chapters 1-15* (London: SPCK, 2004), 2.

⁴ Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew* (BST; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 58.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Platt, 13.

⁷ Chamblin, 193.

⁸ Blomberg, 56n.6.

⁹ "If God can work through these bizarre ways, he seems to be saying, watch what he is going to do now." Wright, 4.

Matthew also varies the language at the end of the genealogy in a way that suggests that something is different when we come to Joseph. David L. Turner explains: "In 1:18–2:23 Joseph's obedient care for his adopted son is stressed, but here in 1:16 he is described only as Mary's husband. His brief appearance in Matthew underlines his modeling of obedience and his Davidic descent even as a humble carpenter (1:16, 18, 19, 20, 24; 2:13, 19; 13:55). His wife, Mary, is not mentioned frequently either (1:16, 18, 20, 24; 2:11–13; 12:46–50; 13:55). At this point the chain of thirty-nine occurrences of the active verb ἐγέννησεν (*egennēsen*, was the father of) is broken by the passive ἐγεννήθη (*egenēthē*, was born), and 'we encounter the biggest surprise of the genealogy' (Hagner 1993: 12). The passive seems to imply the divine activity made clear in 1:18–25. The prepositional phrase ἐξ ἧς (*ex hēs*, from whom) strengthens this implication, since the relative pronoun ἧς is feminine in gender. Thus it is already stated that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus—he did not 'beget' Jesus. Jesus was born from Mary in the supernatural manner about to be explained in 1:18–25." David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 60-61. Cf. Chamblin, 191.

¹⁰ Other texts that suggest the existence of various polemics include Matthew 1:18-25, Mark 6:3, Galatians 4:4, Revelation 12:1-5, and John 8:41, 48. Blomberg (55-56) writes, "Why are the first four of these women included?...The only factor that clearly applies to all four is that suspicions of illegitimacy surrounded their sexual activity and childbearing. This suspicion of illegitimacy fits perfectly with that which surrounded Mary, which Matthew immediately takes pains to refute (vv. 18–25). In fact, the grammar of v. 16 makes clear that Joseph was not the human father of Jesus because the pronoun 'whom' is feminine and therefore can refer only to Mary as a human parent of the Christ child... Within the Gospels, Jewish polemic hinted (John 8:48) and in the early centuries of the Christian era explicitly charged that Jesus was an illegitimate child. Matthew here strenuously denies the charge, but he also points out that key members of the messianic genealogy were haunted by similar suspicions (justified in at least the two cases of Tamar and Bathsheba and probably unjustified in the case of Ruth). Such suspicions, nevertheless, did not impugn the spiritual character of the individuals involved. In fact, Jesus comes to save precisely such people. Already here in the genealogy, Jesus is presented as the one who will ignore human labels of legitimacy and illegitimacy to offer his gospel of salvation to all, including the most despised and outcast of society. A question for the church to ask itself in any age is how well it is visibly representing this commitment to reach out to the oppressed and marginalized of society with the good news of salvation in Christ. At the same time, Matthew inherently honors

the five women of his genealogy simply by his inclusion of them. So it is not enough merely to minister to the oppressed; we must find ways of exalting them and affirming their immense value in God's eyes."

¹¹ Osborne, 63; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 74; Richard Bauckham, "Tamar's Ancestry and Rahab's Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy," *NovT* 37 (1995): 313-329; J. D. Heck, "Tamar" in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 827.

¹² Turner (60) thinks this is the most likely explanation to explain curious way Matthew refers to Bathsheba, but add that it may also be "a euphemism, or perhaps it calls attention to David's sin in having Uriah killed in battle."

¹³ In fact, this was true for Abraham too. "Matthew expects us to know that Abraham was a pagan, Gentile before God called him. He was the father of the covenant people, but he was born outside the covenant and stayed there until God brought him in." Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew, Volume 1: Chapters 1-13* (REC; Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 11. This is true for us as well.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Sinners they may be, but God works to rescue sinners to use them in his service. Here at the outset of the Gospel, Matthew goes out of his way to show that the barriers between men and women are broken down: women share in the official genealogy alongside of men. The barriers between Gentiles and Jews are broken down too: Ruth plays her part in the coming of one who was to be not only Messiah of Israel but savior of the whole world. And the juxtaposition of sinful women like Bathsheba and Tamar and Mary, the gentle mother of Jesus, shows that the barriers between good people and bad people have also come crashing down. As Paul put it, 'there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace' (Rom. 3:22-24). At the very beginning of the Gospel the all-embracing love of God is emphasized. Nothing can stand in its path. There is nobody who does not need it. Maybe the genealogy is not so dry after all." Green, 59.

¹⁷ Chamblin (193) puts it well: "Already at the beginning of Matthew, we learn that God deals with *actual* people, not ideal ones. He enters into covenant with the *fallen* and the *guilty*, terms applicable to all of Jesus' ancestors, Mary included. To be sure, Mary is different from the other four women, in that she is neither flagrantly immoral as some of them were, nor a Gentile. Yet she, like them, receive saving grace: Gabriel addresses her as one 'graciously favored' by God (Luke 1:28); Mary herself speaks of 'God my Savior' (Luke 1:47). God sends his Son to save these very persons—including both those of OT times and his own mother—from their sins (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:25-26). To that end Jesus will identify with them in the closest way. To find him linked with prostitutes in his genealogy is not nearly so shocking as to discover him actually eating with them (Matt. 9:10-11)."