

MATTHEW'S CONCERN FOR MISSION  
BY INCLUDING THE FOUR WOMEN  
(MATTHEW 1:1-17)

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Unlike Luke who does not include women in his genealogy, there are four women, in addition to Mary, present in Matthew's genealogy: Tamar (Mt 1:3), Rahab (Mt 1:5), Ruth (Mt 1:5), [Bathsheba] the wife of Uriah (Mt 1:6) and Mary (Mt 1:16). A genealogy did not generally contain women except in cases such as an irregularity of pedigree or some notable connection,<sup>1</sup> and while these women were significantly related to the history of Israel<sup>2</sup> they are not the more prominent matriarchs of Israel such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. We should then inquire why Matthew included these women in his genealogy. What was Matthew's intention and purpose in presenting their names in this genealogy? This passage has been a topic of much debate among scholars.

NOTORIOUS SINNERS IN THE MESSIANIC ANCESTRY

It might be argued that the four women were seen as disreputable sinners in relation to sexual sins. Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute so as to seduce Judah. Rahab was a prostitute. Perhaps it is implied in

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<sup>1</sup>B.M. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God: The Christology of Mt 1-2 in the Setting of the Gospel*, OBO 23 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 62. Despite not being common, the appearance of women in genealogies of the OT can be seen from passages such as Gen. 22:20-24, 25:1-6, 36:1-14; 1 Chron. 2:3-4, 3:1-9, 18-20, 46-47.

<sup>2</sup>They lived at crucial periods in Israel's history: "Tamar, from the time of the patriarchs, representing the continuance of God's line, his blessing of Israel through the descendants of Abraham, in the Holy land; Rahab, from the time that Israel was on the verge of entering the land promised to them by God so long ago; Ruth, set in the time of the Judges, but written at a time of great upheaval and anxiety after the return from exile; Bathsheba, wife of Israel's greatest king, the golden age of monarchy; Mary, through whom in the fullness of time the Son of God took flesh and dwelt among us." Nancy De Chazal, "The Women in Jesus' Family Tree," *Theology* 97 (1994), 413-419.

Ruth 3.1-18 that Ruth enticed Boaz and lost her virtue. Bathsheba also committed adultery with David. Thus Matthew's intention in including these women could be to emphasize Jesus as the Savior for sinners.

Like Jerome and Chrysostom,<sup>3</sup> Morris argues that "three of the four are of morally dubious reputation," and that "Matthew is surely saying that the gospel . . . is for sinners." It follows that "it is a sinful world, and Matthew is writing about grace."<sup>4</sup> According to this theory, Matthew's inclusion of these women is to focus on the power and grace of God. Human beings ruined by sin can be emancipated by the Savior and thus achieve God's purpose for the Davidic line. (cf. 1Cor 1:27-31)

The advantage of this interpretation is to highlight Christology in Matthew's genealogy and imply that sinful people can be saved (1:21). As Luz rightly points out, "this thought is attractive in the case of Bathsheba, to whose adultery the formulation 'the one of Uriah' would point."<sup>5</sup> It is not entirely plausible, however, that Ruth was promiscuous: rather the approval of Ruth is to be found in Ruth 4:11.<sup>6</sup> Jewish and early Christian tradition sees Rahab as an exemplar of faith and good works, and the rabbis exalted her as a prototype of a proselyte and a tool of the divine Spirit.<sup>7</sup> Tamar also is described as righteous (Gen 38:26) and becomes even a symbol of virtue in Philo.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>F.D. Bruner, *Matthew*, vol.1 (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1987), 7-8; A.D. Heffern, "The Four Women in St. Matthew's Genealogy of Christ," *JBL* 31 (1921): 68-81, esp. 70; R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 71.

<sup>4</sup>L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester: IVP, 1992), 23. He also rightly sees the Gentile backgrounds of the four women in view of Matthew's mission to Gentiles.

<sup>5</sup>U. Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 109.

<sup>6</sup>The later tradition continually praises Ruth as the model proselyte of the OT. M.D. Johnson claims that "while she is neglected in the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, Philo, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, her story is paraphrased by Josephus in a favourable way." He also states further that "yet even here there are hints of a tendency which became full-blown in the later Rabbinic tradition; she is praised as an ancestress of David but with some hesitancy concerning her Moabite ancestry," *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*. SNTSMS 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), 165.

<sup>7</sup>Rahab is presented along with Abraham in the New Testament as one who is justified by her works (James 2:25); and her great faith is referred to along with many outstanding figures in the Old Testament (Heb. 11:31). According to Johnson, although "Rahab is mentioned neither in the apocrypha, the pseudepigrapha, nor by Philo, she is presented in a favourable light as the keeper of an inn, not once being mentioned as a harlot in Josephus." She is also praised as a proselyte despite her prostitution, Johnson,

As David E. Garland points out, however, this explanation overlooks many men in this genealogy whose sins were well-known. For example, "Manasseh was reckoned as the most evil of the kings (2 Kings 21:1-18)."<sup>9</sup> Hence he raises the reasonable question "why single out the women as examples of a sinful race?"<sup>10</sup> For this reason, the argument that Matthew included these women on account of their sins and thus emphasized the role of the Savior is not appropriate.<sup>11</sup>

#### UNUSUAL MARITAL SITUATIONS AND DIVINE INTERVENTIONS

Matthew's inclusion of these women has a possible twofold explanation. Each had somewhat unusual marital situations and even scandals in their relationships with male partners, but each successfully achieved a distinctive mission in the plan of God for his people.<sup>12</sup> Thus

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*Purpose of Biblical*, 162-63; A.T. Hanson, "Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Theology," *JSNT* 1 (1978): 53-60.

<sup>8</sup>Philo, *Deus Imm.*, 136-137; *Virt.*, 220-222; *Congr.*, 124-126; *Fug.*, 149.

<sup>9</sup>D.E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 18.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Johnson has suggested another solution to Matthew's inclusion of the women in the genealogy. He claimed that "there was a polemic that took place within Judaism itself," (Johnson, *Purpose of Biblical*, 176-179) not in relation to Jewish slanders against the idea of the virgin birth, but rather to the ancestry of the Messiah. He sees this polemic as occurring between the Pharisees, who expected a Davidic Messiah, and the other Jewish group who had an expectation of a Levitical Messiah. "After A.D. 70, however, the influence of the Sadducees and Essenes came to an abrupt end, and the categories applied to the Levitical Messiah came to be attributed, in the Talmud, to Elijah and also to the Messiah." On the other hand, the four women were glorified in the Pharisaic tradition which expected a Davidic Messiah. Thus his conclusion is that "Matthew wrote to show that in every respect the Pharisaic expectation of the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, who was the son of David and therefore a descendant of the four women." The function of four women is to "serve an apologetic purpose (*Ibid.*, 178)." It is true that Matthew in his genealogy apparently portrays Jesus as of Davidic descent. But it seems uncertain that this alone vindicates his inclusion of these women since the genealogy's context and of Matthew as a whole offers another good reason as we shall see. Particularly there is no necessary proof regarding Rahab [Rightly, R. H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 15]. See more H.C. Waetjen's article which criticizes Johnson's position, "The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel according to Matthew," *JBL* 95 (1976): 205-30.

<sup>12</sup>D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972), 74; C.L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 55-56; J.

their actions are understood as being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in later Judaism. Overman holds this view, claiming that “what is common among these women is that all except Rahab had unusual births or birth stories associated with their partners,” and that “these women through their actions kept the royal line of Israel alive.”<sup>13</sup>

Tamar disguised herself in playing the prostitute with Judah and yet she helped save Israel by perpetuating the Davidic line (Ruth 4:12). Rahab played a crucial role in saving the spies sent by Joshua and preparing for the seizing of Jericho<sup>14</sup> (Josh 2:1-21, Heb 11:31, Jas 2:25). Ruth, an alienated Moabite (Deut 23:3), was married to Boaz and their

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Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 9; H. Frankemölle, *Matthäus Kommentar I* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1994), 142; Nolan, *The Royal Son*, 118-119; Waetjen, “Genealogy as the Key,” 205-30, esp. 216-217; H.A. Blair, “Matthew 1:16 and the Matthean Genealogy,” *SE 2* (1964): 149; M.J. Moreton, “The Genealogy of Jesus,” *SE 2*, (1964): 219-24, esp. 223; W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 31; W. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 2000), 61; K. Stendahl, “Quis et Unde? Matthew 1-2,” in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. G.N. Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 74; J. Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 20-34; E.D. Freed, “The Women in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *JSNT* 29 (1987): 3-19; Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, 71-74. He also accepts a view that Matthew is interested in Gentile mission because of the four women’s Gentile backgrounds. J.P. Heil, maintains that Tamar and Bathsheba are similar in having been involved in sinful marital unions while Rahab and Ruth were involved in proper marital unions and linked in terms of their Gentile faith. He continues to say that the four women prepared the way for Mary in a way that “His birth by Mary and naming by Joseph establish him not only as the Messianic Son of David, who saves his people from the sinfulness exemplified by the previous Davidic kings as recalled by Tamar and the wife of Uriah, but also as the Messianic Son of Abraham, who fulfils the universalist hope inspired by Rahab and Ruth as he opens the kingdom of God to all people.” His argument is right in a sense that Gentile mission is stressed in the cases of Rahab and Ruth. Yet this does not fully go on to show what Matthew intended in embracing the four women. See “The Narrative Roles of the Woman in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *Bib* 72 (1991): 538-45.

<sup>13</sup>J.A. Overman, *Church and Community: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 35; U. Luck, *Dus Evangelium nach Matthäus: Zürcher Bibelkommentare* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993), 20.

<sup>14</sup>Overman states that “the case of Rahab does not involve an unusual birth.” By hiding the spies, however, she allowed Joshua and his troops to occupy both Jericho and the Land. Eventually her family were permitted to live with the Israelites permanently (Josh. 7:25). Further Overman claims that “she is said by Matthew to have been the mother of Boaz whom Ruth married (Ruth 4:13) and thus also insures the perpetuation of the David line.” Overman, *Church and Community*, 35.

marriage resulted in the Davidic line (Ruth 4:17). Uriah's wife committed adultery with David but gave birth to Solomon who became successor to the King of Israel (1 King 1:11-31). Hence, "all these women saved Israel . . . all play important roles in the continuation of the royal line of David"<sup>15</sup> and divine intervention is often a roundabout way through which the promise of God is nonetheless fulfilled.

In the same way, R. E. Brown also takes up the case of Mary, claiming that "it is the combination of the scandalous or irregular union and of divine intervention through the woman." Joseph saw Mary's pregnancy as a disgrace (1:19). "Yet the child was actually begotten through God's Holy Spirit, so that God has intervened to bring to fulfillment the messianic heritage."<sup>16</sup> Matthew's reference to these women, therefore, is to make them serve as forerunners of Mary, in that they foreshadow the role of Mary as a virgin (unwed mother) whom God had recently used in his messianic plan.

According to this theory, there was the charge that Jesus was illegitimate within the expanding polemic between Christians and Jews.<sup>17</sup> Hence, Matthew may well have included these women so as to

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 35. Nancy de Chazal also has a similar view, but stresses the faith of the action of the four women and the understanding of the genealogy as the fulfillment of the Scripture. De Chazal maintains that "these women, all without power as women, acted quite out of keeping with the ideas of their day as to the position of women." According to Chazal, their action is to fulfil God's will: "Tamar to have children, which was her right in those days as a woman, for her father-in-law through fear would not give her his last son in case he died; Rahab to help the Israelites; Ruth, with guile, in order to give Naomi grandchildren and herself children in a society harsh on women; Bathsheba is included because of her husband's goodness and loyalty." Chazal also believes that "they all stand at major periods of Israel's history" and that "One of the major emphases in the Gospel is the fulfillment of Scripture." Thus Nancy concludes that "the genealogy sets the scene by looking back at his antecedents in a small way." ("Women in Jesus' Family," 413-419) But this assertion seems merely a part of the picture in Matthew's genealogy.

<sup>16</sup>Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, 74.

<sup>17</sup>Freed investigated a few evidences in the gospels that "may reflect grounds for accusations of illegitimacy or for misconduct on Mary's part." First, Joseph's name is not mentioned in Mark. Mark's reading of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth is totally different from Matthew and Luke: "is not this the carpenter's son? (Matt. 13:55)," "Is not this Joseph's son? (Luke 4:22)," and "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary? (Mk. 6:3)." Freed maintained "that Mark's silence could imply that Joseph had died before Jesus became a public figure . . . could be constructed as a scornful remark implying illegitimacy." Second, he also argued that another ground for accusations of

defend against this charge of illegitimacy concerning the extraordinary circumstances in which Jesus was born.

Stendahl insists that “all (four women) represent an ‘irregularity’ in the Davidic line, an irregularity which is not only overcome by God’s recognition of them as mothers of Davidic descendants: exactly by the irregularity the action of God and his Spirit is made manifest.”<sup>18</sup> So this prepares the reader for the holy irregularity of the Virgin Birth. Floyd V. Filson also claims that “they are mentioned not in idle gossip or to reflect on Mary’s purity, but to imply that just as these women in unexpected ways had a place in the Messianic genealogy, so Mary by God’s unusual working became the mother of the Christ.”<sup>19</sup>

Overman supports this view, contending that “in Mary’s pregnancy that appears illegitimate, provokes fear and doubt on Joseph’s part, and requires divine intervention, the line or heritage that will save Israel is perpetuated.” He then concludes that “the mention of the women culminating in Mary is probably less a scandal and more a potent reminder to Matthew’s audience of the lengths to which God has gone to save the people of God in the past and has recently acted similarly in the person and story of Jesus.”<sup>20</sup> This suggestion might be justified when we consider the general thought of God’s providential acting and Matthew’s mainly Jewish readers who our author persuades that Jesus was legitimately born by God’s intervention. There are, however, several difficulties that can arise from this argument.

First, the four women are not an appropriate model for Mary.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it seems very hard to claim that the inclusion of four

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illegitimacy is “the disrespectful attitude of Jesus not only toward his brothers and sisters but toward his mother as well (Mark 3:31-35).” Lastly, He observed two references in John 8 where “the question of who is the real father of the Jews and of Jesus and illegitimacy are the main concern” (John 8:19,31-41). See Freed, “The Women in Matthew’s Genealogy,” 3-19, esp. 5-6. But this view goes on too far from what the texts are meant. See against this view, H.K. McArthur, “Son of Mary,” *NovT* 15 (1973): 38-58. His conclusion is that “the phrase (‘Son of Mary’ [Mk. 6:3]) had no special connotation beyond the fact explicitly stated.”

<sup>18</sup>Stendahl, “Quis et Unde?” 69-79.

<sup>19</sup>F.V. Filson, *Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, BNTC (London: A&C Black, 1960), 52-53.

<sup>20</sup>Overman, *Church and Community*, 35.

<sup>21</sup>See A.J. Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 59-88, esp. 63-71. Levine incorporates two

women who were involved in immorality and Gentile lineage is intended to serve as an equivalent to the story of the virgin Mary. Unlike the four women who were involved in adultery, Mary did not commit it. She was a virgin and pregnant by the Holy Spirit. It is also worth noticing that unlike the story about the four women in the OT, Matthew shows Joseph's faith at work (1:24), and in the following context (2:13-23) Joseph's acts of faith are continually referred to in contrast with the cases of these women.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, if we consider the pattern that the four women present with ἐκ phrases (ἐκ τῆς Θαμάρ. ἐκ τῆς Παχάβ. ἐκ τῆς Ρούθ. ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Οὐρίου) we would expect to see that Joseph was the father of Jesus by Mary. Yet, Mary's case is different from a previous woman: "Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of *who* was born Jesus (τὸν ἄνδρα Μαριάς ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη Ἰησοῦς 1:16)."<sup>23</sup> It implies that Mary's role is unique and special in carrying out God's plan.

Second, Luz raises a more reasonable question with regard to determining the concept of the "irregularity."<sup>24</sup> It might be related to the particular relationship of the women to their partners. But he asks

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theories, the irregularities of the four women and their Gentile origins, into a new theory. According to her, each of the four women in the OT had an outstanding faith in contrast to the men. Thus Levine contends that the contrasts between the privileged, the elite (Pilate, disciples, Pharisees) and the leaders and the excluded, the despised, the culturally disenfranchised and the poor (the Gentile centurion, tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners) are continually present in the rest of Matthew. Consequently, for Levine, "Jesus' lineage symbolizes the welcome of his church to the marginalized and the excluded, to all denied status or privilege by members of elite groups, to all whose higher righteousness is undervalued by structures of patriarchy." Sand also rejects this theory that the women are to be seen in connection with Mary. He comments: Wird man auch einen Zusammenhang zwischen den vier at. Frauen und Maria nicht völlig ausschließen können, dann doch nur in dem heilsgeschichtlich umfassenden Sinne, daß die genannten Frauen den Grundgedanken der ganzen Genealogie, die providentielle Hinordnung der Geschlechterfolge auf die Geburt des Messias Jesus, unterstreichen.) (If one cannot completely exclude a connection between the four women of the OT period and Mary, then certainly in the salvation-historical, comprehensive sense that the women mentioned underscore the basic idea that the whole genealogy is ordered by God's providence in expectation of the birth of the Messiah Jesus) (*Matthäus*, 44).

<sup>22</sup>Levine also found a certain link between these four women and Joseph because of the lack of stress on Mary's role in the following context (1:18-25). See Levine, *Social and Ethnic*, 80-88.

<sup>23</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 184.

<sup>24</sup>Luz, *Matthew*, 109.

plausibly, “Are the marriage of Ruth, the adultery of Bathsheba, and betrothal of Mary really comparable?”<sup>25</sup> In particular, if the reason that he chose the four women is merely because of their irregular births in unusual situations when his intention is to prepare for Mary’s virgin narrative, why would not Matthew take the cases of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel as good examples since God had intervened in their birth stories.<sup>26</sup>

Luz surveyed the Jewish literature where there is evidence for understanding Tamar and Rahab as vehicles of the Holy Spirit but does not find any proof for Ruth or Bathsheba.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the fate of the four women in Jewish tradition is divided. After investigation of the Jewish sources, Johnson contends that “the judgment of the Rabbis is by no means uniform: Matthew could not assume that the mention of these four women would be understood as a glorification of the Messianic pedigree.”<sup>28</sup>

Third, if there was a Jewish accusation of Jesus being the illegitimate son of Mary, Matthew should have shown Mary’s justified marriage with Joseph so that her pregnancy would be lawful. Yet, Matthew’s description of Jesus’ birth would be outstandingly unsuccessful in answering this accusation. Rather it is much more

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>C.S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 79.

<sup>27</sup>Luz, *Matthew*, 109.

<sup>28</sup>Johnson studied Jewish tradition that shows “numerous evidences of the tendency to exonerate each of the women and to picture at least Rahab and Ruth as exemplars of conversion and faith.” Tamar is seen as “a woman from Syria Palestine who had been brought up in her own native city, which was devoted to the worship of many gods. . . . But, she, out of profound darkness, was able to see a slight beam of truth, she exerted all her energies to arrive at piety; and living virtuously was exactly identical with living for the service of and in constant supplication to the one true God. . . . Thus, for Philo, Tamar is a Gentile and, although not a proselyte in the full sense, yet a model of spiritual illumination. . . . But Tamar was not in all circles of earlier Judaism held up as a model of virtue and piety.” There is the Rabbinic tradition which may point to the polemic role of Tamar. Concerning Bathsheba there are many different views in the Jewish tradition regarding the fate of this woman. Johnson states that “we conclude our survey of the treatment of the Bathsheba incident in Jewish tradition by suggesting that this matter was discussed in polemic fashion even in pre-Christian times, while the later Rabbinic tradition is divided between those who would exonerate David and these who maintain his guilt.” See Johnson, *Purpose of Biblical*, 159-176.



convincing that such slanders were stimulated by the genealogy and the birth narratives themselves:<sup>29</sup> Matthew's narrative would lead some Jews to declare Mary's pregnancy illegitimate. Hence, the proposal that the women prefigure Mary in order to be a defense against a charge of illegitimacy by God's intervention is not compelling.

Fourth, this interpretation of Matthew's inclusion of the four women tends to focus only on the Jewish context in which Matthew had attempted to persuade Jews of the Messiah. We might partly agree with this contention of seeing the four women in the light of a Jewish background because Matthew's community was primarily Jewish. This understanding of the four women, however, is isolated from Matthew's universal viewpoint in the context of genealogy and ignores the direction of Matthew's community towards universal salvation.

Rather on the basis of the fact that Jesus was descended from the Davidic line as the Messianic King in Israel's history, Matthew encourages his people to be open to all nations. In other words, for Matthew Jesus' genealogy serves not only to the fulfillment of his birth in the Jewish history by using the phrase "Son of David," but also, more significantly, to confirm the universality of salvation in that all nations shall be blessed through Israel's history.

Furthermore, we have already noted the facts that in Matthew there are many references to negative judgments of the Jews rather than praise of the Jews. (6:1-18; 8:11-12; 9:13; 11:20-24; 12:7, 24, 38, 41-45; 13:10-15; 21:41-43, 45; 22:1-14, 34, 45; 23; 27:25) If Matthew had intended in his genealogy only to persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, why paradoxically would he have passed many negative judgments on Jews in other passages? Would he not have shown a constantly warm attitude toward Jews? The theory of Matthew's inclusion of the four women because of their important role in Jewish history for both commemoration and controversy in Jewish circles concerned with the messianic ancestry is, therefore, unpersuasive.

#### GENTILES IN THE MESSIANIC ANCESTRY

Why then did Matthew incorporate these four women? It has been suggested that the mention of the four women was intended to

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<sup>29</sup>W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 65-66.

foreshadow that God would offer universal salvation. Schweizer sees a reason why Matthew included these women in view of their heathen origin, saying that “the four women are meant to prefigure God’s activity-to culminate in Jesus (28:19)-that will embrace not only the Jews but all Gentiles as well.”<sup>30</sup> Hare also understands the four women as being linked by their Gentile lineage, claiming that “their inclusion in the Messiah’s genealogy reminded the Jewish and Gentile readers of the Gospel that God’s great plan of salvation included Gentiles, even unrighteous Gentiles.”<sup>31</sup> France remarks that their Gentile origin

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<sup>30</sup>E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 25. So R.J. Bauckham, “Tamar’s Ancestry and Rahab’s Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy,” *NovT* 37 (1995): 313-329; Luz, *Matthew*, 109-10; Keener, *Matthew*, 78-81; Heffern, “Four Women, 77-78; Gundry, *Matthew*, 15; D.R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (JSNTSup 31; Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 116-17 and “The Literary and Theological Function of the Genealogy in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Treasures New and Old*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allen Powell (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 148-49. Cf. John C. Hatchison argues that Matthew included the four women so as to draw attention to four familiar Old Testament narratives that “in each case a Gentile shows extraordinary faith in contrast to Jews, who were greatly lacking in their faith.” According to him, “these contrasts are consistent with Matthew’s purpose to remind Jews of God’s faithfulness to His Abrahamic and Davidic covenant promises, to lead them to a more accurate understanding of the messianic kingdom, and to exhort them to forsake the self-righteous attitude of many Jews toward Gentiles who were now joining them in the church.” While his article focuses not on the four persons but on four Old Testament narratives that illustrate a common point, his view of Matthew’s inclusion of the four women is not greatly different from our argument that Gentile mission is stressed in embracing them (“Women, Gentiles, and The Messianic Mission in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *BibSac* 158 [April-June 2001], 152-164). John Nolland rejects the argument of Matthew’s inclusion of the four women because of their status as sinners and their involvement of marital irregularity. Rather he found two common factors in these women: first, in the case of Tamar and Ruth, and Rahab, they take the initiative in coming for refuge under the wings of Israel: second, the vulnerable situations of both Tamar and Ruth and even of Mary are stressed. “The Four (Five) Women and Other Annotations In Matthew’s Genealogy,” *NTS* vol. 43 (1997): 527-539. Similarly, the two reasons led Bernard Brandon Scott to see Matthew’s insertion of the four women: they are all Gentiles and all connected to David. Further, he says that while these women were shameful sexually, they were eventually honored by the Lord. So Matthew’s statement of the four women also anticipates Mary’s extraordinary situation, “The Birth of The Reader,” *Sem* 52 (1991), 83-102, esp.87-88); D.O. Via, Jr., “Narrative World and Ethical Response: The Marvelous and Righteousness in Matthew 1-2,” *Sem* 10 (1978): 123-149, esp. 131-32.

<sup>31</sup>D.R.A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993), 6.

implies “Matthew’s interests in the universal relevance of Jesus’ coming.”<sup>32</sup>

Luz contends, therefore, that “Matthew, who probably inserted these four figures into the traditional genealogy, was intent on ensuring that four Gentile women appeared in Jesus’ line of descent,” and then concludes that “In doing so, he clearly sent a signal: the universal perspective, the inclusion of the Gentile world, must have been important to him.”<sup>33</sup>

All four women are directly or indirectly related to the Gentiles. Tamar was an Aramean or a Canaanite.<sup>34</sup> Rahab was a Canaanite, (Josh 2:1-14) Ruth was a Moabitess, (Ruth 1:4) and Bathsheba was “the wife of Uriah” who was a Hittite (2 Sam 11:3).<sup>35</sup> Thus it seems likely that by

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<sup>32</sup>R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (London: Paternoster, 1989), 74.

<sup>33</sup>U. Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 1995), 26; *Ibid.*, *Matthew*, 110.

<sup>34</sup>In Gen. 22:21, Jubilees 41:1 and Testament of Judah 10:1, Tamar is identified as of the ancestry of Aram. So some scholars see her simply as “an Aramean”; So Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 110; J. P. Heil, “The Narrative Roles of the Women in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *Bib 72* (1991), 539; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 171. Since her ancestry is connected with Abraham’s family, strictly speaking, she would not be thought of as a Gentile. Yet, Philo identified her as a woman “from Palestinian Syria” (Philo, *Virt.* 220-222), namely a Canaanite. Furthermore, in some Jewish sources, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth are seen as proselytes (Sot. 10a; SB 1., p.16, 20-21, 25). So their pagan origins cannot automatically be removed. Bauckham convincingly contends that Tamar had a Gentile origin, see “Tamar’s Ancestry And Rahab’s Marriage,” 313-329.

<sup>35</sup>Nolland is hesitant to connect Bathsheba to other women because of Matthew’s reference to Uriah’s wife (“Four Women,” 527-539). But, Gundry rightly comments: “the change (from ‘Bathsheba daughter of Ammiel’ (1 Chr 3:5) to ‘the wife of Uriah’ (2 Sam 11:26; 12:10, 15) calls attention to her taking on the status of a Gentile through marriage to Uriah, repeatedly designated a Hittite. In fact, the stress falls not so much on Uriah’s wife...as on Uriah himself. Thus again the genealogy foreshadows the place of Gentiles in the church” (*Matthew*, 15); Schweizer maintains that “Bathsheba is not mentioned by name but is introduced as ‘Uriah’s wife’ because she became an alien through her husband, who always appears in the Bible as ‘the Hittite’, e.g., 2 Sam. 11:3.” (*Matthew*, 25); D.A. Carson argues that “Bathsheba herself was apparently the daughter of an Israelite (1 Chron. 3:5[variant reading]); but her marriage to Uriah probably led to her being regarded as a Hittite,” *Matthew*, EBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 66; B. Byrne says that “it is hard to avoid the inference that she goes unnamed because her ‘Gentile’ associations stem entirely from her husband, Uriah the Hittite,” “The Messiah in Whose Name The Gentiles Will Hope” (Matt.12:21): Gentile Inclusion as an Essential Element of Matthew’s Christology,” *ABR 50* (2002): 60. R.

including these four women linked with Gentiles, Matthew creates a universalistic overtone. One objection to this view is that in post-biblical Jewish literature Rahab, Tamar and Ruth were described as Jewish proselytes. Yet, it cannot erase the comprehension of their Gentile origin.<sup>36</sup> Thus, this interpretation fits well with the context of the genealogy and may well be consistent with the theme and theology of Matthew's universal salvation.

In accordance with the suggestion mentioned above, Frederick Dale Bruner's observation on the genealogy is very interesting, though not entirely adequate by itself. He notes that Jesus' own racial heritage is mixed, and thus claims that "Matthew, by emphasizing early racial intermarriages, is, among other things, returning the people of God to their original racial universality."<sup>37</sup> According to him, the reason for Matthew's insertion of four women in his genealogy is clearly to show "his attack on racial and national chauvinisms in the people of God and to warn the new people of God, the church, against any return to national or racial enthusiasm. Thus, he concludes that "Racial prejudice is condemned on the opening page of the New Testament."<sup>38</sup>

Bruner's interpretation is worthy of consideration as long as it recognizes the fact that the universal races are represented in Matthew's genealogy. Unfortunately, it fails, however, to give a reason for the inclusion of the four women that is appropriate in terms of the context in genealogy, the new direction of Matthew's community toward inclusiveness of mission according to God's providence and the book of Matthew as a whole.

Although Matthew's warning against racial discrimination can be taken as part of the reason for the incorporation of the four women

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De Vaux argues that "the husband is called the baal or master of his wife, just as he is the baal of a house or field (Exod. 21:3, 22...); a married woman is therefore the 'possession' of her baal (Gen. 20:3; Deut. 22:22)." (26) He continues to say that marriages with foreigners "not only tainted the purity of Israel's blood, but also endangered its religious faith (I Kings 11:4), and were therefore forbidden by law (Exod. 34:15-16; Deut. 7:3-4)" (31), *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961). So Nolan's argument seems right that "since exogamy was outlawed in the first century, Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, would automatically be adjudged to be not-Israel" (*Royal Son*, 62).

<sup>36</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 171.

<sup>37</sup>Bruner, *Matthew*, 7.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

when considering the mixed nature of the people of Matthew's community and the Jewish discrimination of the Gentiles, this is not the essence of Matthew's purpose in the genealogy. Rather it seems more likely that the main focus in his genealogy is to show a universal salvation and his community's acceptance of an inclusive mission because of God's faithful promise and his culminating purpose of salvation for all nations. Matthew consistently divulges such motifs from the opening section to the conclusion (28:18-20) of his book. Moreover, it is important to note the fact that, as the story of Matthew unfolds, Matthew's concern is not so much whether Jew or Gentile, the races themselves, but whether people, including both Jews and Gentiles, accept Jesus as the Messiah.

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE GENEALOGY

It is entirely true that an understanding of Matthew's incorporation of the four women cannot be definitely elucidated by the OT passages in which their names appear. It should be understood in terms of the context of Matthew's genealogy and the book of Matthew as a whole. What is the main concern of Matthew's genealogy? What is the purpose of his genealogy? Is our understanding of Matthew's inclusion of the four women consistent with the rest of the content of Matthew? We shall examine Matthew's intention in including the four women in the light of these questions.

#### Jesus as the Messiah

First of all, unlike Luke's genealogy, which clearly shows that the Evangelist welcomes all of humanity, including Jews and Gentiles, into a relationship with God through the Messiah,<sup>39</sup> Matthew's genealogy

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<sup>39</sup>I.H. Marshall claims that "the carrying back of the genealogy to Adam is meant to stress the universal significance of Jesus for the whole of the human race, and not merely for the seed of Abraham," *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1979), 161; Hill, *Matthew*, 75. God has used the Jewish people to be the instrument by which Jesus came into the world as the savior. Luke's portrayal of Jesus in terms of universal importance is to indicate not that everyone will be saved, but that God offers salvation equally to all, Jews and Gentiles. By describing the inclusive genealogy at the beginning of Jesus' work, Luke supports the view that Jesus' salvation will be available to everyone (Luke 24:46-47, Acts 1:8, 13:46-48, 26:23, 28:28).

contains the same purpose for universal salvation by placing the emphasis on Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>40</sup>

Hagner rightly points out that, unlike genealogies in the OT and Jewish tradition that always take their first name from the ancestor, here “the genealogy is designated according to the last name of the list, and that thus “the theological orientation is unmistakable.”<sup>41</sup> Here Matthew places “Jesus Christ” as the first name.<sup>42</sup> The word, “Christ,” indicates “anointed” and mentions the Messiah in the Greek way. There is no evidence that Jesus appointed himself to be the Messiah, or saw his earthly ministry in terms of a political Messianic framework in which Israel would be liberated from Roman power. Rather his disciples could begin to use this title for Jesus, followed by their certainty after seeing Jesus raised from the dead. So, to him, Matthew’s careful use of the title “Christ” is very crucial. It implies that Matthew makes use of this title in the way that has a messianic connotation.

W. B. Tatum supports this view, contending that “the reference to *ὁ Χριστός* in v.1, v.17 and elsewhere in the gospel indicates that the First Evangelist perceives its messianic import.”<sup>43</sup> In particular, he understands two passages (v1, v18a),<sup>44</sup> the heading for the genealogy

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<sup>40</sup>E.L. Abel maintains that both the genealogy of Luke and Matthew share the same certainty that Jesus is the Messiah. Yet, he still says, that each describes differently Jesus’ messianic role differently, “one as a royal messiah (Matthew), the other as that of prophet messiah (Luke),” “The Genealogies of Jesus ΟΕΠΠΙΧΤΟΧ,” *NTS* 20 (1973-1974): 203-210.

<sup>41</sup>D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993), 9.

<sup>42</sup>Jesus is the personal name of the protagonist of Matthew’s story as the genealogy (1:16) indicates. According to J.D. Kingsbury, “Jesus denotes that God is salvation and the angel touches on this as he tells Joseph that Jesus will save his people from their sins.” Hence, “of all the traits Matthew ascribes to Jesus in the course of his story, the one most fundamental is that he is saving.” See *Matthew As Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 45. Morris also takes account of Jesus’ name, saying that “Jesus is the Latin form of the name = *Ἰησοῦ* the Greek form of the Hebrew *Jeshua*, a shorter form of *Jehoshua*, which means ‘Yahweh is salvation’” (*Matthew*, 19)

<sup>43</sup>W.B. Tatum, “The Origin of Jesus Messiah (Matt 1:1, 18a): Matthew’s Use of the Infancy Traditions,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 523-535.

<sup>44</sup>NT scholars generally refer the words *Βιβλος γενεσεως* (1:1) to the genealogy (W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB [NY: Doubleday, 1971], 1-2; A.H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 1; J. Nolland, “What Kind of Genesis Do We Have in Matt.1:1?” *NTS* 42 (1996): 471; the infancy stories in 1:1-2:23 (D. A. Carson, *Matthew: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) in 8:61; A.

(1:2-17) and the introduction to the first section (1:18-4:16), as having the function of serving Matthew's interest in Jesus' messianic origin. According to him, the titles "Son of David" (1:1) and "Son of Abraham" (1:1) reflect Matthew's concern for Jesus the Messiah's genealogical origin. Thus, he concludes that "with this table of ancestry the First Evangelist not only shows that Jesus' genealogical origin gives him messianic credentials but that Jesus' place in the royal-messianic line demonstrates that he is indeed 'the Messiah' (1:1, 16, 17)."<sup>45</sup>

It is evidently true, therefore, that the genealogy tells us more than just that Jesus stems legitimately from the royal line of Israel. It reflects on what has taken place in the history of the Jewish people prior to the birth of Messiah and shows the Matthean readers how to assess Jesus. It also shows what God has promised to do with them and what He has fulfilled for Israel. In other words, the genealogy structures Israel's history in a memorable way and repeats the royal Davidic ancestry leading up to the culmination of Jesus' birth.<sup>46</sup> Jesus is the climax and the decisive beginning in realizing God's blessing for all nations.

Since the genealogy apparently portrays Jesus Christ as Messiah, the author of Matthew may well have recognized the plan of God in which salvation comes from the Jews, but should be offered to all nations through this Messiah. Hence it seems fair to say that Matthew's messianic concern is clearly reflected in his concern for universal salvation: Jesus is the king as the Davidic Messiah by divine providential intervention and is introduced as God's agent, offering salvation to everyone, Jew and Gentile.

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Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Elliot Stock, 1910), 1; 1:1-4:16 (Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 9; E. Krentz, "The Extent of Matthew's Prologue: Toward the Structure of the First Gospel," *JBL* 83 [1964], 409-414.), or the entire gospel (Davies, *The Setting*, 67-72).

<sup>45</sup>Tatum, "Origin of Jesus," 529.

<sup>46</sup>H. Milton comments that "the Law and the Prophets witness to Jesus as the Christ who, in Matthew's prologue, recapitulates and fulfils the past....He is the centre of history," "The Structure of The Prologue to St. Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 81 (1962): 175-181; Nolland claims that in the genealogy "Jesus sums up in himself and brings to a climax that salvation-history which began in the call of Abraham. (See "What Kind of Genesis Do We Have In Matt 1.1?") 463-71).

### “Son of David” and “Son of Abraham”

Second, it is significant to note that by introducing Jesus Christ Matthew associates him with “the son of David” and “the son of Abraham,” to whom God had made two great promises to the people of Israel. The title *vŷoŷ Davið* is the designation of the lawful inheritor of the throne of Israel (cf. Jer 33:15; Pss Sol 17:21) and by the time of Jesus the Jews believed that the messianic king would come from the Davidic lineage.<sup>47</sup> Thus, for Israel, this title is reminiscent of the promise of God that a Davidic descendant would be raised up and his kingdom and rule be established forever.<sup>48</sup>

Robert H. Gundry rightly argues that “Certainly the emphasis falls here and later on Jesus as the king who fulfils God’s promise to David, a promise reiterated and expanded in many messianic prophecies and in Jewish expectation.”<sup>49</sup> Hagner also supports this view, claiming that “Son of David” had become, by the first century, a title for the messianic deliverer who would assume the throne of David . . . , thereby inaugurating a kingdom of perfection and righteousness that would last forever.”<sup>50</sup> Leon Morris goes further, arguing that in Matthew this title is frequently found when people ask Jesus for help (9:27, 15:22, 20:30-31),<sup>51</sup> yet also in the narrative of the triumphal

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Luke 1:32; John 7: 42; Acts 13:23; 4Q 174. 1:11-13; 4Q 252 .5:3-4.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. 2 Sam 7:4-17; 1 Chron. 17:11-14; Ps. 132:11-12; Isa. 9:5-6, 11: 1-5; Jer. 33:15; Ezek. 34: 23.

<sup>49</sup>Gundry, *Matthew*, 3; G. Mussies insists that “Matthew presents the pedigree in order to show that Jesus is of royal Davidic descent, as appears from the special addition of ‘the King’ to David’s name in the genealogy itself, and, since ‘son of David’ is equivalent with ‘Messiah,’ that Jesus rightfully bears the title of ‘Christ,’ ‘the Anointed.’” See “Parallels to Matthew’s Version of The Pedigree of Jesus,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 32-47.

<sup>50</sup>Hagner, *Matthew*, 9.

<sup>51</sup>J.M. Gibbs observes that when appealing to Jesus for help there is a certain formula: “have mercy on us, Son of David” (9:27, 15:22, 25, 17:15, 20:30-33). See “Purpose and Pattern in Matthew’s Use of the Title ‘Son of David,’” *NTS* 10 (1964): 446-464. Concerning Matthew’s use of the title “Son of David” in connection with the healing, see D.C. Duling, “The Therapeutic Son of David: an Element in Matthew’s Christological Apologetic,” *NTS* 24 (1977-1978): 392-410. As the Messianic Son of David Jesus goes on to abolish the sinfulness of the people by his teaching of mercy and forgiveness (5:21-26, 6:12-15, 9:9-13, 18:21-35) and by his healing (9:1-8). When he is designated as “Son of David,” it is always in a context of his healing activity (9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31, 21:9, 15). So, it is important to note that one of the



entry into Jerusalem, with the implication of Matthew's awareness of the royal connections of the term. Thus he understands Matthew's gospel to "be about one who fulfilled all that is meant in being the descendant of Israel's greatest king."<sup>52</sup> God's promise had not been overlooked because He swore it to his people and David's tree was sprouting anew when Jesus was born.

Furthermore, God's promise and its fulfillment are also inherent in Matthew's designation, "Son of Abraham." Here Matthew's intention is to call attention to the Abrahamic covenant in which all the people in the world will be blessed (Gen 12:1-3, 17:5-7; 22:18). There is no doubt that the Gentiles will take hope (12:21) in Jesus, as the Messiah, who fulfils God's promise, through the line of Abraham.<sup>53</sup> Thus, by placing the name of Jesus in association with "son of Abraham," Matthew again confirms that salvation will be offered to all nations.

Davies and Allison hold this view, arguing that "Son of Abraham," found only here in Matthew, probably also serves to announce the evangelist's interest in the salvation of the Gentiles.<sup>54</sup> According to them, Abraham's origin was Gentile, and in the later Jewish literature he was sometimes described as "the father of many nations" or "the first proselyte." Davies and Allison continue to claim that "when we come to Christianity, we find Paul representing Abraham as the true father of all who have faith, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom 4:1-25, Gal

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feature of Matthew's gospel is to stress Jesus' healing in terms of the work of the Messiah (Matt. 11:2-5, 12:23, 21:14-16), W. Grundmann, "Χριστός" *TDNT* IX (1974): 532. His death inaugurates the covenant that creates the universal forgiveness of sins (26:28). See J.P. Heil, "Significant Aspects of the Healing Miracle in Matthew," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 274-287. J.D. Kingsbury convincingly argues that Matthew not only employs "Son of David" positively, as part of his portrayal of the earthly Jesus in identifying him with the royal Messiah from the Davidic line promised and sent to Israel, but also apologetically, to stress the guilt of Israel who rejected the Messiah, see "The Title 'Son of David' in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 95, 4 (1976): 591-602.

<sup>52</sup>Morris, *Matthew*, 20.

<sup>53</sup>The argument that Abraham is the father of the nation of Israel is frequently presented in the New Testament. See., Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:55, 73, 13:16, 16:30, 19:9; John 8:33-41, 8:53-59; Acts 7:2, 13:26; Rom. 4:1, 12, 9:7, 11:1; 2 Cor. 11:22; Gal. 3:16; Heb. 2:16, etc.

<sup>54</sup>Davies, and Allison, *Matthew*, 158; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 110; Gundry, *Matthew*, 14-15; Hagner, *Matthew*, 9-10; France, *Matthew*, 71-72; Wiefel, *Matthäus*, 28; Frankemölle, *Matthäus*, 145.

3:6-29).” Thus, their conclusion is plausible that here “Matthew may have held a similar conception.”<sup>55</sup>

Matthew’s reference to this title, “Son of Abraham,” therefore, has a theologically crucial meaning. Jesus, the Messiah, as “the Son of Abraham,” is a true Jew, so salvation comes from Israel,<sup>56</sup> and at the same time God’s plan of salvation expands to the Gentiles. In other words, the significance of both a promise and its fulfillment is implied in the designation “Son of Abraham.” As “Son of Abraham,” Jesus accomplishes the Abrahamic covenant made with the founder of the Israelite community, that he will be the father of all nations and that in him everyone on earth will be blessed.

Matthew’s reference to “Son of Abraham” as indicating universal salvation, that all the nations would be blessed, is consistent with other passages in Matthew where “Abraham” occurs as an eschatological figure of unbounded salvation. In Mt.3:9, by criticizing Jewish thinking that physical ancestry from Abraham is significant, Jesus claims that God can raise up children to Abraham from stones. It probably indicates that Matthew had a criticism of the disobedient Jewish people and the opening of salvation to the Gentiles in mind.<sup>57</sup> In Mt. 8:11, Jesus also refers to “Abraham” in association with unlimited salvation for everyone, Jews and Gentiles. So, in both passages, “Abraham” is presented as an eschatological figure through whom all nations are blessed with salvation.

It is also worth noting that Matthew reiterates the key names in his genealogy: Abraham, David, and Christ (vv 1, 2, 6, 17). In repeating three names and combining David and Abraham, Matthew pays attention to Jesus, indicating that He fulfilled everything that would be

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<sup>55</sup>Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 158

<sup>56</sup>As W.L. Kynes observes, “As a son of Abraham, Jesus may be the source of blessing to Gentiles, but in beginning the genealogy with Abraham, the father of the nation, Matthew is first presenting Jesus as a rightful heir of God’s promise to the patriarchs and as one who was, in every way, continuous with the Israel of the past.” Further, he states, “the crisis in Israel raised by the emergence of the church would have made such an affirmation profoundly significant. Jesus, Matthew contends, was a true Israelite.” *A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus As the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991), 14.

<sup>57</sup>J.P. Meier, *Matthew: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980), 24; Hagner, *Matthew I*, 50; Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, 309.

expected in the Messiah, the restoration and blessing of Israel as well as the offering of universal salvation to all nations on earth. Thus, Matthew's genealogy is not simply the list of the birth of people.<sup>58</sup> Rather, it unveils that "God has been working within history to achieve foreordained purposes and that Jesus, the last person of the last epoch, is the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel and the beginning of a new messianic age."<sup>59</sup>

Luz seems correct when he concludes that "the genealogy contains a universalistic overtone: it is indicated in a hidden way that the son of David, the Messiah of Israel, brings salvation for the Gentiles. This provides a clue for the interpretation of 'son of Abraham' in 1:1, which is seemingly taken for granted and yet so striking... The shifting of the salvation of Israel to the Gentiles, a predominant theme in the Gospel of Matthew, is addressed in its opening text."<sup>60</sup>

In the light of our understanding of the context of Matthew's genealogy, in which the universal scope of salvation exists, the assertion that Matthew inserts the four women because of their Gentile backgrounds seems to be highly relevant and convincing. That is to say, Matthew's description of Jesus as the Messiah and his presentation of him in relation to "the Son of David" and "the Son of Abraham" undoubtedly strongly indicates God's plan of universal salvation and an all-embracing mission in his genealogy. Thus, such interpretation of the context leads us reasonably to see that the contention that Matthew incorporates the four women because of their Gentile background cannot be easily discarded.

Matthew's emphasis on the Messiah, his introduction of Jesus associated with the two great ancestors, and his inclusion of four Gentile women in the genealogy are, therefore, not incidental but rather

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<sup>58</sup>On the discussion that genealogies had six functions, see R.T. Hood, "The Genealogies of Jesus," in *Early Christian Origins*, ed. Allen Wikgren (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961), 1-15.

<sup>59</sup>Garland, *Matthew*, 20. David D. Cupp also holds this view that "his genealogy is a perfect and perfective rhetorical source, almost a rhythmic anthem, which demonstrates for the implied reader that God has been active within the history of his people since its founding members." Further he contends that "this line of God's people has been "telic" in design, finding its end in *ὁ Χριστός*." See *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53.

<sup>60</sup>Luz, *Matthew*, 110.

intentional for charting the new direction of his community to an inclusive mission. In particular, two main facts support this. First, women are not usually included in Jewish genealogy.<sup>61</sup> Second, they are not like the great women to be found in Jewish writings such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. Matthew's theological direction, therefore, is through the transforming community, toward an inclusive mission which is clearly distinguishable from Judaism.<sup>62</sup>

#### The Genealogy in the Light of the Whole Gospel

Finally, this interpretation regarding the four women in the light of the context of his genealogy is more consistent with the rest of the contents of Matthew as a whole. As Luz rightly points out, we cannot encounter the main themes without involvement in which we "choose to read the Gospel as a continuous narrative rather than in excerpts and individual pericopes."<sup>63</sup> Thus it can be reasonably seen that the universal salvation indicated in Matthew's genealogy through his stress on a Christology associated with David and Abraham and his incorporation of four Gentile women plays an introductory role in unfolding Matthew's concern for Gentile mission. Such Gentile

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<sup>61</sup>Ruth Edwards argues that "in essence Hebrew and Jewish society was patriarchal in structure and outlook, with men exercising political, religious and social leadership and women having supportive and domestic roles." She informs us of many examples of male-chauvinism in Judaism: "Women were expected to be veiled outside the home. Some rabbis regarded it as shameful for a man to talk to a woman in a public place, even if she were a member of his own family, Some discouraged any talk with women: one is said to have advised, 'Talk not much with womankind' (or 'the wife'); for this could lead to Gehenna (Hell). Pious Jews thanked God daily that they were not created a Gentile, a woman, or an ignoramus (or slave)." See *The Case for Women's Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1991), 23-38.

<sup>62</sup>Despite the fact that an inclusive mission to all nations began with the coming of the Messiah, it is true that God's plan for universal salvation is presented in several passages of the OT. For example, His love and mercy to the Gentiles is particularly detected well in the Book of Jonah. In other words, the author of Matthew is not unique or the first person, as Jew, to understand a universal salvation. Thus since our evangelist, a converted Jew, may well have discerned God's plan for an all-embracing salvation, he could have a transforming effect on his community by stressing a new identity in Jesus, as distinct from Judaism, and so apparently manifests it from the opening of his book.

<sup>63</sup>Luz, *Theology of Gospel*, 5.

orientation is continually underlined in the earlier chapters (2:1-12; 5:14) as well as in the following chapters in Matthew.

David E. Garland rightly comments: “the stories behind these names prepare us for the kind of tenacious faith we will see in the Gentile centurion (8:5-13) and the Canaanite woman (15:21-28)—a faith that surpasses that found even in Israel. Their stories also make clear that the inclusion of Gentiles did not damage the cause of Israel but benefited Israel and moved things along their divinely appointed course.”<sup>64</sup>

For this reason, it seems fair to say that in his genealogy Matthew, by including four Gentile women, portrays his community, not merely as rooted in Judaism, but as a universal family, embracing people of different backgrounds, Jews and Gentiles according to God’s providence. Thus Matthew’s insertion of four Gentile women is not random but deliberate to usher his community toward God’s plan for universal salvation, the inclusive mission. This conclusion may be confirmed by many passages which we shall find to be favorable to Gentiles as Matthew unfolds his story (2:1-12; 3:9; 4:24-25; 5:14; 8:5-13; 10:18; 11:20-24; 12:18-21, 38-42; 13:38; 15:21-28; 21:28-45; 22:1-14; 24:14, 30-31; 25:31-46; 26:13; 27:54; 28:18-20).

#### CONCLUSION

In summary, Matthew’s inclusion of the four women is intentional in order to fulfill his theological purpose. They are directly and indirectly linked with Gentiles. So, by including the four women Matthew’s focus is on demonstrating God’s plan of universal salvation: everyone, Jews and Gentiles are welcome by illustrating that the Messiah also is connected with Gentile forebears.

It is confirmed by the context of Matthew’s genealogy in that he clearly lays stress upon Jesus as the Messiah for the same purpose of universal salvation, especially in association with the significance of the Abrahamic and Davidic promises in the comprehension of the messianic mission. Matthew’s Jesus, as “Son of David,” fulfils God’s promise to restore his kingdom forever by blessing Israel under the rule of the Davidic descendant. As “Son of Abraham,” Jesus also fulfils

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<sup>64</sup>Garland, *Matthew*, 19.

God's promise that all the nations will be blessed. Hence, the genealogy shows the fulfillment of the salvation of God for Israel as well as for all nations in Jesus as the Messiah. Matthew's incorporation of the four women linked with Gentiles fits in well with the context of Matthew's genealogy as well as with the rest of the whole gospel which is in favor of Gentile mission. By their inclusion in the genealogy, therefore, Matthew may encourage his Jewish readers to welcome Gentiles into the body of Christ.

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