



# Matthew the Lord's disciple communicates his justification of Mary as the Mother of the Messiah

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## Abstract

Genealogies were in the past written so as to show lineage of people who were significant in society. However, in recent times many individuals want to discover about their family tree. When the writer of the Gospel of Matthew laid out the genealogy of Christ the Messiah, he started from Abraham. He did this because Abraham was regarded as the father of the Jewish nation. Therefore, it implies that the writer was writing with the intention of reaching a Jewish audience. It could therefore be assumed that the writer used written communication to persuade the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah and the one spoken of in the Old Testament by the prophets. However, he realised that many Jews had and are still having reservations in believing that Mary could be a chosen vessel because they did not then or presently see her as a virtuous and pure woman. Like an advocate who uses supplementary information and facts to build a case before he/she can defend his/her client, so too does the writer of the gospel of Matthew mention four women's names before he can present Mary in his genealogy. This was to signify that if those women could be in the lineage of Judah, why could Mary not be qualified to bring forth the Messiah? The theoretical framework for this paper is the Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication. The objective of this paper was to show how written communication was used to substantiate that Mary is the mother of the Messiah.

**Keywords:** Gospel of Matthew, Genealogy, Jesus Christ, Christianity, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, Mary and Written Communication.

## Introduction

“What prompted Matthew to include a prostitute (Rahab), a woman who pretended to be a prostitute (Tamar), a sexually forward widow (Ruth), and a woman taken in adultery (Bathsheba) in his account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham?” (Farrrell Johnson Fine Arts, nd, para 2). Heffern (1912, p. 69) states “recent discussion of the Virgin Birth has renewed interest in the genealogies of Christ; and one of questions that have been reopened is the significance of exceptional mention of the four women in Matthew's genealogy.”

The researcher is of the view that the writer of the Gospel of Matthew mentions the four women in the genealogy to construct a defence before he could present Mary in the genealogy as she was not regarded as one who is righteous or worthy to bring forth the Messiah. In the same manner as a lawyer would do in presenting his case before a jury, so too is the writer of the gospel of Matthew, by presenting this gospel to the Jews/Jewish Christians. It is regarded that this gospel was written to Jewish readers, therefore based on this fact Matthew takes Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham. It is exciting to highlight how Matthew defends Mary as the Mother of the Messiah, through just using four women that precedes her in the Genealogy.

**Aim:** To illustrate how written communication was used to prove that Mary is the mother of the Messiah as depicted in Matthew's genealogy.



## Statement of the Problem

The mere fact that the Jews currently reject the concept of Christ as the Messiah and are still waiting for the Messiah to come, is evident in that they do not accept his divine conception and being born of a virgin. In addition to this, before he was crucified they rejected Him and demanded that He be crucified. However, to get them believe that their role in having the Messiah crucified would have been something that they were not easily going to accept, particularly as it would show that they were responsible for crucifying the Messiah. Since the writer of the Gospel was writing to the Jewish nation and based on the fact that he takes his genealogy back to Abraham, he had to try and convince them that Mary was indeed chosen by God and that she was a virgin. But because they rejected the Lord and indeed never believed that Mary was a virgin, it was difficult to persuade his readers. This gospel is not only for the early church, but also for the Jews of the 21st century who do not accept Mary as the mother of the Messiah. Matthew would have anticipated that this would be a long standing problem and therefore he decided to include five women in his genealogy of the Messiah. Matthew knew by emphasizing the four women in the genealogy, it would remind the Jews of how God turned these women's lives around. By the time it came to Mary, should they find her unworthy to bring forth their Messiah then they honestly rejecting what God has done in the whole family tree of Abraham.

## Theoretical Framework

The Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication will be used as the Theoretical Framework for this paper, being that there is a sender, message, medium, receiver, feedback and barrier (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The sender is one who sends a message. Message is what is being communicated by the sender (Mishra, 2017). Medium is the how they send this message. The receiver is the one who gets the message (Mishra, 2017). Barriers are the hindrances which deter the receiver from getting the message in its entirety. Through the receiver providing feedback, it will be determined whether the receiver got the entire message from the sender. The sender when applied to the gospel of Matthew will be Matthew the disciple of Christ. The receiver will be those that will read or hear the genealogy. The message will be on the genealogy. Medium will be written communication, verbal communication, electronic communication and interpersonal communication. The barrier will be one's firmness in electing not to look at the defence used by the author to defend Mary's case in order to justify that she is truly the mother of the Messiah, notwithstanding the fact that they have witnessed the multitude of miracles which Jesus performed on earth.

The barrier could have been created because they expected a Messiah who would deliver them in the literal sense (Nicolaidis, 2010). Since this has not happened, they rejected him and spurned everything spoken of Him in the Old Testament by the prophets, hence becoming a barrier in them accepting Christ as the Messiah then and even now. Such type of unbelief or failure to accept Mary as the vessel chosen by God to bring forth the Messiah will refer to barriers as mentioned in Shannon and Weaver's Model of Communication.

## Literature review

On reading genealogies in the bible when I first became a Christian was very frustrating as I did not know how to pronounce many of the names. So to avoid wasting time on trying to pronounce the names in the genealogy, I just skipped through the genealogy and proceeded on to other scriptures. The only genealogy I often heard in sermons was that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Even then the preachers did not say Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob; I knew this was the genealogy given by preachers. Genealogy is given to show the family tree. It also shows the lineage. When we read the bible we assume the women are only mentioned in the Genealogy as listed in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel. However, Miriam is also mentioned in a genealogy in the Old Testament.



Jackson (2019:7) states three facts as to why there are biblical genealogies, which are as follows:

- Genealogies for the most part trace family histories through males;
- The relationships frequently are father-son connections, though this is not always the case; and
- The genealogies of scripture had both material and spiritual values.

### Old Testament Genealogy

Ezra 7:1-6 “<sup>1</sup>After these things, during the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, <sup>2</sup>the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, <sup>3</sup>the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, <sup>4</sup>the son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, <sup>5</sup>the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest— <sup>6</sup>this Ezra came up from Babylon.”

Ezra traces his genealogy or family tree back to Aaron, who was the Chief priest. In my perspective I believe that one would trace their family tree to show their bloodline and what significance it has, often to ascertain whether their forefathers were prominent individuals. This is evident in the case of Ezra who, by stating that Aaron was his forefather, enhanced his right as a priest. At times Jesus was referred to as the son of David, thereby emphasizing that He is the rightful heir to the Kingdom. Scriptures also state that the promise of the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah of which David formed part of, and Jesus' earthly father Joseph was part of such a genealogy.

1 Chronicles 6:1-15 (NIV) “<sup>1</sup>The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath and Merari. <sup>2</sup>The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. <sup>3</sup>The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. <sup>4</sup>Eleazar was the father of Phinehas, Phinehas the father of Abishua, <sup>5</sup>Abishua the father of Bukki, Bukki the father of Uzzi, <sup>6</sup>Uzzi the father of Zerariah, Zerariah the father of Meraioth, <sup>7</sup>Meraioth the father of Amariah, Amariah the father of Ahitub, <sup>8</sup>Ahitub the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Ahimaaz, <sup>9</sup>Ahimaaz the father of Azariah, Azariah the father of Johanan, <sup>10</sup>Johanan the father of Azariah (it was he who served as priest in the temple Solomon built in Jerusalem), <sup>11</sup>Azariah the father of Amariah, Amariah the father of Ahitub, <sup>12</sup>Ahitub the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Shallum, <sup>13</sup>Shallum the father of Hilkiah, Hilkiah the father of Azariah, <sup>14</sup>Azariah the father of Seraiah, and Seraiah the father of Jozadak<sup>15</sup> Jozadak was deported when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.” Jackson (2019:12) states “A comparison of Ezra 7:3-4, with 1 Chronicles 6:6-10, reveals that six names are missing from Ezra's list.” It is also interesting to note that though genealogy often contain genealogy of men, Miriam the daughter of Amram is mentioned in the above genealogy (1 Chron. 6:3a).

“Remember that the genealogies in the Old Testament are always working to communicate multiple layers of information to readers. Genealogies trace family trees, obviously, and they also help us trace priestly and royal lines through Israel's story. These types of genealogies can be observed in the first nine chapters of Chronicles. In fact, there's little doubt that the author of Matthew had the book of Chronicles and its genealogies in mind when he wrote his own Gospel account and began it with a genealogy” (The Bible Project, 2017:3).

### The New Testament Writing, Written Communication

The early church focused mostly on small group communication, interpersonal communication and large group communication in order to maintain and propagate the gospel of Christianity. Initially they were called the people of the Way. However, it was at Antioch where they were



termed as Christians. With the passage of time the disciples of Christ, as well as other believers, saw the need to document the teachings of Christ, and that is how the Gospel of Christ came about. The letters and other books were written in order to provide the doctrines for the church, guidance, teaching on how believers are to live, as well as the book of Revelation which communicates to the believers about the end time.

It is worth noting that many theological personalities, inter-alia, Saint Ambrose (339-397 BCE) who was bishop of the Italian city of Milan and was a leading writer in the Western Christian Church during the 4th century communicated much on the issue. He was an outspoken believer in the notion of Christian female virginity and succeeded in communicating prominent conceptions of God and of the Christian quest for a righteous life. Central to Ambrose's teachings was the virginity of Mary and her role as the Theotokos (God bearer/Mother of God) (Ambrose of Milan, 2007; Shoemaker, 2005; Nicolaidis, 2014a).

However, the books which are in the New Testament become our yardstick as believers of Christ. So from verbal communication, the early church had written communication and over time they were copied and circulated to other churches. This illustrates that written communication played an integral role to provide teaching, correction and clarity on various issues which the early church were faced with. There is also no hesitation that early Christians began painting images of Christ, of His Mother, and of holy people in their homes and churches, largely as a precipitate assertion of their faithfulness and love for Jesus. The honouring of God and the commemoration of the Virgin Mary in Church history through the use of imaginative depictions almost certainly appeared to be standard practice to them (Nicolaidis, 2014b; Lossky, 1951).

In this section the author will look at the gospels in the New Testament in order to understand why they each wrote on the life of Christ; with what purpose in mind; and to which audience and to see if and how they unpacked the Genealogy of Christ.

### **The gospel of Mark, the disciple of Barnabas**

“New Testament evangelist, more fully, ‘John, whose surname was Mark’, traditionally the author of the second canonical Gospel” (Whaling & Goring, 1992: 324). Acts 12:12 makes the first historical reference to Mark, who also was the nephew of Barnabas. According to early church tradition, the Gospel of Mark has been ascribed to John Mark (Whaling & Goring, 1994). “While the gospel of Matthew was written for the nation of Israel (the religious man), the gospel of Mark was specifically written for the Romans (the strong man)” (Reddy, 2018:1). Mark portrays Christ as Servant, who came to serve humankind. Berkhof (2004:39) states “The style of Mark is more lively than that of Matthew, though not as smooth. He delights in using words like εὐθύς or εὐθέως and πολὺς prefers the use of the present and the imperfect to that of the aorist, and often uses the periphrastic εἶναι with a participle instead of the finite verb.” A genealogy of Jesus Christ for John Mark was not important because where Christ came from was not as important to that which He came to do for humankind. So John Mark had to present a genealogy. Mark 10:45 projects Christ’s purpose as God’s servant, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many”, Fulfilling the Old Testament scripture which is found in Isaiah 42:1-2. Reddy (2002:77) posits “Christ is presented as the servant of Jehovah; busy doing the will of the Father therefore there is no genealogy because a servant does not need a genealogy.”

### **The gospel according to Luke, the physician**

Dr Luke was not one of the 12 disciples of Jesus Christ. Whaling and Goring (1992:307) state “Luke was the New Testament evangelist, A Gentile Christian, perhaps ‘the beloved physician’ and companion of Saint Paul (Colossians 4:14, Philippians 24).” The Gospel of Luke has traditionally been ascribed to Luke the physician (Whaling and Goring, 1992:307). This gospel projects his intellectual ability as a scholar and researcher. Reddy (2002: 77) states “He (Luke) shares the same level of intellectualism and spirituality as the apostle Paul. Luke was also a



scientist of his day and wrote the best Greek compared to any of the other New Testament writers.” The author is of the view that although history and tradition refer to this as the Gospel of Luke, he regards it as a letter as he does the Acts of the Apostles. The reason is that both were written by Dr Luke. Though history refers to this writing as a gospel, it was actually a letter written to Theophilus, (Luke 1:1 and Acts 1:1). He was a high-ranking officer within the Roman Empire and who had converted to Christianity. Reddy (2002:77) posits “This gospel was written not for the public but rather to a single individual, namely Theophilus. Luke gives a well-researched account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Luke 1:25-38 prophesies the birth of Christ. He mentions Mary finding favour with God and that she, through the power of God, would bring forth the Son of God. By taking the genealogy of Christ back to Adam, Luke was presenting the Gospel of Christ to the Gentile world (Luke 4:25-47). He projects Christ as the perfect Son of Man.

### **The gospel John, the beloved**

John was “One of the 12 apostles, son of Zebedee, and the younger brother of James, a Galilean fisherman; one of the inner circle of disciples who were with Jesus at the transfiguration and Gethsemane” (Larousse Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions, 1992:267). Reddy (2002:78) posits “the author refers to the Jewish customs and religious activities (John 2:6; 10:22).” Reddy (2002:78) states “the authorship of the gospel of John is ascribed to John the Beloved.” The Gospel of John takes the genealogy of Christ back to the beginning of Creation. Reddy (2002:78-79) states “Firstly, it is apologetic in nature (an apologist is an individual who writes in defence of his/her beliefs). John wrote this gospel to defend what he believed; that Jesus is the Son of God. Secondly, it has an evangelistic approach (through believing one can have eternal life).” Deduced from John 3:16, it is evident that this gospel has a universal appeal; showing that God sent His Son into the world so that whosoever believes in Him shall be saved. A gospel communicating God’s love to all humanity.

### **The gospel of Matthew the Jew, the tax collector**

Berkhof (2004:35) states that “It was Matthew’s purpose to convince the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, the great Davidic King promised by the prophets.” “It is, as it were, a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New. As the Old Testament had reference to the Jews only, so the Gospel of Matthew is written for the old covenant people” (Berkhof, 2004: 37).

Matthew was a Jew. The name Matthew means gift of God. He was the son of Alphaeus – (Schaff, 1996). Before called into apostleship, he was known as Levi (Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27) (Reddy, 2018). By profession he was a tax collector and such individuals were hated by the Jews (Reddy, 2018). Whaling and Goring (1994:330) state “According to tradition he was the author of the first Gospel, a missionary to the Hebrews, and suffered martyrdom, but nothing is known with certainty about his life.” Reddy (2002:67) states “there is no conclusive evidence that Matthew wrote this gospel.” This gospel was ascribed to Matthew who was a disciple of Christ according to Christian tradition. Tenny (1991;150) states “as a publican he must have been literate and accustomed to taking notes as a part of his business activity.” Early Christian theology was greatly influenced by Matthew (du Toit, 1988). Reddy (2002:67) posits “the singular way in which Matthew lays emphasis on the Old Testament as well as on customs and views that typify the Judaism of that time, is one of the most striking features of this gospel”.

“Matthew identifies three spans of fourteen generations each between Abraham, David the Exile and Jesus” (Naseri, 2001:3). Matthew uses written communication with the Jew as his readership. By starting Jesus’ genealogy from Abraham the above can be assumed, for Abraham was regarded as the father of the Jews. Naseri (2001:3) posits “The genealogy is made up of a list of male names responsible for the generation of progenies in an uninterrupted line leading up to Jesus”.



By calling Jesus the “son of Abraham”, the author is connecting Jesus to the father of the people of Israel. Abraham represents the moment when God selected and separated his family from the rest of the nations all the way back in the book of Genesis. It was through these Israelite people that God promised to bring blessing to all of humanity (Gen 12:1-3). By linking Jesus to Abraham, Matthew is bringing the reader’s attention back to the promise of God’s rescue plan for the world. (The Bible Project, 2017:8)

(Reddy, 2002:67) posits “in defence of Christ’s illegitimatised and heir to the kingdom of David, Matthew gives the lineage of David and highlights the role of five women in the genealogy of Jesus.”

1. *Matthew 1:3, “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar”;*
2. *Matthew 1:5, “Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab”;*
3. *Matthew 1:5, “Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth”;*
4. *Matthew 1:6, “David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife (Bathsheba)”;* and
5. *Matthew 1:16, “and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is the Christ”.*

Reddy (2002) states that Matthew’s gospel incorporates a genealogy of Jesus because it is common cause that a king is required to have such authentication with regard to validating him to the throne, even though Matthew used Mark’s gospel as the basis for his gospel. In writing to a Jewish audience and because he was projecting Christ as a king, he had to present a genealogy to show His royal lineage (Reddy, 2018)

### **Tamar, the first women in Christ genealogy**

Matthew 1:3, “Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar”. Tamar in the Hebrew language is written as (תמר). In the genealogy presented Tamar who is Judah’s daughter in law is the first woman mentioned. Tamar is recorded in Genesis 38:1-30. According to Karssen (1978) the name Tamar name means palm tree. She was chosen by Judah as a bride for Er, who was the grandson of Jacob. Karssen (1978) states that next to his riches and many sons, Jacob was known by everyone for his worship of the God of the heaven and the earth. It was these factors which had aroused an expectation within Tamar. (Karssen, 1978). The Lord put Er to death because he was wicked in the sight of God (Genesis 38:7). Karssen (1978:68) states that, “the laws of the tribe which Tamar now belonged to prohibited a childless woman from remaining a widow. The leaders believed that the name of a man could not, under any circumstance, go into oblivion.” However, being a submissive daughter-in-law, Tamar remained and waited for Judah to arrange her next marriage (Reddy, 2002). According to Old Testament Jewish custom when a brother who is married dies without having any children. Then it is the duty of his brother is to marry her so as to give his brother who has died an heir. Onan did not want to impregnate Tamar though he married her because he knew the child will not be his but his brother’s. “So whenever he lay with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother” (Genesis 38:9). He caused Tamar more pain and anguish by his actions. Due to his unacceptable behaviour, he was killed by God. This highlights the consequences of sin. Due to this outcome, Tamar was asked to return to her father’s home. She was to wait until Judah’s son Shilah came of age so as to marry her. She therefore went home and accepted Judah’s reasoning.

Genesis 1:27-28 reads “so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.’” Tamar discovered she was robbed of what God instituted for women when she discovered that her father-in-law had different intentions for Shelah. She was not going to be part of those plans. She disguised herself as a prostitute when she heard that Judah was taking the sheep to Timnah for shearing (Genesis 38:13-15). When Judah noticed Tamar he communicated that he wanted to have sexual relations with



her. This is an example of interpersonal communication. Karessan (1978:71) states “with the promised reward of a young goat in return for her sexual services, the woman agreed to the act. It was the usual payment offered for this sin, and Judah expected that it would be sacrificed in the temple of the goddess of fertility, to whom prostitutes often dedicated themselves.” Tamar asked Judah to make a pledge till he sent a goat for her sexual favours. So he asked to choose and she requested for his staff and rod and he granted her request. She returned to the role of a widow and he sent his friend Adullamite to give the goat to the prostitute but he could not find her. Judah wanted Tamar to be burnt after it was discovered that she was pregnant. She informed Judah that the father of the child owned the staff and rod. After seeing these items, he realised that he had been deceived by Tamar and broke his promise to her with regard to her marrying his youngest son.

Karssen (1978:73) states “Tamar, the abused woman, is the first registered woman in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Her son Perez became a forefather in the lineage of Jesus of Nazareth. This fact is not proof that God approved of sin. But it does confirm the fact that He wrote His history notwithstanding the imperfections of men.” Karssen (1978: 74) further states, “Tamar’s story gains perspective when the light of Jesus Christ shines on it. In spite of everything that can be said against her, Tamar became an enviable woman. Jesus Christ extended to her the honour of becoming a mother in the early history of His earthly family.” By having Tamar in the genealogy, Matthew was making the Jewish Christian aware that “... though you project Mary to be sinful, have you forgotten about Tamar and what she did in order to have a child?”. Though her act may not be condoned, she was tricked by her father-in-law.

### **Rahab, the second women in Christ genealogy**

Matthew 1:5, “Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.” Halverson (2019) states:

In the Hebrew of Joshua 2:1, she is called a “zanah”. Of the 94 times the word ‘zanah’ appears in the Old Testament, in nearly every instance it means harlot, whoredom, fornication, or similar words. Many hundreds of years later the ancient Jewish writer Josephus (37 AD – 100 AD) said she was an innkeeper. Of course, that was Josephus’s flowery way of saying ‘brothel.’ The conclusion is that Rahab owned a brothel and was herself a harlot.

Though Rahab was an ordinary lady, she was a woman of loose morals judging from her reputation as a harlot (prostitute) (Reddy, 2002). She put her own life at risk when she hid two Israelite spies. Due to her protecting the Israelite spies her family and herself were spared when Joshua and his men invaded Jericho. “Matthew is communicating that God will do His work and He can work with anyone of us” (Halverson, 2019). She lived with Israelites and married Salmon who stemmed from the line of Perez, who is from the line of Judah. They had a son whose name was Boaz. Boaz in turn married Ruth and was the father of Obed, who was the grandfather of King David.

### **Ruth, the third women in Christ genealogy**

Matthew 1:5, “Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth.” Ruth, who was a Moabite, is known as the “famous daughter-in-law” (Reddy, 2002:71). Elimelech was from Bethlehem and was married to Naomi who had two sons. When she died her one daughter-in-law (named Orpah) returned to her people whilst Ruth decided to remain with her mother-in-law. Since both these women were widows and childless, Naomi decided to return to her home town and Ruth accompanied her. Ruth worked on Boaz’s land and because she was Naomi’s daughter-in-law, he took pity on her. Since Naomi saw an opportunity to preserve the name of Elimelech, she told Ruth to do what she could to get Boaz to make her his bride. Boaz was able to ensure that Elimelech’s name is continued in though the latter and his sons have passed away. Karssen (1978:127) states “Ruth, whose name cannot be translated from the



Hebrew language because of its Moabite origins, was quickly appreciated by those around her.” She sacrificed her happiness just to live with her mother-in-law. After the death of her husband she remained single for a long time just to take care of her mother-in-law. It was advisable for young widows to remarry to avoid becoming loose and immoral women. Karszen (1978:132) states “Boaz, whose name might have meant fleetness, lived up to his name.” However, her strong virtues, her dedication, commitment paid off, and she eventually married the man Boaz, a relative of her father-in-law. Though in the eyes of the ordinary Jew she could not be regarded as a virtuous woman because she had previously been married. However, she still played a significant role in the Jesus’ lineage. By including a new Jew into the lineage illustrates that God’s plan of salvation for the Gentiles was already in place. This is what Matthew is also trying to communicate to his audience, being that God’s love and plan for salvation is for all humankind. Paul highlights God’s love for all humankind in Galatians 3:28 where he posits “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

### **Bathsheba, the fourth women in Christ genealogy**

Matthew 1:6, “David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah’s wife (Bathsheba).” During the time when Israel was at loggerheads with the countries around the border King David was unable to go into battle because of him being indispensable to the kingdom. He noticed Bathsheba who he fell in love with even though he knew she was married. The outcome of their relationship was that she became pregnant. Though King David summoned her husband to return home, he did spend the night at his home. King David had to opt for plan B in which Uriah was placed in the front line of battle and the enemy attacked, he was to be left in isolation, rendering him defenceless. Bathsheba married King David after the death of Uriah. The prophet came to speak to King David. Reddy (2002: 73) states that “here we see a special form of communication that existed between the king and the prophet”.

The Prophet Nathan required from King David a verdict regarding a case and the outcome was such that his child will die. David’s son whom Bethesda bore did in fact die. Bethesda was an adulterous woman and likewise did David commit adultery with her, as well as premeditating her husband’s death. Matthew was showing that through her came Solomon, whom she bore of David, and who became the next king of Israel. Such an unrighteous woman, and according to the law, a woman who was actually supposed put to death by stoning. Deuteronomy 22:22 states “<sup>22</sup>If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.” This is once again stated in Leviticus 20:10. According to Numbers 5:22-27, a woman who is considered too have been unfaithful to her husband was to come before the priest and offer a grain offering and to be given water by the priest to drink after the grain offering was burnt on the altar before the Lord. And if she has been unfaithful her abdomen would swell and she would miscarry. However, Bethesda had not done this because David tried to cover-up his and her sin. The child did not live. “Indeed, her presence (in the genealogy) insists upon the grace of the coming Messiah, who would redeem people caught in relationships of unequal power and tainted love and restore them in the true love and freedom offered by God” (Scterszky, 2020). Therefore, Matthew communicates that God worked through the life of someone who according to the Old Testament should have been stoned, yet God used Bathsheba to bring forth Solomon, a royal heir to Israel.

### **Mary, the fifth women in Christ genealogy**

Matthew 1:16, “and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is the Christ.”

Halverson (2019) gives a precise definition of how Mary would have been treated and regarded by the people of her day. Halverson (2019) states:





Mary was an unusual mother. Found to be pregnant before she was married, she could have easily been outcast, thrown into slavery, or executed. She could have lived her life with terrible accusations thrown against her, and according to some ancient traditions, many people did think she was nothing more than an immoral harlot. And if so, such ancient critics reasoned, how could God ever do any good through someone so fallen, so morally compromised?

The author is of the view that the first four women which Matthew mentions is used to justify Mary's circumstances concerning Christ's birth. Who is this Mary was referred to as the mother of Jesus? The same name as Miriam. Mary in Hebrew is מַרְיָם.

Matthew also makes reference to Mary conceiving while she was still a virgin. According to Matthew 1:18-25 he posits,

<sup>18</sup> This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about<sup>[a]</sup>: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet<sup>[b]</sup> did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,<sup>[c]</sup> because he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"<sup>[d]</sup> (which means "God with us"). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

It is interesting to note that even Joseph at first never believed Mary's encounter with the Angel of God with regard to her finding favour with God and bringing forth the saviour of the world. He must have assumed she was trying to trick him. It was only after he himself had an encounter with an angel, that he was swayed and believed what she had told him. Even though the Jews believed at one stage that Jesus was a prophet of God, they were expecting a Messiah who would free them politically (Reddy, 2018). Herod had all the boys under the age of two years executed. He did this because he was afraid of being dethroned. Herod believed that the child born would be the next king of the Jews, yet the Jews themselves did not believe in the teaching of Jesus. They rejected him as the son of God. Matthew presents Jesus as the promised Messiah according to Matthew 4:14. By doing this he justifies through written communication that Mary is the virgin spoken of in other written documents, Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 states "Therefore the Lord himself will give you[a] a sign: The virgin[b] will conceive and give birth to a son, and[c] will call him Immanuel [d]" Matthew being a Jew would have known of the Old Testament scriptures, especially of the coming Messiah. Therefore, he believed that Jesus was the Messiah and that Mary at the time of conception of who was to become Jesus, had to be a virgin. Therefore, Mary who was undefiled by any man was the chosen vessel of God to bring forth the Christ who is the Messiah.

## Conclusion

The writer of Matthew's gospel, in the genealogy of Jesus, uses persuasive communication. The four women referred to before Mary were not virgins when they conceived children. All four of them had been with other men before they gave birth to the children which formed part



of the lineage of Abraham. However, according to the Bible Mary was the only virgin to have conceived a child which was to be part of the lineage of Judah. Can the four women be a type of Mary? The author does not think so as they were not pure at the time of conceiving. However, each of them had a significant role to play in the lineage of Abraham. It can be mentioned that God could use the four women mentioned in the lineage, even though they have sinned. Despite their sin, He was merciful towards them. Why would one doubt if Mary was a virgin and why would her conception not be one of supernatural or divine nature? Mary was chosen by God as the medium through which He would bring forth His son, so that the world may be saved through Him.

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