

In the Line of the King: Bathsheba
2 Samuel 11-12; Matthew 1:6
ABC 12/24/17

Mt 1 could easily be called the forgotten chapter of the Christmas story. It's a genealogy, a list of names, many of them hard to pronounce. This is a portion of Scripture we tend to overlook. It's not often read in public or in private. Hardly anyone ever memorizes this passage & I know of only one song that puts it to music.¹ It's just a long list of names starting with Abraham, moving on to David & ending with Jesus. In between are some names we recognize (Jacob, Solomon, Jehoshaphat) & many more we've never heard of (Azor, Zadok, Achim, Eliud). The structure is simple: *So-and-so was the father of so-and-so, who was the father of so-and-so, etc.* One name after another, a listing of the generations of the Hebrew people from their father Abraham to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. If you're familiar with the KJV, you remember the word **begat** is used instead of the phrase **the father of**. **Abraham begat Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob, Jacob begat Judah,** & so on. That word **begat** has caused some confusion at times.

One day a little boy came home from SS excited about his lesson. When his mother asked him what he'd learned, the little boy replied, *I learned all the "forgots" of the Bible.*

What do you mean?

You know, Abraham forgot Isaac, Isaac forgot Jacob, & Jacob forgot Judah.

In that spirit we can call this *the forgotten chapter of the Christmas story*. We routinely skip it in order to get to the more familiar & easier reading stuff. But the Jews of the 1st century would be surprised by our attitude. To them the genealogy would have been an absolutely essential part of the story of Jesus' birth. The Jews paid close attention to their genealogies. Whenever land was bought or sold the genealogical records were consulted to make sure that land belonging to one tribe wasn't being sold to members of another tribe. Genealogy was also crucial in determining the priesthood. The law specified that the priests come from the tribe of Levi. Genealogy also helped determine the line of heirship to the throne. That helps explain why Ezra 2 & Neh 7 contain lengthy listings of the various people returning from captivity. As the Jews re-established themselves in Israel, it was crucial they know which families had historically held which positions

¹ Andrew Peterson's *Matthew's Begats*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jOXeUAZjppi

in the nation. Genealogies were their resumes, it was who you were. This comes into play with the Christmas story.

It came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth ... & all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city (Lk 2:1, 3).

That meant that each man must return to his ancestral hometown, the town from which his family had originally come. But the only way you could be sure about your family's hometown was to know your genealogy. Which is why Mary & Joseph had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem in the 9th month of her pregnancy. They had to make that long journey because Bethlehem was Joseph's hometown, a fact they knew from their genealogy. You may agree with all I've said & still wonder why we should study this passage. Although it was important 2,000 years ago, what relevance does it have today? Let me give just one answer, although there are more: It establishes Jesus as part of the royal family of David. This is the central purpose of Mt 1:1-16. To a skeptical Jewish reader, no question would be more central in his mind. God had said 1,000 years earlier that the Messiah must come from the line of David (2 Sam 7). In NT times, Jesus wasn't the only one claiming to be the Messiah. Other men, imposters, also claimed to be Israel's Messiah. How would the people know who to believe? One answer was to simply check his genealogy. If he's not from the line of David, forget it. He can't be the Messiah. That's why Mt 1 begins this way: **The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.** David is listed 1st, even though chronologically Abraham came 1st in history. Why? Because the crucial issue wasn't, *Is Jesus a Jew (a son of Abraham)?* but rather, *Is He a direct descendant of David?* In order for Jesus to qualify as the Messiah, he must be a literal, physical descendant of David. & He is through all kinds of other connections he could have been, but through a child who was the product of adultery & murder. **Mt 1:1-6** PRAY

We've looked at 3 of the ladies listed in this genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, & Ruth. Today it's Bathsheba. Matthew isn't slighting Bathsheba by not mentioning her by name in his genealogy, instead he's showing us something astounding. God's grace is for all of us, no matter what we've done. Bathsheba rightly belonged to Uriah the Hittite. She was married, not available to David.

She was the wife of one of his elite soldiers. So in this genealogy, she isn't Bathsheba, she's not David's wife, she is **her of Uriah** the Hittite. Yet in God's grace, He gave her a wonderful place in His plan. What's the 1st thing you think of when you hear the name, **Bathsheba**? Bathing on her roof & her adulterous relationship with David, right? Let's read of it in **2 Sam 11:1-27**.

This is a saga of seduction, intrigue, & murder starring the most unlikely of people: King David, man after God's own heart. But this morning I want us to look at Bathsheba, not David. There's been endless speculation about Bathsheba's part & guilt in David's relationship with her. Did she know David could see her bathing? Did she assume he was away in battle? Could she have resisted David's advances? Was she simply a pawn in a society dominated by men? It's been fascinating reading different scholars, commentators, & pastors & hearing their take on Bathsheba. Their opinions run the gamut from it was all her fault. *Shame on her for bathing on her rooftop*. One insisted that *had she been a careful, modest woman, surely she would have looked around the easily seen adjacent roofs*.² Another complained, *David may be a voyeur, but Bathsheba is an exhibitionist*.³ Others say she was completely innocent & it was all David's fault. After all, she couldn't say no to the king. This morning let's see what the Bible tells us about her. (Sneak peek: The Bible doesn't blame or condemn Bathsheba & it strongly condemns David.)

1. Family Bathsheba means *daughter of oath*, which doesn't tell us much. But as we saw in 2 Sam 11:3 we know her father was Eliam or Ammiel (1 Chron 3:5). Who was he? His name means *God is kinsman* which indicates he was a follower of God. His very name declared he was part of the family of God. In 2 Sam 23 we have a listing of David's mighty men of valor & some of their deeds. These were guys who excelled in virtue & warfare & became David's most trusted men. We read in vs 34, **Eliam the son of Ahithophel**. Bathsheba's dad was one of David's mighty men of valor. It would appear that Bathsheba was born into a family that honored God through service & integrity. These would have been things she was taught from a young age. We're also told she was Uriah the Hittite's wife. In that time, it's possible that Eliam picked out **Uriah** to be **Bathsheba's** husband. So what do we know of **Uriah**? We know he was a Hittite & not Jewish by

² Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible*, p 35

³ J Cheryl Exum, *Plotted, Shot, & Painted*, p 47

nationality. Who were the Hittites? They were one of the people groups who lived in the land God promised to the Jews. Abraham bought the field & cave where he buried Sarah from **Ephron the Hittite** (Gen 23). **Uriah** means *flame of Yahweh* or *my light is Yahweh*, which seems to suggest the Uriah, although a Hittite, was a proselytized Jew. Why would Eliam choose a Hittite to be his daughter's wife. Back in 2 Sam 23:39 we find that **Uriah the Hittite** was also one of David's mighty men of valor. Apparently, Eliam knew Uriah quite well & thought him qualified to marry his daughter. That he chose a Hittite speaks volumes to the character he saw in this man. The wisdom of that choice proves itself out as Uriah shows himself to have more character than did David himself. What else do we know of her family? Her grandfather, **Ahithophel**, was a counselor to King David. We read,

The advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel regarded by both David & Absalom (2 Sam 16:23).

His words & wisdom were highly valued by David. But if you know your OT history, you realize that Ahithophel later turned on David (2 Sam 17). Many believe he did so because of what David did to his granddaughter, Bathsheba, & her husband Uriah. From these clues it appears Bathsheba was born into a godly family. It certainly doesn't sound like the kind of home to raise an evil, gold-digging vixen looking to seduce the king.

2. Appearance We also know that Bathsheba was **very beautiful in appearance** (2 Sam 11:2). Literally it says she was *exceedingly good of appearance*. Should we hold that against her? Should she have hidden her beauty by wearing a flour bag & droopy hat? I don't think so.

3. Punishment Let's read of Nathan's confrontation with David & see where the Prophet lays the blame on their sin. **12:1-15**

Did you hear of one word spoken of against Bathsheba there? Nope. David is punished & all the consequences are directed at David, & though Bathsheba will also suffer because of some of them, they aren't said to be directed at her. Maybe you're thinking, *This isn't fair! Why does a helpless baby die & guilty David go free? Why does Bathsheba have to watch her child die to pay for David's sin?* Wait, that sounds familiar, doesn't it? Jesus, son of David, the innocent One, whose death was foreshadowed in the death of this newborn babe, this was also part of the

story. 2 Sam 12:15 says **the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David**. Seems impossible to comprehend, doesn't it? & yet, when Jesus went to the cross the Bible says, **the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief** (Is 53:10). Almighty God sends His own Son to the cross to innocently die. He hung there for David, for Bathsheba, for you, for me, & for all who have sinned & fallen short of the glory of God. God offers forgiveness to David, but not without the shedding of his son's blood.

4. Marriage 2 Sam 12:24-25

Jedidiah is the name the prophet Nathan gave him & it means *beloved of the Lord*. He was also given the name **Solomon**, which is the name he is known by. Solomon means *peace*. **Now the Lord loved him** (24). Does that sound to you like God is holding something against David & Bathsheba? No, just the opposite. Though God punished David, He didn't withhold His love from him or from Bathsheba & their child. This was a marriage that wasn't supposed to happen & yet God crowned it with His blessing. Why? Perhaps to teach us all there is life after adultery or divorce or any other kind of sin. Not just life, but abundant life, if we surrender our lives to God. David & Bathsheba suffered but God gave them a wonderful heritage after repentance as a lesson to us all. Bathsheba isn't the story of a perfect woman, but the story of how great God's grace can be in a person's life. She isn't the model of a perfect woman, but of a woman whose life was touched by grace. God took away her tarnished name & the shame of adultery & told her & David quite clearly, *I love your child & am blessing your marriage together*. God didn't renege on His promise to establish David's line forever. In fact, God would pick Solomon to carry on the kingly line of David, in keeping with the covenant He made with him (7:12-13). Bathsheba had 3 other children with David, & I want to show you something interesting about one of them in particular: 1 Chron 3:5 says, **these were born to him (David) in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, & Solomon, four, by Bath-shua** (a variant of Bathsheba's name). Did you notice the name Nathan there as one of her sons? Nathan was the name of the prophet who confronted David, & yet David & Bathsheba apparently wind up naming one of their sons after him! The man who confronted David in sin becomes so highly regarded by them, they name one of their children

after him. That's clearly a byproduct of repentance: appreciation for those who rebuke you when you're going down the wrong path. Stay with me, it gets better. We all know that Solomon is in Jesus' lineage: Mt 1:6 **Jesse was the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by her of Uriah.** But did you also know another of Bathsheba's sons are in the lineage of Jesus? We read in Lk 3:31, **the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David.** Luke's gospel is believed to be Mary's genealogy, & Matthew's is believed to be Joseph's. But we see that not just one of her children, but 2 of them are in Jesus' lineage!

As David advanced in age & neared his death, Bathsheba became influential in the royal court (1 Kgs 1-2). One day Nathan approached her to tell her that David's son Adonijah was preparing to make himself king. The prophet urged Bathsheba,

Go at once to King David & say to him, 'Have you not, my lord, O king, sworn to your maidservant, saying, *Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, & he shall sit on my throne? Why then has Adonijah become king?'* (1:13).

Bathsheba heeded Nathan's advice. David respected Bathsheba & immediately ordered Solomon's coronation, thwarting Adonijah's short-lived rebellion. After David's death, Bathsheba remained a respected influence on her son, King Solomon. Though he didn't always grant his mother's requests, he respectfully bowed to her & placed a throne for her beside his (2:19-24).

Let's recap so far, Bathsheba comes from a godly family, is beautiful, 2 of her children are in Jesus' lineage, her 2nd son is proclaimed to be beloved of God, & she names one of her children after the prophet Nathan. Whatever else might be said of her, the biblical record seems to be a wonderful example of the acceptance & elevation of sinner from the kingdom of darkness into God's marvelous light. David had 8 wives & perhaps as many as 10 concubines. God could have chosen from any of them for the lineage of Jesus, but He chose Bathsheba for that honor. He crowned her life with blessing & that's exactly what grace does. When God saves someone He doesn't just forgive them He elevates them. A robe, a ring, a fatted calf, a seat at the Father's banqueting table (Lk 15). Bathsheba is the story of a woman with a skeleton in her closet who became a chosen member of the royal family. & so it is with all God's sons & daughters. God

doesn't put a band aid on your heart, He gives you a new heart & puts a crown on your head. You don't wear prison garb after you get saved, you wear the beautiful robes of salvation.

5. Legacy Prov 31 lays out an exemplary model of what a woman of God is. It begins, **The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother taught him.** Who is this Lemuel & who is his mother? Many believe that Lemuel was a pet name for Solomon given to him by his mother, Bathsheba. In fact, Jewish tradition says Prov 31 was given to Solomon by his mother as a reproof on his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter.⁴ In Prov 31 we have a mother, being a mother, & attempting to teach her son to live a Godly life, to find & marry a virtuous woman, & not one that simply appeals to the eyes. Bathsheba isn't a perfect woman with a perfect past, she's a redeemed woman & an example to all of us who haven't lived a perfect life. God can take you from whatever your past is & make you His beloved child.

The OT proclaimed a Redeemer was coming. The NT begins with a genealogy which declares He is here! His name is Jesus & He is from the promised line, the line of David. Against Jewish protocol, Matthew's genealogy includes 5 women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, & Mary (3-16). All were trophies of God's grace. Their inclusion emphasizes the truth that Jesus came to save His people from their sins (21).

Tamar: Incest, immorality, a Gentile
Rahab: Harlotry, lying, deception, a Canaanite
Ruth: A woman from Moab—a nation born out of incest
Bathsheba: Adultery

Four unlikely women:

Three are Gentiles
Three are involved in some form of sexual immorality
Two are involved in prostitution
One is an adulteress
All four are in the line that leads to Jesus Christ!

Why would God include women like this in His genealogy? But it's not just the women. Think about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, & Manasseh. They were sinners, too. Why include people like this? I think there are at least 3 answers to that question:

⁴ Edith Deen, *All the Women of the Bible*, p 113

1. He did it to send a message to self-righteous people. Matthew was written especially to the Jews. Many of their leaders (the Pharisees in particular) were self-righteous & judgmental toward others. They truly thought they deserved eternal life. What a shock it would be to read this genealogy because it's filled with liars, murderers, thieves, adulterers, & prostitutes. Not a pretty picture. This list was a stinging rebuke to that kind of judgmental self-righteousness. Do you know what this means? Jesus was born into a sinful family. He came from a long line of sinners. & yet never sinned Himself.

2. He did it so that God's grace might be richly displayed. If you come from a family like this, you can't exactly boast of your heritage. Sure, your ancestors were rulers & kings, but they were also great sinners. Can a prostitute go to heaven? Can an adulterer go to heaven? Can a murderer go to heaven? Can a liar go to heaven? You'd better say yes, because Rahab & David are both going to be in heaven & Rahab was a prostitute & a liar & David was an adulterer & a murderer. When you read the stories of these 4 women, & of the men as well, you aren't supposed to focus on the sin, but on the grace of God. The hero of this story is God. His grace shines through the blackest of human sin as He chooses flawed men & women & places them in Jesus' family tree.

3. He did it so that we would focus on Jesus. This genealogy is in the Bible to let us know He has a background a lot like yours & mine. He called Himself the friend of sinners (Mt 11:19), & He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He said, **the Son of Man has come to seek & to save that which was lost** (Lk 19:10). Jesus came from a disreputable family. His family tree was decorated with notable sinners. He knows what it's like to have relatives who embarrass you. He knows all about a dysfunctional family situation. But no matter what your past, Jesus can save you. No matter what your past looks like, or your present feels like, no matter where you've been or what you've done, God can give you a fresh start.

We all deserve punishment because we all are sinners. As Bathsheba's son Solomon wrote, **there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good & who never sins** (Eccl 7:20). We need a Redeemer to remove our sin so we can face a holy & righteous God. Like Bathsheba, we need God's mercy & grace. & there is no better time to ask God for it than at Christmas, when we

celebrate the advent of His Son, the One who came to bear our sin & set us free (Is 53:5). If God could forgive these ladies' sins & redeem their lives, He can redeem our lives as well. Confess your sins & trust that Jesus paid for them on the cross. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter how dark & disgraceful you think it is. God sent His Son so He can forgive you. Jesus shed His blood & died to pay for your sins so that you don't have to. It was through these ladies (& men) of this genealogy that Jesus came with a message of hope for all those who feel hopeless.

This Baby whose birth we celebrate, resting in a feeding trough in Bethlehem, had the blood of kings running in His veins. This Child of peasants could trace His bloodline to the giants of the OT story, to men like Father Abraham & King David. But in the middle of these giants are these ladies. Maybe Matthew wants us to know, right at the beginning, that Jesus didn't just come for the Jews, & He didn't just come for good people, Jesus came from & came for sinners. Our past doesn't count. Who we were doesn't matter with God. Every one of these ladies had something in their past that could have overwhelmed them with shame. We tend to judge people by where they've been & what they've done. God looks at where we're going. God sees precious children, taking baby steps of faith. God can use the most unlikely people to fulfill His purposes. I expect to find Abraham & Isaac & Jacob on the list. They were sinners, but they were also patriarchs, giants of the faith. I expect to find David & Solomon, Hezekiah & Josiah on the list. God knows they were sinners, but they were also the greatest of Israel's kings. But the path of the Messiah also weaves its way through the wombs of sinful women. God uses broken people, sinful people, people like Tamar the incestuous & Rahab the prostitute & Ruth the Moabite & Bathsheba the adulteress & you & me. The story of Jesus isn't just for some of us. It's for all of us: male & female, rich & poor, black & white. If Jesus cherished these women as His great-great-great grandmothers, don't you think He cherishes you as His son or daughter? If He could look with fondness at grandmas Tamar & Rahab & Ruth & Bathsheba, don't you think He could be madly in love with you? These ladies didn't deserve their place in the Christmas story. I suspect they were always haunted by the labels that followed them throughout their lives. But it looks like they felt

the smile of God. & I don't deserve my place in the Christmas story, peeking with wonder at my God, laying helplessly in a feeding trough & neither do you. & I don't deserve my place kneeling at the foot of the cross & neither do you. But the God who swept their sins away will sweep away yours & replace it with His peace if you let Him. There's a reason why the stories of these ladies aren't kept in the closet or swept under the rug. They are witnesses of the grace, mercy, & redemption of God. He doesn't give up on us. By grace, He redeems us from our sins. To Him be all the glory.