Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





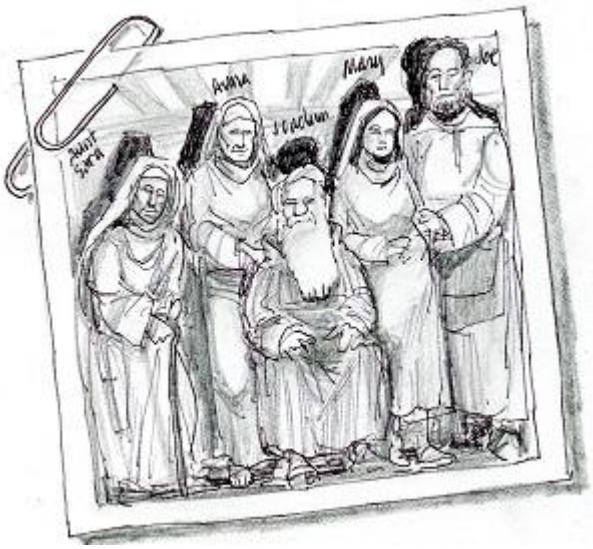
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“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1).

Gen 49:2, 8-10; Matt 1:1-17

Matthew begins his Gospel by establishing that Jesus is the descendent of Abraham through David. These two figures are key to his messianic identity, an important claim by the early church that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and of the prophecy that God’s anointed would be from the House of David.

Matthew’s genealogy lists 42 male progenitors, then significantly adds four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba, referenced only as the wife of Uriah the Hittite, before naming Mary, wife of Joseph, mother of Jesus. Each woman has a story that alters the message of the line that produced Jesus.

Tamar was a Canaanite who disguised herself as a temple prostitute in order to conceive twin sons by her father-in law, Judah. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute in Jericho who hid Joshua’s spies in her house. Ruth was a Moabite who accompanied Naomi, her mother-in-law, to Bethlehem, where she wed Boaz, the grandfather of David. David seduced Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon.

Matthew’s genealogy immerses Jesus in the flesh of human origins without judgment, prudery or any attempt to hide the universal reach of his mission. He came for all people, representing the full range of earthly experience and the complexity of human will, still directed by God toward his own purposes. The Bible is the story of the dysfunctional human family, a colorful, chaotic, violent, lustful

narrative in which we can all easily find ourselves.

Joseph, husband of Mary, completes the link from David, but oddly enough, is only the supposed father of Jesus. Mary’s lineage is not mentioned. At this point in the story, the Holy Spirit, not bloodline, becomes the new source of family intimacy with Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God. The promise transcends genealogy and now grace is accessible to anyone who receives the Incarnate Word. Jesus came for everyone.

At a time when products like Ancestry can tell us our genetic identity, we are amazed to discover who we are physically. Even more amazing is our spiritual heritage handed down to us by faith. Baptism is undetectable with a saliva test, but who we become because of our membership in Christ is an eternal identity. This is the joy of the Gospel and the secret of Christmas.

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