Yesterday I received this question in response to a post:

**QUESTION:**

I have also heard that hints of the possibility of Jesus’ illegitimacy can be found in Matthew’s hereditary narratives. It is a bit of a stretch but Matthew names 4 women in them and all 4 are somewhat “loose” women, giving the hint that illegitimacy can still produce remarkable people. Any thoughts on this?

**RESPONSE:**

Ah, great question. Here is what I say about it in my textbook on the New Testament:

There is one other interesting and frequently-noted feature of Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus (actually, not of Jesus, but of Joseph). That is the fact that it makes explicit reference to women among Jesus’ ancestors. That is highly unusual. Women scarcely ever appear in most ancient Israelite and Jewish genealogies, which invariably trace a person’s lineage from father to son (or vice versa) all the way back through the family line; see, as I pointed out earlier 1 Chronicles 1-9. Where are the women? For ancient genealogists, as a rule, they were not important enough to mention.

But Matthew not only ends his genealogy by mentioning Mary, Jesus’ mother, but he also includes reference to four other women: Tamar (v. 3), Rahab (v. 5), Ruth (v. 5), and the “wife of Uriah” that is, Bathsheba (v. 6). Stories about all four of these women are found in the Jewish Scriptures (Tamar: Genesis 38; Rahab: Joshua 2, 6; Ruth; Ruth 1-4; and Bathsheba: 2 Samuel 11-12).

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