

## **Critiquing the Presence of Outsiders, Women of Questionable Pasts in Jesus' Genealogy: Lessons for Contemporary Christianity**

Oluwatoyin Adebola Gbadamosi, *PhD*  
Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan  
E-mail: [tygbadamosi@gmail.com](mailto:tygbadamosi@gmail.com)  
Cell: + 234 803 685 7692

### **Abstract**

The book of Mathew has an unusual beginning and a casual reading shows a monotonous account of people "begoting" another and this itself, is somewhat boring and repetitive. Besides this repetitiveness, a striking feature of this account is the mention of four women and a fifth, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary. Extant literature on the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew have largely focused on it from the perspective of his role as the messiah, his ancestry and lineage, and in comparison with the Lukan genealogy, with scant attention paid to the presence of women, especially from a critical point of view. This study, therefore critiqued the unusual mention of women in a chronicle of men given the patriarchal setting of the history. The aim of this research was to answer the following research questions: who are these women and why were they mentioned in an historical account that was predominantly masculine? What purpose did they serve in the Mathean genealogy? These questions were answered critically with the view of drawing lessons for contemporary Christians, especially as they concern women. The study used philosophical methods of contextualism and the verification principle. The study revealed that the inclusion of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary in the genealogy of Christ was not accidental but purposeful, especially in a history that looked down on women. More so, many lessons could be drawn from the lives of these women by contemporary women, Christians generally and the society at large and the major one is that no one should be written off.

**Keywords:** Mathean Genealogy, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary, Contemporary Christianity

### **Introduction**

The Gospel according to Matthew is the first book in the New Testament thereby having a prominent place in the study of the Holy book. It begins with the genealogy of Christ and a history of fourteen generations from Abraham to David, another fourteen generations from David to the captivity in Babylon and the last fourteen, from the captivity to Jesus Christ (cf. Mat.1:17). These generations are forty-two in number and the preciseness cannot be dismissed as casual or coincidental which is in itself teleological. Teleological in this sense means that the arrangement is purposeful and not accidental or coincidental. Another striking feature in the genealogy of Jesus (cf. Mat. 1:1-17) is that it is predominantly a history of males giving birth (begotten) to

children, who are progenitors, spanning from Abraham to Jesus Christ. In the midst of this orderly account, a disorder is obviously present when some women were mentioned. They were, Tamar (cf. Mat. 1:3), Rahab and Ruth (cf. Mat. 1:5), the wife of Uriah (referring to Bathsheba cf. Mat. 1:6) and Mary (cf. Mat. 1:16).

Although Mary was on a class of her own because her past was pure, compared to the other four women, one can still wonder why women were included when the pattern was men-dominated. If it had been names like Sarah, Rebekah, Leah or Rachael, their presence may not have warranted any form of inquiry, if these notable women were excluded in this genealogy, why were these "unusual" women? Dyer (2017) calls them an odd choice and asks like any rational

mind, what is it about the four women earlier mentioned that makes them worthy of mention by the writer of this gospel? What is special about them that they were included given the patriarchal nature of the ancient near East where the histories of these women were set? This study sets out to critique this unusual inclusion which has been interpreted differently by scholars, Clements (2014) such as the traditional view, reductionist view and the one she favours, narrative methodology, Pearson's (2002) use of the Midrash, Nolland's (1996) annotation in examining the text and several others. This paper seeks to examine critically, the logic in the inclusion of these "outsiders" in the narration of the ancestry of Jesus. What is so special about them? What was so sinful or so virtuous about them to warrant their mention? These questions and other related ones are answered with the view of situating their experiences and outcome within contemporary realities for the purpose of drawing lessons for Christians.

### **Unraveling the "Outsiders" in Jesus' Genealogy**

The genealogy of Jesus can be found in Matthew 1: 1-17. Jesus Christ is identified as son of David, the son of Abraham (cf. Matt. 1:1) and the third verse, suddenly mentions a woman, Tamar. Her mention would not have been out of place, if two other women, Sarah and Leah, who came before her were also mentioned. The next woman strangely mentioned was Rahab whose presence bypassed other four women before her who could have also been mentioned. Rahab is closely followed by Ruth and the next woman was named as "her who had been the wife of Uriah". No other woman features again, several generations after, till Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. These five women have an obvious thing in common, they were all

named in the ancestry of Jesus, whereas other women, who came before or after, given the impossibility of a man to "begot" without a woman (at that time in history), were omitted. These women, according to Clements (2014) should be examined via their individual significance before going into their collective significance. It is necessary therefore to be sensitive to their peculiarities before drawing any importance in their presence in the narrative of Jesus' ancestry.

### **Tamar**

The first woman mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus is Tamar (cf. Matt. 1:3). This woman has been called different names by scholars as a result of her experience and the unusual path she took in the course of her life. Tamar, according to Awoshiri (2021) signifies hope generally or what he calls desperation born out of shattered hope. Pearson (2002) identifies Tamar as a woman who sought justice. This description can be expressed in different ways; she sought justice for herself and also for her hope from Awoshiri's description, which appears shattered. The story of Tamar can be seen in Genesis 38:1-30. Here, the Bible records the story of Tamar and the main hero or villain, depending on the perspective of view, is Judah. He marries a Canaanite who gave birth to three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. Tamar was married to Er, the firstborn by his father. Unfortunately, Er was killed by God because he was wicked in His sight, the Bible does not document the nature of his wickedness. In this incident, Tamar was the victim because she became a widow and was thus passed down to her husband's brother because of levirate marriage. The new marriage of Tamar was cut short because her new husband knew the consequences of bedding his late brother's wife was that the children would not be his. He therefore decided to emit on the floor

rather than into his wife, an act seen as wickedness by God who killed him also. Tamar became a widow for the second time, Judah, probably out of fear found solace in the youngness of his youngest son Shelah and would not want the same fate that befell his elder brothers to happen to him asked Tamar to return to her father's house. Marika (2019) sees the experience of Tamar in marriage as little or more as a possession as she was passed down from one brother to another to ensure the continuation of the line of property owning men. When she was later seen as "bad investment, she was put in storage in her father's house".

Although the origin of Tamar is blurry, it is possible that she was a Canaanite as her mother in law (cf. Gen.38:2). According to Awoshiri, (2021) her story was set in a world where women had almost zero prospect outside of marrying well and giving birth to children. Thus, Tamar's plight was desperate when she pretended to be a prostitute because the marriage promise to her youngest brother in law, Shelah, appeared to be slipping out of her hands. Awoshiri holds further that since she had no status, no inheritance and no social security, her only hope was to become a mother because she was not eligible for remarriage since she was already betrothed to Shelah. She therefore took her destiny in her hands. After Judah had slept with his daughter in law thinking she was a prostitute, who became pregnant in the process, he was quick to judge her outcome without any consideration of her history and circumstances that led her to where she was. Marika (2019) opines that the actions of Tamar expose two things: firstly, hypocrisy. Judah sleeps with Tamar for pleasure and sends his friend to settle the bill and in contrast, was eager for Tamar to be burnt for her actions. A similar scene plays out in the New Testament (cf. John 7:53-8:11) when a woman was caught in "the very act" of

adultery and was brought obviously for punishment to Jesus, whereas the male counterpart in the "very act" was missing. Jesus' response shows their hypocrisy and the same experience plays out in contemporary Christian circles when people are quick to judge others without any consideration for the circumstances that heralded the current realities of people. This is not a call to condone immorality or justify wrong actions but a need for empathy. Secondly, the entanglement of both marriage and sex work with property. In both marriages, the interplay between marriage and property was clearly spelt out, on the one hand, since that was the motif of marriage to the second brother. On the other hand, Tamar was more or less a commodity in the way she was handled.

### **Rahab**

Unlike Tamar, Rahab was not pretending to be a prostitute but was a real one and she was the second woman mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Pearson (2002) calls her a woman who made faith to work, while Awoshiri (2021) holds that she signifies peace. Her story can be found in Joshua 2; 6:22-23. The circumstances surrounding her first mention in the Bible are very unusual because she was a citizen of Jericho which was a land to be taken by the children of Israel. Some men were sent by Joshua to spy the land of Jericho and bring reports and of all the houses in the land, it was the house of a harlot that they stayed. Although she was a gentile, she believed in the Lord and her testimony of faith in Him was evident (cf. Joshua 2:9-13) as she displayed her faith in the Lord she has never had any direct dealing with. As a result of her action of faith, God took extraordinary measures to save her and her entire household when everything living in the land was destroyed. According to Awoshiri, Rahab's story shows a woman of

character, though obviously imperfect who had a fervent faith in God and stood against her own culture as she betrayed her own king, for what she believed in. Thus, God is looking for faith and not perfection. The same woman was married into the tribe of Judah and she ended up becoming an ancestor of David and shared also the ancestry of Jesus.

### **Ruth**

Only two women had biblical books named after them, Ruth and Esther. Pearson (2002) calls her a woman who loved the enemy. She was a Moabitess and had every reason to hate the Israelites; she is recognized as a symbol of devotion and ever abiding loyalty because of her commitment to her mother in law. Regardless of the death of her husband, she remained with her mother in law despite the fact that she was not obliged to do so. Even in contemporary circles, it is somewhat bold and forward for a woman to make advances towards a man. Even though Boaz had spotted Ruth earlier on his field he left word with his workers to be kind to her and restrained himself from making advances towards her. It was Ruth, with the encouragement of her mother in law, Naomi, who took the bulls by the horn in approaching Boaz. Awoshiri (2021) opines that in contrast to Tamar and Rahab, and their respective shades of grey, Ruth is one of the brightest and most appealing figures in the Bible. Even as a widow, she still maintained her sexual purity and Boaz identified her as a woman of virtue and noble character (Ruth 3:11). Ruth occupies a prominent place in the ancestry of Jesus, and her life shows that the love of God extends to the gentiles.

### **Bathsheba**

Another notable figure in the genealogy of Jesus was the woman identified as "her who had been the wife of Uriah" (Matt. 1:6). One

can wonder why she was not simply called Uriah's widow or by her name. Reading her story in 2 Samuel 11:1-27 and 12:24-25; a story of adultery, murder and forgiveness is seen. Here a story of a woman who enticed a king while taking her bath and the latter arranged for the death of the husband of the woman. There are different analysis of what ensued between Bathsheba and King David, it is believed that the woman did nothing wrong by bathing where she did. It is also believed that it was King David that was at the wrong place at the wrong time, who allowed his eyes to linger after seeing what he should not have seen. It is easy to conclude that she was also a victim in this story since the Bible did not include any account of her reprimand, acknowledgement of sin or forgiveness, whereas David experienced these three. It is also possible that it was a case of seduction on her part since she kept the ordeal from her husband thereby suggesting her as a willing party in the escapade. Whichever narration is true, one fact is certain, Bathsheba committed adultery with David, whether willingly or unwillingly. It is interesting that God chose this same blood line for the birth of Jesus. Bathsheba is no doubt a unique character in the Bible and Pearson (2002) calls her a woman who beats all odds. Awoshiri (2021), holds that her story depicts God as a transformer, who is capable of bringing hope out of darkness.

### **Mary**

The last female mentioned in Jesus' genealogy is his mother and her figure commands a lot of attention in Christendom. Her story is very unusual like the women previously mentioned in the lineage of Jesus but unlike the four, her past was devoid of the undesirable experiences that coloured the histories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba. Another notable difference between Mary and them is that she is the

only Israelite while the others were non-Israelites. Mary is also considered as a role model for young unmarried women because of her sexual purity unlike the other four women. Besides Ruth, it is very rare to see girls named after these other four women, probably because no parent wants his little girl to share their history (a fake prostitute, a real one and an adulteress). Pearson (2002) calls her a woman who says "yes". An unusual request was made of an unmarried young woman, though engaged to be married, an angel told her that she will conceive and give birth to a child in an unconventional manner. (cf. Luke 1:26-38) She agreed to the request not giving any thought to the implications for her betrothal because she did not discuss it with her husband to be. She did not even consider the risks of being a mother outside of marriage which carries grave consequences at that time. It was indeed not an easy decision for her to make even though she agreed on the spot. A lot of emphasis is usually placed on her as a symbol of purity because of her virginity, she should also be identified as a brave and courageous young lady. This is because she did not ask for further signs or give reasons or excuses that required further affirmations like other biblical heroes such as Gideon- who felt too weak for what God wanted him to do (Judges 6 & 7) Moses- who was afraid, argued with God and asked God to send someone else (Exodus 3:11-12; 4:1-13) or Jeremiah- who felt too young (Jer.1: 5-6). Mary was not reluctant or hesitant and required no further nudging by God, this is a notable character. According to Awoshiri (2021), Mary represented fulfillment and as a devout believer of Yahweh, she entrusts herself, reputation, future and entire hope to what was requested of her.

Going through the stories of these women, it is obvious that they have something in common, their experiences

were unusual and none of them can be classified as an ordinary woman. The germane question their experiences pose to this study is the purpose of their inclusion in the genealogy of Jesus Christ given the patriarchal predisposition that runs through biblical narratives.

### **Philosophical Reflection on "Outsiders" in Jesus' Genealogy and Lessons Learned**

Pearson (2002) and Awoshiri (2021) maintained a position portraying uniqueness and misfortunes in the lives of Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth except for Mary who was projected to be the figure worthy of emulation. Devoid of male dominated theological exposition and going by empathic biblical exposition as St. Thomas Aquinas suggests that scripture must interpret scripture for sound theology. Using this view of Aquinas, another scripture that can justify this lopsidedness (from human perspective) is "So the last shall be first and the first last; for many be called but few chosen" (cf. Mat. 20:16, KJV). God has His yardstick to determine who can be called first or last and among the many called, He alone knows who He chose and why He chose them. On a similar note, God has chosen the foolish, weak, base and despised things of this world in place of the wise, mighty and others more qualified (in the eyes of men) and the reason in this text is so that no flesh can glory in his presence. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:27-29). Deborah was a woman of valour and a great prophetess, Esther was a woman of faith and courage, Hannah was also a woman of faith, there were many more other great women in the Bible.

Many feminine figures who have records of good deeds that were realistically worth mentioning in the genealogy of Jesus missed count, one will begin to ask questions like why their exclusion? Why bringing to light figures of mockery, sexual immorality, misfortune and adultery when

there are better figures without questionable character? What could be the purpose for their mentions? If the reason is so that no flesh will glory in God's presence (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29), obviously, Tamar, who slept with her father in law could not be proud before God. Rahab also, would count it a privilege to be counted among the Israelites. There were no records of her marriage in the Bible, but there is a very high likelihood that she later married an Israelite for her to be in the genealogy of Christ. Bathsheba's adultery was a humbling factor for her as she could not boast of holiness or a pure past. More so, she lived in a culture and age that condemned adultery as the laws of Moses forbade it (cf. Exodus 20:14). Ruth was a Moabitess, God did not like her race, they were called the enemy of Israel (cf. 1 Sam. 14: 47), for Ruth, it was a great honour to serve the God of Israel, to live among them and eventually marry Boaz as seen in the Book of Ruth. This can be likened to popular saying that people who converted into Christianity often have more zeal for the things of God, more than those born into the religion. Lastly, Mary whose virginity was not anything to be boastful about before God or even her people because she lived in a world where it is expected that any unmarried woman must be a virgin. Being called a virgin here was like an address for a young, unmarried woman (cf. Judges 21:12, Psalm 45:14, Songs of Solomon 1:3;6:8, Lamentations 1:18, Amos 8:13 and Mat. 25:1), Angel Gabriel's salutation to her shows that she was favoured (cf. Luke 1:28). Mary was called "highly favoured" and "blessed among women". The Cambridge dictionary defines favour as the advantage that you give to someone...especially when this is unfair (Cambridge 2024). When something is deserved or achieved by merit, it cannot be called favour. Mary could therefore not before God as there were other

young Israelite women, but God chose her among them.

In an objective philosophical analysis of the rational questions on the choice of these women in the genealogy of Christ, a few issues are crucial. Firstly, they are not questions in which one can easily interrogate and answer swiftly, this is because there exist circumstances surrounding the situation in terms of contextualization and motives. Secondly, contextualization and motives cannot be circumvented but rather engaged critically in order to unravel the basis of critiques and make known reasons and motivations geared to their mention. Thirdly in order to establish the lessons for Christians, especially women, it should be noted that the Bible itself is philosophical, contextual and prophetic.

### **Contextualization of Theological Exposition with Cultural Affinity**

The term contextualization has earned much critique, some of it deserved, since it was first devised which should not warrant its non-usage because of its purpose in any logical inquiry. Contextualization according to Helleman (2020) is a process of relating text (Bible) with context. It involves interpreting the text in a specific context. The context herein incorporates all aspects of culture, including religion and philosophy (worldview). To this end, contextualization is as old as the church. Contextualization can easily result to syncretism. Rational minds have pointed out that the greatest danger the church faces in every age is subversion by the world ranging from colonialism, cultural evolution to the triumph of science.

In approaches to contextualization; firstly, how can contextualization judge what is sin or evil in a particular culture? Secondly, how can the contextualized theology be as the same prophetic in the

case of Mary? Thirdly, though related to the first, is the high concept of sin of Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba and Ruth; and the placement of Mary in the conceptualization of critiques. But if this is the case, sin and evil of these women are largely personal. Is there then still a place for corporate sin and evil?

The big questions herein are; who and what determine what is normative? Do young churches have a right to read and interpret the scriptures in their own cultural contexts? Theoretically, most protestant churches would admit that they do. But in practice, most doctrines are deeply threatened when national leaders begin to develop their theologies. By virtue of sound reasoning, the question of critiquing the presence of outsiders in the genealogy of Jesus lies principally on the theological exposition of the Biblical context of the figures represented in this study; Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth, and Mary.

Helleman (2020) maintains that Bible translation is a form of contextualization even though it has only been appreciated in the last decade. Rational mind will ask questions like do we need to reject everything in another culture or there are things we can accept? These are some issues that contextualization must address. The context of histories of women with unquestionable characters in this study as maintained by critiques was basically premised on male dominated setting, in such a given societal framework, the weakness of men were easily waived and swept beneath the carpet but the ill-character of women were easily announced. Whether the context is unfavorable for the feminine figures or not, the Bible which is God-breathed knew and understood the place of women regardless their characters, yet mentioned them in the lineage of Jesus, hence, the motive behind their mentions becomes paramount and worth learning especially by

contemporary Christian women. Thus, no one can be regarded as unworthy or judged as a total cast off. God saw Rahab, beyond her past of prostitution, similarly, Tamar's seeds of intimacy with her father in law were still useful before God that Perez one of her twins became the ancestor of King David. Even David, who had other wives but the heir to his throne, Solomon had to come from Bathsheba. Ruth, a Moabitess, was a widow who remarried and there were no clear biblical records about whether the man she re-married, Boaz had other wives or children, God used this union to serve His purpose. There were other 'pure' unions in Israel, why did Jesus have to come through this lineage? This shows clearly that God's standards or qualifications differ from those of men.

### **Biblical Truth and Application**

The art of preaching is an application as surveys suggest that the vast majority of Christians attending a church service long to hear a word from the Lord to change their lives. People insist that the preacher's task is only to proclaim the word; it is the work of God's spirit to transform the listener, Lamb (2016). If so, should one dismiss one's responsibility as congregation in terms of discernment and filtering truth from heresy? In the same way, the major concern must be that of truth which should enter the concerned contexts of the contemporary day and generation given the mention of Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth and Mary in Jesus' genealogy. This in no way lessens a Christian's commitment or conviction regarding the truth of a Scripture.

In the histories of the feminine figures mentioned in the lineage of Jesus, the emphasis on praxis can quickly lead to relativism if the context is deemed more important than the text; hence, there is clearly a danger of denying biblical truth. The priesthood of believers was good

theology, but in practice did it not open the doors to all kinds of heresy and critiques? Increasingly, this theological hegemony is being called into question. The question of why the mention of these women with not just questionable character but more so worth mentioning in the lineage of Jesus possess of hidden truth in which critiques attached prejudice in accepting. Whatever claim sustained, the truth becomes paramount in compliance with the purpose of scripture as found in Paul's writing to Timothy:

'All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2Timothy 3:16-17).

Adopting reason alongside faith, this is quite rational in that when truth is defined in terms of theological formulation, to tamper with formulation is to undermine the whole task. The lives of the feminine figures mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus portray the relevance of persons who are regarded as cast away. The ministry of Jesus is not for the perfect or ones with excellent character but for the imperfect. The mention of Tamar who is painted as object of sex and transient, Rahab as prostitute, Bathsheba the adulterer, Ruth, the one known to make advances to a man and Mary who blindly uphold a message not minding her betrothed man which do not project submissiveness, yet reckoned with in the Mathean Gospel is a hope for contemporary Christian women on the purpose or perfect will of God.

### **Verification Principle**

The theory of meaning known as 'verification principle' developed by logical positivists, states that anything that cannot be subjected to verifiable means is not verifiable. This means that a statement which cannot be conclusively verified cannot be verified at all. It is simply devoid of meaning. Verification principle has two approaches; using mathematical statement and confirmation using empiricism through human senses. The latter approach is sustained for the purpose of this paper. Theory of meaning corroborates with the viewpoint that a statement is factual and meaningful only if sense experience can go at least some way to confirming it. The profiles of the outsiders in the genealogy of Jesus, Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Ruth and Mary according to the Bible have explicit histories which could be verified by readers thus, warrant critiques of their characters. A question that could possibly be asked is whether having access to ones' history, be it positive or negative alters divine will. According to Dummett (1976), an understanding of a statement consists in a capacity to recognize whatever is counted as verifying it. Eliciting their ill-manners is not the major concern herein; instead, the fact that their lifestyles are not hidden, bringing to note their histories as expressly pronounced and thus assessable, accessible and verifiable is point of emphasis worthy of adopting by contemporary Christians.

### **Lessons for Women, Christians and the Society at Large**

Women are mostly at the receiving end in almost every state of affairs especially in most parts of Africa. They tend to keep their past away from the public due to fear of stigmatization, this is as a result of our present day societal reactions to unfavourable circumstances. That is, women wanting of various misfortunes, for instance;

pregnancies outside wedlock, abortions, divorce and even widows are discriminated against. It is reasonably justifiable that every sane being is morally responsible for what becomes of him or her, however, in another line of understanding; no one chooses circumstances surrounding his or her life as a result of the ultimate will or circumstances beyond their control. Whatever becomes of a person, the Christian society must learn to accept and accommodate everyone regardless of deeds, misfortunes or gender specification.

The greatest limit anyone can encounter is him/herself. People should not allow their past experiences to hinder them from making great waves in the world. There are people who were called failures, who dropped out of school and those whose past was tainted by some misfortunes who later changed the world by their great contributions and inventions. Oprah Winfrey, Jack Ma, Henry Ford, Michael Jordan are all famous people who did not allow the failures of their past to rob them of their great achievements today.

When believers fall into sin, they should not remain in sin but allow genuine repentance. God forgave David and Bathsheba, even though the child borne out of the adulterous act died, He still allowed the heir to the throne of David to come through Bathsheba, even though there were other wives and children. Thus, sinful past cannot hinder God's use of a person.

If the spies sent out had looked down on Rahab and said that they were too holy to talk or interact with her, she would not have saved them and assist their escape from the land of Jericho. Rahab was later useful in God's plan and she would not have given birth to Salmon, the father of Boaz, who gave birth to Obed the father of Jesse, who was the father of David. Thus, Christians should not feel too holy to preach to anybody because no one knows God's plan

for such individual. In the same vein, Christian ministries, governmental and non-governmental institutions should also provide support and means of rehabilitation for prostitutes, convicts or ex-convicts, drug addicts and other people involved in illicit activities.

God commanded believers not to judge, people find it easy to judge others and think the worst of them, even though this is also not a call to condone sinful acts. No one knows if and when the person who sinned reconciled with God. Christians should not act on behalf of God in the area of judgement because they do not know God's plan for the person they have condemned in their heart or openly.

Evidently, God does not make mistakes, He knows the end from the beginning and for these women, given their histories to share the lineage of Christ, no one should be considered as unworthy of God's love and use. Religious people and religious leaders should not act as if God had appointed them as referees to determine those who will enter heaven and those who will not. If God could make use of these women, whom the society, culture and religion will consider as "write offs", there is no one that cannot be useful in the plan of God. The Yoruba saying that "*inu ikoko dudu ni eko fifun ti jade*" meaning "it is from the black pot that white corn jellos come from". This saying summarizes the fact that something good and beautiful can come out of a seemingly bad life, history or experience. No one knows tomorrow, and there is no reason to conclude that nothing good can come out of a life only because of a person's past or present life.

Women have been victims of discrimination since antiquity and the slightest misdeed on the part of a woman makes her vulnerable and her experience narrows her chances of success to the minimum. Young girls, young women, older women, youths and everyone

including males should be supported and not written off because of their mistakes or past. This is not an encouragement of immoral lifestyles or bad behaviours, but a call to support people and help people to find their ways out of any mess their wrong choices have made out of their lives. If something good can come out of the lives of the four “outsiders” and the fifth, in Jesus' genealogy, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary, and for the Holy son of God to be able to come through them, then no woman and no one should be written off.

### Conclusion

The focus of this study was the odd choice of four women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba and also the fifth person, Mary in the genealogy of Christ in the book of Matthew. Obviously, if it had been other names like Sarah, Rebekah, Leah or Rachael, their presence may not have warranted any form of attention, or questions. The study therefore, examined critically, the logic in the inclusion of these “outsiders” in the narration of the ancestry of Jesus. Their identities were unraveled individually, these showed that they were all unique women who all had something in common, which was unusual histories. The analysis of their histories included reference to main biblical texts and apposite texts to enable a better understanding of their histories and experiences. It was discovered that they were indeed special women and till today no woman will hope to share their experiences except the case of Mary.

Contextualization of the histories of these women with cultural affinity aided a critical understanding of their experiences especially in patriarchal settings, this was useful in drawing lessons for contemporary women, Christians and even the society at large. The study approached the notion of Biblical truth and its application in the cases of the women in the Mattean genealogy

which revealed that these women portrayed the relevance of persons who are regarded as cast away. This is because the ministry of Jesus is not for the perfect or people with flawless characters but for the imperfect ones, which should also be central in contemporary Christian ministries.

The study also critiqued the mention of these unusual women by drawing emphasis on their uniqueness, which could be understood as their weaknesses, shortfalls or flaws which were, sexual relationship with father in law- Tamar, prostitution- Rahab, widow from a discriminated race- Ruth and adultery- Bathsheba. Even though, their experiences were not desirable, they could be understood as their “advantages” in God's grand plan because their shortcomings actually qualified them before God. He prefers those that cannot boast before Him, Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians expressed this aptly.

Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of “the brightest and the best” among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these “nobodies” to expose the hollow pretensions of the “somebodies”? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ.

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That's why we have the saying, "If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God." (1 Corinthians 1: 26-31, Message Translation)

This text shows that truly if women were to be included in Jesus' genealogy, there were women with better pedigrees who are truly worthy of mention or inclusion, but God preferred these four women who had questionable pasts. Even Mary the fifth woman, in reality could not be boastful in her virginity because there were many other virgins but she was favoured among them.

The study recommends that emphasis should not be on judging or condemning people because nobody should be written off because many good things can still come out of the seemingly bad, notorious or ugly life experience. If the weak, foolish and ignoble are actually the preferred in God's gradation, what then is the basis for striving for excellence, strength and other good qualities that set people above their peers? How can one really situate God's criteria of choice within the established human expectations or standards of excellence? These two questions and other similar ones which are antitheses of the predilection for "outsiders", women of questionable pasts in the genealogy of Christ, and others, who are disqualified in human standards, warrant attention in future studies.

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