

## Christmas Devotional 2022

Just before she passed away, my great-grandmother, who was from the Greek island of Rhodes, recounted her whole family tree to my mother. It was very important for her to let the family know who our ancestors were. Why? Because our ancestors can teach us something about ourselves. At the beginning of the Christmas story in the Gospel of St. Matthew, we read about Christ's ancestors. Against the custom of his time, St. Matthew mentions five women from whom Christ descended. These five women can teach us about the reasons for which Christ came at Christmas.

The first woman mentioned is Tamar, who was daughter-in-law of the patriarch, Judah. Tamar's husband died without giving her children. This put Tamar in a desperate situation; she had no family, no means of support. Yet through God's providence, Tamar became an ancestor of Christ. This story teaches us that Christ came to give us hope. Like Tamar, we are all hopeless without Christ; but Christ's coming gives us hope.

The second woman mentioned is Rahab, who was known for her sinful lifestyle. Yet, Rahab, a sinner, was given the honour of being an ancestor of the Messiah. Why? Because she turned from her wrong actions and believed in God. Therefore, she was forgiven and accepted into God's family. Rahab's story teaches us that Christ came to forgive sinners and to accept them into God's family. We, too, are sinners, but when we believe in Christ, we are forgiven and are accepted into God's family.

The third woman mentioned is Ruth, who was a foreigner from the land of Moab. Since the Moabites were enemies, Ruth would not have been allowed to worship near God's presence. But God gives her the great honour of being an ancestor of the Messiah. Ruth's story teaches us that through Christ, God has brought near those who were once far. In Christ, we who were once far from God, can now enter God's presence. Since God has accepted us, we must learn to accept others who are different than us.

The fourth woman mentioned is Bathsheba. Bathsheba's story is full of chaos. Her husband is murdered; her child passes away; she is a victim of circumstances she cannot control. Her whole situation reminds us about how chaotic and disordered life can be. Despite all this, God grants her the great honour of being an ancestor of the Messiah, the Prince of Peace. This teaches us that amidst the chaos of this life, God brings His order and peace by sending His Son, the Prince of Peace.

The fifth woman mentioned is Mary, the mother of Christ. She embodies the faithful people of God. She is perhaps the greatest example of one who held on to God's promises for renewal and restoration. In her famous song, she refers to God fulfilling his promises (St. Luke 1:55). She is rewarded for her faith and faithfulness with one of the greatest honours imaginable: to be the mother of the Christ. Mary's story teaches us that God rewards those who hold on to his promises in faith.

This Christmas season, let us ponder the stories of these five women who are ancestors of Christ. Let us meditate on how their stories show God's love for us in sending us His Son.

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