

**Christ Church, New Haven**  
**Sunday Forum: The Gospel According to St. Matthew**  
**September 24, 2023: Matthew 1-4**

**Questions for Reflection**

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus in Chapter 1 lists five women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. These women have remarkable stories—some of them faced incredible difficulties, while others were “sinners” in the eyes of societies. And yet, through these complexities and challenges, God's work led to grace: the birth of Jesus. Reflecting on your own story, where have you seen God's grace in your life? When has grace given you hope, despite challenges and difficulties?

King Herod and the “wise men from the east” respond to the birth of Jesus very differently. Why do you think this is?

In Chapter 4, Jesus calls his first disciples. How do they respond? Consider times in your life when have you been called to follow Jesus. How did you hear this invitation, and what was your response?

**Notes for Matthew 1-4**

**Jesus's genealogy (Matthew 1)**

- 1:3 Tamar:** the wife of one of Judah's sons; she dressed as a prostitute to seduce Judah, in order to preserve his bloodline (Genesis 38)
- 1:5 Rahab:** a prostitute in Jericho who assisted the Israelites (Joshua 2:1-21 and Joshua 6:22-25)
- 1:5 Ruth:** a young woman from Moab who worshipped the God of Israel (Ruth 2-4)
- 1:5 the wife of Uriah:** Bathsheba, with whom King David committed adultery (2 Samuel 11-12)

**Jesus's birth (Matthew 2)**

- 1:19-25 Joseph's dream:** Compare to the vision of the priest Zechariah in Luke 1:8-20
- 2:1-12 the story of “wise men from the East”:** the origin of the Feast of the Epiphany
- 2:16-18 Herod slaughters the children of Bethlehem:** Compare to Pharaoh's command to kill the children of the Hebrews in Exodus 1:15-22

**The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3)**

Other accounts of Jesus's baptism can be found in Mark 1, Luke 3, and John 1.

- What is unique about Matthew's account?

- 3:3 “This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke...”:** quotes Isaiah 40
- 3:7 Pharisees and Sadducees:** The Pharisees were a Jewish sect who emphasized careful adherence to Jewish law (Torah). Because of their approach to interpretation of the law, some scholars consider the Pharisees to be the forerunners of what later grew into Rabbinic Judaism. The Sadducees were another Jewish sect, associated with the elite priests of the Temple in Jerusalem. The Sadducees notably did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.
- 3:17 “This is my Son, the Beloved”:** see Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1

**Jesus in the desert; beginning of Jesus's ministry (Matthew 4)**

Other accounts of Jesus in the desert are at Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 1:1-14.

- 4:2 “forty days and forty nights”:** Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:28); the prophet Elijah walked in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights (1 Kings 19:8)