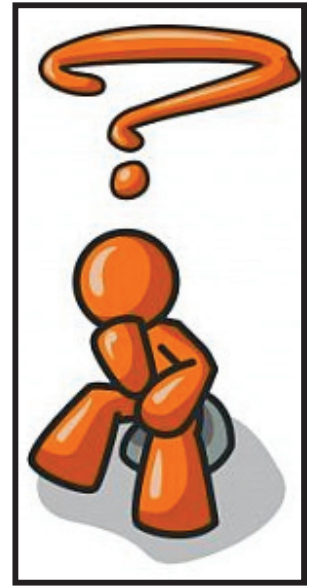


# What About ... the People We Meet in the Bible?

BY DR. DAVID A. DEWITT

It's easy to understand why the Bible tells me about Adam and Eve. After all, they were the first people—my parents. It's easy to understand why I'm told about Noah. He is also a father of all of us, and the Flood was a big deal—globally speaking. I suppose it's understandable that I know about Abraham and Sarah. They aren't my parents, but they are the parents of the Jews. But I'm Dutch. Why am I not told about my family tree in the Bible? Apparently, I came from Noah's son Japheth. But beyond that, it's pretty foggy. Why don't we know a family tree for the Chinese Orientals, the Central African Blacks, the South American Latinos, the Germans, or the British? Why just the Jews?

Why do I know a lot about Ruth? And why Samson? I mean, Ruth was a nice lady and all, but history is full of nice ladies nobody will want to talk to in heaven. For example, my wife's grandmother was one of the most godly women I've known. But you won't seek her out to talk with her heaven.



But I'll bet you'd like to talk to Ruth. And Samson was awful! Why do I have to know about him? Maybe I might expect to learn about David and Solomon, but why Ahab and Jezebel? Or their evil twisted daughter Athaliah? What a piece of work she was! The Bible tells me nothing about Socrates, Plato, Alexander the Great, or Julius Caesar. But I get pages about Gideon. What's with that!?!

Paul gave us the answer in Romans 15:4 and 2 Timothy 3:16.

*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope... All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

Genesis 15:6 reads, *Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.* But a lot of people *believed in the LORD*. For example, God told Elijah that there were 7,000 believers in Israel, believers who Elijah did not know about, *all the knees that have not bowed to Baal* (1 Kings 19:18). So why don't we hear about their lives? Why Abraham? Why is his life something *for our instruction*? Well, the next verse (Genesis 15:7) reads, *And He [God] said to*

*him [Abraham], "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it."* So the reason we know what we know about Abraham is because it was written for our instruction. And it is instructive because it is an inerrant record about what God was doing.

Suppose one of those 7,000 believers in Israel told us their story, would that be *for our instruction*? Certainly not in the same way as the story of Abraham or Elijah, or Ruth or Samson. Why? Because it would not be an inerrant record of what God was doing. They wouldn't be speaking Scripture. And why do I need to know something about Nebuchadnezzar and Artaxerxes but not Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar? Because God did not do anything in the lives of Alexander and Caesar that was *for our instruction*.

The same goes for you and me. We know God is working in our lives to conform us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). But we do not know what He is doing to accomplish that, outside of His written word in *the Scriptures*. The Bible is the only work of God throughout all history recorded *for our instruction*. So we should not be getting instruction about God from any other source—not some other book, not some report of a miraculous event, and not our own experience. Our *hope* comes *through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures*.