

# PEOPLE LIKE YOU AND ME

BY RICH MAFFEO

LIKE MOST JEWS, I'D NEVER READ THE OLD TESTAMENT. ALTHOUGH I REMEMBERED HEARING THE NAMES OF DAVID AND ABRAHAM DURING MY INFREQUENT VISITS TO THE SYNAGOGUE.... AT THIS POINT, THE WORD *BORING* FLASHED ACROSS MY MIND.



us, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession,” so that we would declare his salvation to those who don’t believe God cares for them (see 1 Peter 2:9, NASB).

Oh, if only they knew—if only we knew—how much God cares for us. We wouldn’t be so easily tempted to wonder if God really is in complete control of the affairs of our world—or of things that directly affect our lives.

We’d only have to remember the genealogy of Christ to realize that what God starts, he sees through to completion.

And nothing can frustrate his plan. □

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I remember the first time I opened Matthew’s gospel. I was sixteen. Maybe seventeen. I’d grown up in a Jewish home and was curious about what Christians called the New Testament.

So, thinking it was like any other book, I began at the first page: “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham....”

Like most Jews, I’d never read the Old Testament. Although I remembered hearing the names of David and Abraham during my infrequent visits to the synagogue, I didn’t know much more about those two patriarchs than the fact that they were Jews.

“Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah became the father of Perez....”

At this point, the word *boring* flashed across my mind.

“Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud....”

I stopped reading. Not only was I clueless about who those people were, I couldn’t even pronounce their names! I closed the book and wondered why anyone wasted their time reading the New Testament.

Today, more than three decades later, and having read the Old and New Testaments many times, I have a different opinion. If I could go back in time and talk to myself before I closed the *boring* book, I’d tell myself that list of nearly unpronounceable names is not as mind-numbing as it seemed. Instead, it has the power to encourage the most discouraged among us.

The genealogy of Jesus Christ illustrates God’s absolute control over his plan of salvation. Through Abraham and David, God sent a Messiah who would redeem humankind from their sins and reconcile them to the Father. That plan for our redemption would not—could not—be thwarted, even by the sins of individuals in direct lineage to the Savior.

For example, Abraham offered his wife, Sarah, to an Egyptian king in order to save his own neck. David made another man’s wife pregnant, and then had him murdered to cover up his adultery. Solomon, also in the genealogy, built altars for his wives to worship false gods. Manasseh practiced witchcraft and human sacrifice.

But God’s plan for humanity’s redemption persevered—and continues to persevere. He wove the good and the bad into an intricate tapestry that unveiled first in a Bethlehem manger, then unfurled throughout Church history, despite the scandals, shame and divisions of his people.

Jesus’ genealogy is a register of people like you and me—sinful, weak, fearful. The King of Glory was born into our human family to redeem the lost, strengthen the weak and encourage the fearful. He was born to make

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