



Genesis



Beginnings. God's perfect world. Human sin spoils and destroys.

People develop relationship with God, and in doing so begin to discover His ways and purposes.

God looks on the heart, and chooses faithful men to bless; from their family He will bless the whole world



Law

The family has been chosen, and God places on them the job of living lives separate from the world around them. They are to be completely distinct, have no intermarrying with other races and be so visibly and behaviourally different that there is no doubt they are set apart.

The cost of being His chosen family is enormous, but so are the blessings.



History

The story of how that family, now a nation, did and did not live up to God's calling. Ultimately they failed to, and they reaped the consequences as set out in the Law (esp Deuteronomy 28)



Reflections

Hymns and thoughts of those inspired by God and the Holy Spirit during this time.

People reaching out to God in times of great joy, great pain, and also confusion. Yet always with the assurance that God is there and God is with them...even if there is no visible evidence at the time.



Prophecy

God speaking to His people to warn them of the dangers of turning from Him. His word into real situations to call them back to Himself. But always too with the ultimate promise of a future in which His people will live with Him in security and blessing.

Throughout all of these sections, there is the promise of the coming Messiah. Jesus is the theme of the whole Bible, and is spoken of in every book. The promise of Him can be seen in Genesis 3:15 for instance.

The Old Testament has many 'types' of Jesus...pictures of the Saviour to come. Noah's Ark is one, the fourth man in the fiery furnace in Daniel is another.



Gospel

The Messiah comes. Jesus speaks to the Jews of His day, pointing out their failure to keep the Law and the fact that it is impossible to keep. The purpose of the Law was to show that we need a Saviour. God is more interested in the heart than the action, and religion is not His invention or intention.

Death on the Cross and Resurrection. A new beginning, made possible by Jesus fulfilling the true law of God completely and then superceding it with a covenant sealed with His blood.



History

The story of how the first believers in Christ took the message of the Cross and lived lives in the power of the Holy Spirit. Their encounter with non-Jews and the growing realisation that the old distinction and separation was no longer required.

The distinction now was between those filled with the Holy Spirit and those not.



Epistles

Paul's writings are based on his time in the wilderness being taught directly by the Holy Spirit; and the other epistle writers would have had similar experiences. This is the meat of what God has for His people, and the world, today. It is the way His

people should live in His family, towards God, each other, and the world around them



Revelation

Genesis starts with God saying "Let there be light". Light brings revelation. The purpose of scripture is to reveal Jesus. Ultimately, this happens in this last book.

We have been getting to know Him throughout Scripture. We have known Him best in human terms, showing us how to be His people. Now we see Him as Deity. Now He is revealed.

Throughout scripture God's aim has been self-revelation. He wants us to know Him and He wants us to be like Him.

It is a progressive revelation, we learn of Him little by little.

We discover Him to be unapproachable, except on His terms; and lose Eden as a consequence.

We discover His character in the Law: "I am the life giver, do not commit murder; I am the Provider, do not steal" and so forth - and learn that we cannot be like Him using our own strength

We discover His patience throughout the Old Testament, warning following warning until in the end He allows the coming disaster to fall

We discover His self-sacrifice in the story of Abraham and Isaac, foretelling the coming of Jesus to give His life for us all

We discover His grace, that forgiveness is not enough for God; He pours out His Spirit, His Person, onto His redeemed Church so that empowered by Him we *can* after all be like Him

Finally, we discover Jesus as not only the Lamb that was Slain but also King of kings and Lord of lords. This is the One who has loved us from the beginning. This is the One we can know.

When we read something in scripture we need to be aware of its context.

X Which piece of the jigsaw is it from?

X How was God speaking to people at that time?

X How do we relate to that jigsaw piece today?

X For instance, you may well have heard it said "We are not under Law but under Grace". So, when you read something from the books of the Law can you just ignore it?

X Do we even need to read it, can we just ignore that part of the Bible?