**Origin Stories**

**-Genesis**

* This tells the story of creation from an Israelite mythology and the first Laws God gave the people.
* Mythology doesn’t mean the central meaning of the text isn’t true, it is a way of telling the story of the people involved

**Look up Genesis 1:1-2**

The creation story tells us how humankind chose to turn away from God, not necessarily how humans were literally created and went through evolution.

This example tells theological truth rather than historical truth.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that "many scientific studies . . . have enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life forms, and the appearance of man. These studies invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator"

**Look up Genesis 1: 26-27 and 3:20**

* *Adam (Hebrew)=* humankind
* *Eve=* mother of life/life force

Thus the story is not literally about a man and a woman in the garden, but about how God created humankind and put a life force/spirit within them to live in union with God and creation.

*Science tells us HOW the world has evolved, and faith tells us WHY the universe was created.*

**There are also semi-historical books of Israel: Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, 1& 2 Maccabees, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah, and Acts.**

**Law**

**-Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers**

* Known to the Jews as the Torah (teaching/revelation) and to Christians as the Pentateuch (first 5 books)
* There are 613 laws in Judaism found here.

**Look up Deuteronomy 24: 5-9 and Exodus 20: 1-17**

Old Testament law, as such, is not binding on Christians. It never has been. In fact, it was only ever binding on those to whom it was delivered—the Jews (Israelites).

That said, some of that law contains elements of a law that is binding on all people of every place and time. Jesus and Paul provide evidence of this in the New Testament.

**Look up Matthew 22:34-40 and Matthew 5: 17-19.**

How could Jesus fulfill the Old Testament law without relaxing it? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "The Law has not been abolished, but rather man is invited to rediscover it in the person of his Master who is its perfect fulfillment" (CCC 2053).

Christians are obliged to follow the laws cited in the Ten Commandments not because they are cited in the Ten Commandments—part of Old Testament law—but because we can know by reason (our thinking) alone that certain actions are immoral—e.g., to kill the innocent, to take what does not belong to us, to cheat on our spouses, etc.

Christians are not and have never been bound by Old Testament law and those elements of Old Testament law which are not part of the natural law—e.g., the obligation to worship on Saturday —were only ever binding on the Jews.

**Wisdom Writings/ Poetry**

**-Psalms, Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Job, Song of Songs, Song of Solomon, Lamentations**

The task of wisdom is character formation: what is the wise path to follow? The lessons are expressed by observations that challenge as well as by warnings.

Wisdom itself is an art: how to deal with various situations and achieve a good life. And it is also a teaching: the lessons learnt from experience were shared at various levels, from education in the home all the way to training in the court.

**Look up Psalm 139:1-4 and Proverbs 28:25-26**

* Proverbs consists of long poems dealing with moral conduct and reflect on the experiences of life.
* The Book of Job is a literary presentation of the problem of the suffering of the innocent and god-fearing Job.
* Psalms, the book of prayer songs derives from varied origins, especially liturgical celebrations; it contains personal cries of agony as well as of praise and thanksgiving.
* The Song of Songs is a collection of poems that give meaning to human and divine love.
* Ben Sira is the only author who identifies himself (Sirach 50:27), and in 200 B.C. he writes a summary of Jewish wisdom and creation theology.
* The Wisdom of Solomon was written in Greek for believers in majority Greek communities, expressing humans have eternal life in terms of a continuing relationship with God after we die on earth.

**Prophets**

**-Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi**

* Inspired by God to proclaim and communicate what God wanted in the world as everyone had gone astray after God had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt.
* Passion for social justice, vivid imagery & disturb the norm

**Look up Amos 5:24**

Amos was the earliest of the writer prophets. He was born in Tekoa, near Bethlehem, probably around the beginning of the eighth century (700s).

He ministered in the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743).

At that time the northern kingdom of Israel, thanks to its conquests, was enjoying a period of great success and wealth, but there were sharp contrasts between rich and poor and many instances of inequity and injustice; the spirit of true religion was difficult to find.

The book is a hymn to God's all powerful-presence. It is full of rich imagery and vivid parables/stories based on the rural country life with which Amos was so familiar.

This is different to other prophets who wrote in times of despair, when Israel was ruled by other foreign rulers who had taken over, and were trying to encourage people to keep their faith in God though all seemed lost.

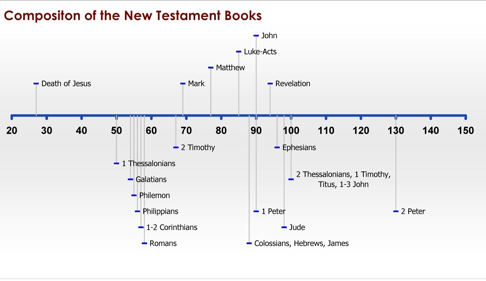
**Gospels**

**-Matthew, Mark, Luke, John**

We take the Gospels more literally as they describe the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Gospels all tell the same basic story

* But **EACH AUTHOR HAS HIS OWN REASON FOR WRITING**
* To **A DIFFERENT COMMUNITY**
* At **A PARTICULAR TIME**
* With **DIFFERENT NEEDS**

**Look up the contents page of your Bible.**

Timeline of New Testament:

* Matthew: …….for the Jewish community, tracing not just Jesus family (whakapapa) but the strong link of the Israelite people, their history, their culture to the continuing story of Jesus and how He is the promised one.
* Mark: earliest and shortest… Moves quickly from one incident to another. Begins with Jesus ministry. Nothing of childhood. For new Greek converts in Rome, Galilee, Antioch.
* Luke: Shows connection of God’ revelation in history continuing and climaxing in Jesus…. John the Baptist features a turning point. Is for Israelites, but now too for the Gentiles the nations. Even as far as Aotearoa/NZ! (even though Luke didn’t know about us, he would have approved of the missionary enthusiasm that brought the faith here. Remember…Part 1 the Gospel…. Part 2…the Acts of the Apostles. Probably for Gentile audience, converts.

Together Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they are similar in how they tell the story of Jesus.

* John the theologian, the mystic. In the beginning was the WORD. Focuses on Divinity of Christ “I am the way the truth and the life”. We also have a significant section on the Person of the Holy Spirit

**Letters**

**-Thessalonians, Galatians, Philemon, Philippians, Corinthians, Romans, Timothy, Peter, Jude, Colossians, Hebrews, Ephesians, James, Titus, 1 & 2 John**

* St. Paul wrote many letters to church communities and leaders, but there are also a few other letter writers we recognise (e.g James, John, Peter…). Some were written by followers on behalf of Paul. These encouraged first communities to follow Jesus’ teaching in multi-cultural towns they lived in.
* It’s important to take into account the CONTEXT which these early Christian communities existed within as we don’t take everything as literal.

**Look up Ephesians 5: 22-33 and Ephesians 6: 5-9**

It’s important not to take passages such as these literally!

We must take into account, for example, the patriarchal society at the time. In today’s context, the word ‘submission’ has a different meaning. The second half of the passage discusses the husband’s role in the relationship, so within today’s context doesn’t mean that women should be submissive to their husbands, but that the couple should both work together to create a self-giving relationship.

Similarly, slavery was considered normal in Paul’s time. Now, we know slavery to be wrong as it violates the person’s dignity.

Cultural shifts have happened in society, and we must consider this when looking at biblical texts, we cannot take a book at ‘face value’.

**Apocalyptic Writings**

**-Daniel, Revelation**

* Revelation was St. John of Patmos’ visions. For both Daniel and Revelation, we are encouraged to read symbolically/metaphorically.
* Main purpose to illustrate that God is the Lord of the whole cosmos/universe

Many Fundamentalists and some Evangelical Protestants believe that these books illustrate soon-to-happen events and the end of times.

Attempts to interpret John’s vision in light of current events have resulted in predictions of the end of the world, the infamous mark of the beast, identifying different people as the Anti-Christ (mostly the Pope), the whore of Babylon as the Catholic Church and a 1000 reign of Christ where the 144,000 only will be allowed into heaven (see Rev. 7:4, 14: 1-3).

These kinds of interpretations ignore John’s historical context! John also had to use metaphors as he was in exile in Patmos and writing for early Christian communities trying to give them hope and reassurance of God’s power. Christians at this time were still under the ancient pagan, Roman empire.