

Seven Things I Saw -- Reading 1500 Years of History

By Bob Young

Toward the end of 2019, over a 20-day period, I read through 1500 years of history – 388 pages of print that was far too small, without pictures! Are you already ahead of me! I read Genesis to 2 Chronicles (in order, except I read 1 Chronicles immediately after 1-2 Samuel). Old Testament Bible history covers several millennia. The “1500 years of history” in the title of this article came from an approximate calculation of the time from Abraham to the early sixth century BC and the fall of Jerusalem, about where the historical accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles end.

Reading the Old Testament storyline in the same way that one would read any other history book was insightful. There is a place for detailed study of the Bible; there is also a place for simply reading the Bible -- reading until you “finish the book.” Both methods are useful. I highly recommend rapid, intensive Bible reading! You will see things that will not surface in systematic, methodical study.

(I had done the same thing earlier in 2019 when I read the New Testament through twice during the first few days of January. Later in the year, I again read the Gospels rapidly – finishing all four Gospels in a few days.)

Seven things impressed me as I read Genesis to 2 Chronicles. I share my list. I see seven sermon topics to be developed and expanded in the future!

First, the story is about God*. I read about a lot of Bible personalities, but the Bible is the revelation of God. I was reminded that the people we refer to as “Bible characters” are simply people who happened to be alive during the time of the Bible storyline.

Second, God has revealed himself and his nature through his actions. Lists of God’s characteristics are few and far between in the Old Testament.

Third, God chose the people of Israel and wanted to bless them based, on his nature and purpose. God’s way of penetrating the world in the Old Testament was proactive. Can it be any other way today?

Fourth, Israel was constantly challenged to make choices and to follow God whole-heartedly.

Fifth, when God rejected Israel for disobedience, he was willing to take them back at the slightest evidence of repentance and return. Amazing grace!

Sixth, God’s promise to Israel to establish them in their own land was conditional – based on their obedience. Reading the stories of the judges and the kings in about a week, I was impressed by how often God warned them that he would remove them from the land he had promised them.

Seventh, God’s promise to Abraham -- renewed to David -- to maintain an heir as king continued even when Israel disobeyed. The contrast between God’s conditional promise and God’s unconditional promise was striking as I read the story.

I am confident that another rapid reading would yield even more insights. I encourage you to try it! For a week or two weeks, set aside a little more time each day and read the Bible in the same way you would read a book. You will be surprised at what you see!

*I use the proper noun God in this article, recognizing that God revealed himself to Israel as Yahweh (YHWH). When God’s nature was revealed in certain actions, he was often described with other descriptive combinations, sometimes called the redemptive “names of God” even though they are descriptions more than names, e.g. YHWH-Yireh (God provides), YHWH-Rapha (God heals), YHWH-shalom (God our peace), YHWH-shammah (God is light).