

Intro:

Last time we talked about the *Flow of History* and the *Development of Redemption* as two preliminary considerations in applying a Biblical worldview to the subject of History.

Today we are going to consider three reasons to study history from a Biblical worldview perspective:

“It’s good to study history for three worldview reasons: (1) History helps us understand the ways and works of God. (2) History teaches life lessons—as atheist philosopher George Santayana said, ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’ Since all knowledge comes with historical background, the opposite of history is amnesia. (3) History provides a sense of cultural identity. That’s why schools around the world teach students the histories of their respective nations.” [Ward, 342.]

I. Understanding the Ways and Works of God

“The historical narratives of Scripture are given primarily so that God’s people can understand His ways and His works.” [Ward, 342.]

A. God’s actions in the past reveal truths about God and His purposes

1. Creation

- a. Reveals the power of God
- b. Reveals the wisdom of God
- c. Reveals the purposes of God for man

2. Intervention

- a. Reveals God’s holy offense over sin
- b. Reveals God’s determination to overcome sin
- c. Reveals God’s love for his creation
- d. Reveals God’s continuing providential care for his creation

B. Understanding God and His ways in the past develop insight for events in the present

1. The Bible leads us to conclude that God who acted in the past continues to act in the present

2. The way God acted in the past gives us insight into how God is acting in the present (though we must be cautious without specific revelation)
3. The way God acted in the past gives force to the gospel call to sinners in the present

C. God's nature and purposes give hope for God's actions in the future

1. God who created the universe and continues to act through the past into the present cannot be expected to allow the futility of the fall to continue forever
2. God's interventions in the past give assurance that God is working out the promises he made for final and full redemption

II. Learning Lessons for Life

A. People who live at a given place and time share a vast amount of common beliefs, assumptions, and prejudices (they have a common world-view)

1. It is very difficult to discern your own assumptions
2. Studying history immerses us in the assumptions and worldview of people in the past
 - a. Sometimes jarringly different from our own
 - b. That includes those who are our own immediate ancestors
 - 1) Consider the difference in worldview between you and your grandparents
 - 2) Consider the difference between the way English-speakers of today view the world compared to the English-speakers of the 19th century (just over 100 years ago)
3. One benefit of studying history is that it forces us to confront our own assumptions and prejudices

B. Comparing cultures

1. Western people in the past saw purpose in things and events; modern westerners see random chance behind things and events

2. People of the past often lived in an “enchanted” world dominated by superstitions; moderns understand that natural forces are behind natural phenomena (earthquakes, weather, eclipses, etc., etc.)

C. Consequences:

1. The consequences of belief systems or practices in the past can inform us about how to solve problems in the present (or not, as many politicians seem unable to grasp this!)
2. Sometimes study of history will re-discover valuable solutions of the past that can be adapted to the present

D. Bible

1. As the one, final standard of truth, the Bible is essential for studying and interpreting history correctly
2. Unbelievers can provide much research and often wise interpretation of historical events, but the failure to recognize God’s role in history inevitably leads to a break down in complete understanding

III. Establishing a Cultural Identity

A. “The assumptions, values, and practices of the cultures we live in all have histories.” [Ward, 344.]

B. For example, primary values of Western (English) culture are

1. Freedom
2. Opportunity for growth
3. Individualism
4. Equality

C. The history of Western (English) culture

1. Developed over hundreds of years as lower classes struggled against oppression by powerful upper classes
2. The (mostly) non-violent progress a consequence of wide embrace of the gospel and Christianity
3. Individual equality in the gospel inspired the values that produced a culture of opportunity, freedom, and equality

- D. History, however, reveals that men can idolize their own cultural achievements
1. We can see a pursuit of opportunity and growth by some that leads to oppression of others
 2. We can see demands for equality that refuses to submit to authority
 3. We can see a pursuit of individualism that leads to a denial of rights to others
 4. We can see a desire for liberty that wants to be able to do wrong instead of right
- E. In spite of the corrupting aspects of the fall on display in history (and the cultures of history) we can also see positive ways in which culture reflects creation – the image of God expresses itself

Conclusion:

“History, then, should play a vital role in everyone’s life. While Scripture is the norm that must be applied to all of life, history gives us a clearer vision of the life that Scripture is being applied to. For this reason, the [next lesson] will explore how the discipline of history should be pursued.” [Ward, 344.]