

STORY OF CHRISTIANITY
From the Early Church to Today

Fall of 2009

Teachers: Pastor John and Karmie Tsang

What is History?

Opening Exercise:

In one simple short paragraph of no more than 3-4 sentences, recount what happened on Sept 11, 2001.

What is History?

What difficulties or questions came up in this opening exercise as we attempted to 'do' history?

What is History?

- How does one go about studying history?
- Why do we need to know our history?
- Is history ever objective?
- What is the bias of the historian? What are our own biases as we read history?
- What do we need to be aware of when studying history?
- Is there a pattern to history? Is history going anywhere?
- What is the Christian understanding of history, time, God, and human agency?

What is History?

- Most elementary form – history is the preservation and telling of past events.
- Secondly, historical studies attempt to understand, draw meaning, connection with (before and after), and causes or reasons why certain things happen.
- Fundamental belief that humanity is connected through the generations. That there is a larger narrative that gives human history meaning.
- History can never be purely objective. Both the worldview and bias of the writer and reader must be taken into consideration.

Is there a Pattern to History?

No Discernable Pattern

- History is not moving toward anything. There is no destiny, no ending, completely due to the chance and actions of humanity.

Is there a Pattern to History?

Cyclical History

- Repetitive pattern based on different factors.
- Prevalent worldview in China (dynasties), India (karma/caste), tribal cultures (cycles of nature).
- Marxist history – based on labour and production.
- Golden Age thinking – utopia is in the past.

Pessimism

- Questions and Assessment

Is there a Pattern to History?

Linear Progressive History

- History is linear and moving toward something. No discernable repetitive pattern. Humanity can change the course of history at any time.
- There is progress be it moral, economic, intellectual, technological resulting in an increased quality of life.
- Sense of optimism. We are more knowledgeable, civilized, technologically advanced, economic progress.
- Utopia is in the future.
- Questions and assessment

Is there a Pattern to History?

Christian perspective of history

- God started history, intervenes in human history, and brings history toward a destination/goal.

Eph 1:4-5 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will

Eph 1:9-12

9And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. 11In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Eph 3:10-11

10His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Is there a Pattern to History?

Christian perspective of history

- God interacts with creation.
- But how? How is it possible that God is in control of history and yet, humanity has a part or role in this process?
- Questions and Assessment