

If History is Going Anywhere?

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[0:00] So as I've said, we're in this series and we're looking tonight at is history going anywhere? You know, is there any control in it all, in life?

Is there any coherence to the world as we know it? You know, is there someone or something pulling the strings behind the scenes? Where is history heading?

Where are we going? Hopefully, we will explore some of these things and what the Bible has to say about that in the next half hour. You know, that might cause some personal questions.

What do we think about the future? When we think to the future, what comes to mind? What do we trust in? What do we put our hope in for the future?

You know, there's this concept, this forever home. I don't know if you've come across this. Maybe you've used it. I'm not here to dig if you have.

[1:01] But I find it a funny concept. You know, people might buy a home. It's maybe not their first home. It's maybe their second home. It's a nice big home. They've got room to grow into it. It's got a nice garden.

It's in a nice area. And they say, oh, we've bought our forever home. You know, it's a big one. It's a good one. It's going to be us for life. We're set. That's us.

You know, it's a funny concept. And it's estate agents. They use it a little bit because it sounds good, doesn't it? But people use it because they like that thought. They like that thought of being settled. That's us.

We're secure. We're safe. That's us forever. We're sorted. You know, it's a funny concept because it's not true, is it? We're not going to live forever. And, you know, we're certainly not going to live forever in that home.

Things happen. Cowboy builders. Houses fall down. You know, my house is built on a mine. It was about 60 years ago.

[1:57] Hopefully, it's still going to keep going. But, you know, we're not going to be in that house forever. We might be in that house for our whole lives. But that is not forevermore.

You know, we like to think that it'll be all right in the end, don't we? You heard the phrase, all's well that ends well. And it is, to a degree. You know, something might go badly, but if it gets the right result, then all good.

All good. You know, we want everything to be all right in the end. But will it? You know, as we look back over the chaos of history, civilizations rising and falling.

We see great successes for mankind as a whole. We also see wars and famines and disasters. We see new technology come in.

Think of the world we live in today. It's crazy, isn't it? The things that we have and can do and do in our fingertips. You know, we also see that being abused. And we see financial crashes.

[3:04] And we see societies at times going to pot. The chaos of history as we look back. You know, is it all just random? Are we just thrown side to side on the rickety train ride through history?

Or is there someone outside of it all who has a plan for how it all will end up? Well, what does the world say?

What is maybe some of the world views? Now, if you went out on Brunnsfield this afternoon and said, what's going to happen forevermore in the future, as far away as you can think, you would get a wide, wide variances of opinion.

But you know, what is for sure is that there is such uncertainty out there. There is such uncertainty. People aren't sure. Oh, I'm not too sure. I don't know.

I don't want to think about it. That's one side. But I think people also have a kind of maybe a vague hope. Like, oh, there's a better place when we die. You know, in the future forevermore, you know,

there's a good place and we'll end up there.

[4 : 14] There's a kind of vagueness to it all. But you know, some people, they'll just say, well, we're just here randomly. Graham, he gave us that quote from Richard Dawkins, his dinner party friend that he wanted to have dinner with, with the joy that Richard Dawkins came out with, saying that it's all just nothingness.

That it's random, that we're not going anywhere, and it basically means that this world as we know it is just totally random. A series of accidents, fluke, luck, chance.

That is what life is. I know, I think that's quite a sad worldview. Because it means that, well, it's all just pointless, isn't it?

If we're just here as an accident of biology and chemistry, then it's just pointless. What are we doing? This guy, another cheery chap, Albert Camus, I don't know if you've heard of him, he came out with this, life is meaningless, but worth living, provided you recognize it's meaningless.

Now, I'm no philosopher. This guy was. He was a French philosopher quite a while ago. But you know, if you think about that, and I've been trying to think about this and trying to get my head around it, and I kind of know what he's meaning.

[5 : 28] You know, it's sad, isn't it? His philosophy, it was called absurdism. And it argues that trying to put a meaning in life actually just causes you more problems.

It's a conflict, and it causes this thing called the absurd. But he says that having this attitude doesn't cause despair. It doesn't cause us to think that all things are pointless, but it's just about the here and now.

It's about the present. It's about temporary joys. That is what life is all about. Well, tonight we're going to have a look at what the Christian worldview says about the future and how that affects the past and also the present day.

The Christian worldview that there is a God who has a plan. It is so radically different to any other worldview you will see out there. And so as we explore history, we need to think what we mean by that.

Well, history, I'm going to take it tonight. You can argue with me if you want. But I'm going to say that it's everything that we know since time began. You know, that in itself poses a question.

[6 : 43] What came before time began? How did it all begin? Anyone seen this show? The Big Bang Theory?

Alexander has. Big fan. You know, it's entertaining. It's funny. And it's got the theme tune. And if you've ever watched it, it's got this really catchy theme song that plays every time.

It's got a collage of sort of going through history from early man all the way through to modern day. And it says this. Our whole universe was... I'm not going to sing it, by the way.

Our whole universe was in a hot, dense state. Nearly 14 billion years ago, expansion started. Wait. The earth began to cool. The autotrophs... I don't know what that is.

...began to drool. Neanderthals developed tools. We built a wall. We built the pyramids. Math, science, history, unraveling the mystery that all started with the Big Bang. Right?

[7 : 38] Now, why am I going on about this? Well, it just poses questions. What came before? And we're not going to go into the science and the arguments that would be for a whole other night.

We'd be here for hours. But, you know, it just poses a question. What came before? So we're going to look tonight at before history, during history, and then we're going to look after history is how I'm going to phrase it.

Okay? Okay? So, before... Very opening words of your Bible. Now, I've got a lot of Bible passages in here tonight. But I think it's so important to see what God's Word has to say.

So there's a lot of Bible passages in this tonight. But, you know, Genesis 1, verse 1, the very beginning of our Bible that we have in front of us, says this, In the beginning, God.

And it says that God created. Well, we need to define, first of all, what we mean by God. If you're ever speaking to someone and they're talking about God, this, God, that, you need to say, Well, what do you mean by God?

[8 : 42] Because often people are talking about something totally separate to what the Christian would describe God as. So what do I mean by God? What does a Christian mean by God?

Well, the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is outside of space, time, and matter, i.e. the world that we know. God is Trinity.

God the Father. God the Son. God the Spirit. And God, in time, and before time existed, the before, existed in completeness and wholeness in the Trinity.

God is eternal. God is everlasting. And what does God do? Well, out of love, God creates everything that we know, everything that we experience.

God's experience created mankind, created us. God's good design, and we can read about that in Genesis 1 and 2. Isaiah, one of the prophets, he says this, Do you not know?

[9 : 43] Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

God is eternal. The God of the Bible. Everlasting. Our mind just blows when we think of this, because everything in our world is timed. Things start, things finish.

Everything is constricted by time, but God is outside of that. Well, what's the impact? Well, the impact of thinking about before time is that we have an intelligent designer with a plan and sovereign control over the world as we know it.

and that means the course of history. So if that's before, well, let's look for a while at during.

If we read through the Bible, especially if we look through the Old Testament up to the point that Jesus comes in at the start of the New, but then through that also, it shows God's control over the course of history, over the course of the time that man has been on earth that it has existed.

[10 : 56] We see God's plan for his people. We were thinking about Abraham this morning who was promised by God to bless the nations, to have descendants more than the stars of the sky and that they will be God's people.

And if we follow that story through, we see that through the ups and downs and unfaithfulness of God's people, he is faithful to them. And we can follow that history through the various characters that we maybe know through Sunday school.

God has a hand in everything. Jeremiah 29 says this, For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

That is what God wants for his people. And you know, sometimes the coherence of the Bible, the genuineness of it, the authenticity of it is questioned.

I don't know if you've seen this diagram before, but I have. And what this is, and this came to mind when I was thinking about this, this diagram, this actually links the difference, so the little bars down the bottom, these are all the chapters of the Bible.

[12 : 11] And there's almost 70,000 links and cross-references between the chapters of the Bible. So each line shows a cross-reference.

Now this is not a book written by one person, not one man anyway, but it is God-inspired work written by many authors over many, many years. And yet the coherence of it is marvelous.

Have you ever wondered or read the genealogies in the Bible? You get them at the start of the Gospels like Matthew, and you get this big long list of people, and you sometimes read them and go, I don't know why this is here.

You read it and you think, I'm not sure what I'm getting from this. Well, you know what? The genealogies in the Bible, they teach us that God has a plan, and that God has carefully put the course of history so that His will and His plan will come to fruition.

God's control is shown in the course of history by these genealogies. You know, Daniel, he was one of the great prophets of God.

[13 : 27] And he was in a foreign land and being forced to do things that he didn't want to do, but he was faithful to God. And he says this, Praise be to the name of God forever and ever.

Wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons. He deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

If we look back at the Old Testament especially, we see kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. And as we look back at history, we see chaos. But God's plan is in it all.

Daniel, he witnesses to the king at the time of Babylon, this great mighty king of the biggest kingdom on the planet, Nebuchadnezzar. And he turns around and says this, how great are his signs, how mighty his wonders.

His kingdom is an eternal kingdom. His dominion endures from generation to generation. This is Nebuchadnezzar speaking about God. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom wasn't lasting from generation to generation.

[14:43] It was failing and it would be taken over very quickly after this. that God's kingdom and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

So what we have through the Old Testament is we kind of have like a big funnel. Have you ever watched the bake-off and they do the choux pastry? I always think it's great. They put all the icing into the funnel and they cut the bottom off and they make amazing shapes and things with it. It's not pastry. It's icing. I'm not much of a baker. You know, it's like that. We have this big funnel of history and we see it and it's all pointing and it's narrowing and it's narrowing and it's narrowing and we get to this specific point in history.

It is the key point of history and if you've not guessed it already it's Jesus. Jesus coming into the world. God. Jesus is God the Son part of the Trinity and it's God stepping into history into time think about that.

That's mad. He was the promised Savior. The promise that Abraham gave. The promise of Christ the Messiah as we can read about throughout the Old Testament.

[15:58] And you know this was not a last minute thing. Before time even began the plan of the Lord Jesus coming in was hatched.

The Lord Jesus would have to come and he would have to do what he did on the cross. That singular point of history. Isaiah 7 says this Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. Hundreds of years before Jesus came this is prophesied and it's elsewhere as well.

Don't hate me for saying this but Christmas is approaching. It's not that far away. We'll be thinking about this again. This is often read in Christmas services. Emmanuel God with us God coming to and into history.

Jesus' arrival is of singular importance and significance. The fulfiller of all of God's promises and plans to that point.

[17:07] You know the Lord Jesus when he came he lived that perfect life that only he could. He made marvelous claims about who he was and he backed it up with the miracles showing that he was who he said he was that he didn't just talk the talk but that he walked the walk.

He went all the way to the cross and he took on as we thought about this morning that curse that we deserve. Why? For our disobedience against a holy and just God.

the Lord Jesus he took that on and yeah he physically died but you know he rose again and that is the key to the Christian faith the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Many have come and said things many have come and lived a life and died. Only the Lord Jesus has risen again proving that he was truly who he said that he was.

And you can turn to it if you want or I'm just going to read it but in Acts chapter 1 I'm not going to read it all. In verse 3 it says after his suffering this is Jesus he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

[18:18] He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. So Jesus witnessed to many that he was risen from the dead. and then later on in verse 9 after he said this he was taken up before their very eyes this is the disciples his followers and a cloud hid him from their sight and they were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them and said men of Galilee why do you stand here looking into the sky this same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

The Lord Jesus he ascended back outside of time back to be with the Father on high as we say but you know with a promise with a promise of the future and this is where we start to turn our eyes to the future and what the Bible has to say about it.

John 14 once again I don't have it written up because it's a long passage but verse 3 says this the famous words and I go and prepare a place for you I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am Jesus promised that he would go and prepare a place heaven life eternal with the one who created and loved us and he promised that he would come back for us if we trust in him and the disciples Thomas he says Lord we do not know where you are going so how can we know the way quite a sensible question but Jesus says I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me the world might tell us as many ways to get to that better place to that good place whatever is meant by that you know but the Bible says that it's only Jesus he is the only way to have that future which we all desire and so we live in this post Jesus

age don't we it's sometimes called the church age or Christians would call it such in Acts 1 verse 8 it says

Jesus instructs his people to go to the ends of the earth saying about him that is the world that we live in at the moment you might wonder well why is time going on why is Jesus not come back yet a reasonable question well in his mercy he's giving time for people to come to a saving faith in him before he returns he's giving Christians opportunity to go and tell others so they can be included when he comes back for his people again and so as we look to the future and look at after well what next coming back to that question what are we trusting in what are we putting our hope in in cod we trust I was at an airport recently and this was a big sign and I think they do skin grafts for something I didn't look it up but they do skin grafts with cod skins so it's in cod we trust you can see what they did there you think of the American banknote in cod we trust you know this is just a play on words it's a bit of humour but it caught my attention if you know me and what I do for a living you'll understand maybe about why but you know what are we trusting in well the bible it tells us of this rescuer to come as we've seen this restorer this redeemer who will come what are we promised well the very last book of the bible revelation 21 and it says this now this is john he is getting a vision of the future revelation 21 says this then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and he sees a city the holy city of god and it says they will be his people and god himself will be with them and be their god and we thought about this this morning we thought about it last week he will wipe away every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away and he who was seated on the throne said I am making everything new then he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true we are given the promise by god and that is word the bible of this perfect future that time with no more mourning no more suffering no more pain a future that we can even hardly imagine with the holy almighty god who created us who loves us who cares for us and wants the best for us that is the promise of the bible we are promised an end to history that is not only good but it is just and it is a complete ending and it is all that everyone hopes for which is a good end everything to work out well you know hope it's an interesting concept hope you know we sometimes think of hope as being like

[24 : 19] I really hope it's sunny tomorrow that's kind of how we use it nowadays isn't it I really hope that they've got good biscuits out at church tonight but you know the hope of the bible is an assured hope based on facts and evidence and promises it is not something that we're not sure of it is something that we are convinced of now how can we be so sure of this well as we've looked at in the past God has given his promises in the past and they have all come to fruition the promise of the Lord Jesus and we live in that privileged age where we can look back and see the truths of these things the past evidence and the proven faithfulness of God allows us to trust in his promises for the future where history is going but you know it is conditional we must trust and we must accept in the work of the Lord Jesus otherwise it wouldn't be a just end and you know if we live in hope of the future and it changes our life now it changes the mentality that we have for the here and now if we live all about the here and now like that chap said that we should then we'll be bitterly disappointed in life if we load all our hope and our happiness onto our current situations our present surroundings how we get on in worldly terms if we're all about the good life or inner well-being where we're going to be disappointed life is tough life is difficult

I don't need to convince you of that we're not promised an easy road even if we trust in Jesus we thought about that last week the suffering and evil and at times we just don't know why things happen the way that they do you know I think the world tells us that we can set our own path that we can get to wherever we want if we set our mind to it if we work hard if we apply ourselves if we speak to the right people I think it's the google map society that we live in you know I don't get in the car nowadays without just putting in the destination why I want to get there quickest I want to make sure there's no roadworks I want to get there and I know I can get there you know that's what life is about isn't it people might ask you what are you doing next year what's your five year plan what's your ten year plan have you started your pension I know you're only 20 but have you thought about that it's important you know these things are important and it's good to have plans but we can't kid ourselves that we can set our own path that we won't hit the hiccups the diversions that come along in life the problems and the pitfalls that come our way and that we're going this way and suddenly we find that we're just going the complete opposite and I think the older we get

I think the more we realize that and I think if we trust in God I think as we look back we see God's hand maybe we thought we wanted to go one way but God takes us another way we see his hand in our life you know if we're living as a Christian then 2 Corinthians says this for we know that if the earthly tent that's our body now that we live in is destroyed we have a building from God an eternal house in heaven not built by human hands meanwhile we groan longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling you know a bit like that forever home concept it's not perfect is it if we are in Christ and we have that eternal house in heaven that can never be taken away it is secured how so well verse 7 we live by faith and not by sight why is it important well verse 10 for we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body whether good or bad you know as we consider these things

I've sure said it before from the front but I find it very helpful it's a phrase and it says that regret well it looks back at the past regret looks back worry worry looks around present circumstances but you know faith looks up and if we want to make forward progress if we want to go on in these things then we need to be looking up you know just to finish we've seen that history is going somewhere the Bible tells us so God's promises well they can be trusted because we can see the past evidence of previous promises that have been fulfilled all will be made right one day which is all that we desire isn't it all that we long for but we need to trust in God we need to accept his work of Jesus to make us right again so that we can be forever with a holy God in his perfect presence and when we have that heaven mentality well it changes the here and now our priorities our goals and our joy we need to let's see you in the future!
we need to see you in the future