

Sunday, September 19, 2010—Grace Life School of Theology—*Church History: A Tale of Two Churches*—Lesson 2: The Biblical View of History

### **Introduction**

- Last week we demonstrated that linearism is rudimentary to a dispensational understanding of Scripture.
- Therefore, mid-Acts Grace Believers should have no problem recognizing the importance of linear thinking to their theological construct.
- Thoughtful reflection upon last week reveals something interesting: virtually all gentile societies have viewed time as cyclical in nature.
- This linking of life with the observable seasonality in nature occurred despite their geographic location or their lack of contact with each other.

### **Introduction**

- Pagan holidays and festivals coincided with seasonal occurrences such as the winter and summer solstices as well as the spring and autumnal equinoxes.
- After the so-called conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 A.D., the Roman Catholic Church slowly began the process of trying to Christianize pagan holidays.
- As a result, the Catholic Church positioned Christmas, Easter, and All Saints Day or All Hollows Eve to coincide with pagan festivals that celebrated the seasonal changes of nature.
- Where did the Gentiles obtain this seasonal celestial view of the universe?

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- Before God created Adam and placed him in the Garden of Eden, He created the planetary bodies of the universe.
- Genesis 1:14-19
- First, the alignment and position of the planetary bodies serve the purpose of providing light upon the earth.
- Second, the relationship between the earth and the celestial bodies of the firmament would not only account for the differences between day and night but would also serve as a mechanism for rendering seasons as well as for counting days, weeks, and years.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- Third, the dividing of day and night, seasonal differences, and the counting of days and years were designed in verse 14 to serve as signs to the inhabitants of the earth.

- According to *Strong's Concordance*, the Hebrew word translated “signs” in the King James Bible means “a signal, a distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, or warning.”
- Therefore, Adam was placed in an environment in which the planetary bodies served as signs of God’s existence and handiwork.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- The daily rotation of the earth on its axis would bring day and night.
- Likewise, the combination of the earth’s yearly revolution around the sun along with the tilting of the earth’s axis at 23 1/2 degrees would produce the yearly seasonal differences.
- All of these natural phenomena were designed by God to serve as a sign and testimony to His existence and creative genius.
- Genesis further reports of humanity’s fall into sin, which not only wreaked havoc on God’s pristine creation but also clouded and distorted man’s willingness to see God’s handiwork in the natural world.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- Romans 1:19-23
- First, mankind clearly knew who God was through His creation.
- Second, based on the testimony of creation alone, mankind is without excuse for not desiring to retain God in his knowledge.
- Third, the ultimate result of not glorifying God as God, lack of thankfulness, and vain imaginations is the changing of the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- In short, mankind took the witness of God through creation and perverted it in an attempt to escape accountability (Romans 1:28, 28).
- Therefore, from the very beginning mankind was aware of the seasonal nature of God’s creation. After the fall, the sons of Adam, in an attempt to remove God from their knowledge, took the signs and seasonal markers God established when He created the planetary bodies and hijacked them as part of their religious systems.
- Herein lays the explanation for why virtually all pagan societies in the ancient world viewed time as cyclical.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- Historically, the Gentiles were given over to a reprobate mind in Genesis 11.
- Acts 14:16-17—notice that God left the signs of seasonality in place to serve as a witness to the Gentiles of his existence despite their perversion of it.
- Rather than God setting up the nations to follow a cyclical seasonal progression, the nations chart their own course that follows Satan's distortion of God's created order.
- In other words, seasons continue not because pagan religious rituals bring about their passage but because God ordained His universe at creation to function in this fashion.

### **Origin of Cyclical Thinking**

- Genesis 8:22
- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
- While linearism remains the predominant model for understanding history, we must also recognize that God is also the author of cyclical seasonality. Consequently, to arrive at a complete paradigm of history, we must embrace the reality that as time moves forward, linearly towards its prophesied end, cycles are also occurring.

### **Secular Examples of Cyclicity**

- Business Cycle
- Chinese Dynastic Cycle
- Rise and Fall of Civilizations

### **Biblical Example of Cyclicity**

- The book of Judges stands out as a clear example of Biblical cyclicity.
- "The book opens with a description of Israel's deterioration, continues with seven cycles of oppression and deliverance, and concludes with two vivid examples of Israel's depravity."(*Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*)
- "Repeated deliverance by God are described in the middle section of the book (3:5-16:31) which presents seven cycles of apostasy, oppression, cry for deliverance, salvation, and rest. Israel vacillates between obedience and apostasy as the people continually fail to learn from their mistakes." (Same)

### **Biblical Example of Cyclicity**

- J. Sidlow Baxter author of *Explore the Book*, presents a similar structure to his readership. Baxter outlines Judges by presenting six apostasies, servitudes, and deliverances that reoccur in the following four-stroke rhythm: sin, suffering, supplication, and salvation. (Baxter)

- Judges 2:10-19

### **The Biblical View of History**

- Now having established that both cyclical and linearism are in fact Biblical concepts, all that remains is for them to be combined into one workable paradigm.

### **The Law of Human Collapse**

- Unlike the evolutionary or Marxian views of history, humanity is not improving but finding new ways and methods to rebel against God.
- In Romans Chapter One, Paul summarizes how the reprobate mind works when he reports that human beings are “inventors of evil things.”
- The chart presented above does not take into account the Law of Human Collapse. For accuracy’s sake, the trajectory of linear progression is best illustrated by a downward sloping line.

### **Conclusion**

- In short, a complete Biblical view of history must contain the following three characteristics.
- First, it must reflect the God-ordained method of Bible study by adhering to linearism as its predominant explanatory model.
- Second, it must recognize that God is also the author of the cyclical and make room for seasonality as God’s linear plan unfolds.
- Third, the linear progression and imbedded cyclical must be understood to progress along a line that is downward sloping in its trajectory, thereby taking into account the Law of Human Collapse.

### **Works Cited**

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960.

*Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.

Ross, Bryan. *What is History? How Should Believers View History?* Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Life Bible Church, 2010.