

Knowing The Church's History

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Why This Topic?

- NOT to survey 2000 years of history in 45 minutes.
- Does the history recorded in the Bible matter?
- Does the Great Protestant Reformation, and subsequent history of Reformed churches, matter?
- Can I learn any lessons from the origin of my own denomination?

What Is Church History?

(1) Distinctions

- History:
 - His Story, the record of the work of God bringing to pass all that He determined. Isaiah 46:10.
- World History:
 - Regards all events that have ever happened. Revelation 6.
- Sacred History:
 - Regards the fulfilling of His promise to send Christ and save His people from sin.
 - Recorded in Scripture.
- Church History:

What Is Church History?

(2) Explanation

- Regards the development of His church, after the time of sacred history.
 - The record of the work of the Triune God gathering, defending, and preserving His church (HC LD 21, Q&A 54).
 - The record of the development of God's kingdom, as manifest on earth (HC LD 48).
 - The record of the fulfilling of God's covenant.
- The history of the false church as well as true, the apostatizing as well as faithful.

Must We Know Church History?

(1) Some argue we need not.

- Is it relevant to my life in the present?
- Does it have meaning?
- Isn't it boring?

Must We Know Church History?

(2) Of course we must!

- We want to know our history!
- God wants us to know history!
 - The Bible's revelation.
 - The Bible's promises.
 - The Bible's prophecies.
 - The Bible's examples.
 - The Bible's commands.
- We want to know God and Christ better!

Why Must We Know Church History?

(1) It teaches us about Jehovah, the true God.

- Displays His attributes, Lord's Day 47, Psalm 107:43
- Teaches important lessons about how He cares for His church, Deuteronomy 1-4
- Which attribute especially did the Great Protestant Reformation underscore?

Why Must We Know Church History?

(2) It helps us respond to errors/heresies.

- Every "new" wrong idea about God, Christ, salvation, and the Bible is an old idea with new garb. Ecclesiastes 1:9-10.
- The church in the past has responded to these heresies - sometimes wisely, sometimes not so. We learn from the church's mistakes.
- How did the Great Protestant Reformation underscore this?

Why Must We Know Church History?

(3) It helps us refute false charges/claims.

- Jerubbabel, Judges 11:12-28.
- Stephen, Acts 7:1-53.
- The church's enemies will always portray history to their advantage; this is lie and deception. By knowing history, we can respond to those lies.
- What great charge was leveled against the Reformers, which a knowledge of church history helped/helps refute?

Why Must We Know Church History?

(4) It helps us remember the church's ultimate goal.

- History is not only the record of what is past, but also points to where we are going.
 - All history MUST end.
 - History has meaning and purpose only in light of its end.
- The books of Daniel and Revelation speak prophetically of the church's history:
 - The church will suffer throughout time.
 - The church will be glorified in heaven!
- How did the Great Protestant Reformation underscore this?

Why Must We Know Church History?

(5) It has other personal, practical benefits.

- Reminds us we are a distinct people, Exodus 19:5-6, 1 Peter 2:9-10.
- Encourages us to fight spiritual battles/run a spiritual race. Hebrews 12:1,2.
- Motivates us to prayer.
- Gives substance to what we must teach our children, Psalm 78:1-8.

March 31 in Church History

- 1146: Bernard of Clairvaux preached his famous sermon encouraging people to join the 2nd crusade. Many did; it failed miserably.
- 1492: Ferdinand and Isabella ordered all Jews to leave Spain or convert to Catholicism.
- 1515: Albrecht of Brandenburg had become Archbishop of Mainz in 1514. To pay for this privilege, he had borrowed money. On this date, Pope Leo X issued a papal bull authorizing Albrecht to sell indulgences in Germany to raise funds to repay his loan. One man who helped raise these funds was named Tetzl.