

Sunday, July 5, 2020—The Present Distress & The Fourth Turning

Introduction

- I Corinthians 7:26—last week I broke from our study on Colossians to address a couple issues related to Paul’s political example, Corona Virus, mask wearing, and the local church.
- This morning I would like to revisit somethings that I taught at our 2015 and 2016 Bible Conferences about cycles in history and where we are presently at as a nation.
- In 2015 GLBC hosted a Bible Conference titled, “What in the World is Going On: Grace in Our Culture?” Which covered the following topics:
 - The Absolute Nature of Truth
 - The Rise of Militant Atheism—The Problem of Evil
 - Human Sexuality: Why God’s way is the Best Way
 - The High Calling of Our Daily Work
 - Why Christianity Can’t Save the World—Refutation of Postmillennialism
 - Why The American Dream is a Lie
 - This world is not our home.
 - Politics is not our hope.
 - Security is not found in what we have.
 - Why the Grace Life is the Best Life
- The following year in 2016 we hosted “Grace in Our Culture: What in the World is Going On? Part 2” which covered the following subjects:
 - This Present Darkness: Understanding the Course of This World
 - Understanding Roman America: The History of Its Future Fall
 - You Want Me to Pray for Who? The Believers Relationship to Human Government
 - Radical Islam and Religious Fundamentalism: Is Religion Responsible for Our Current Mess?
 - The Sleeping Giant Gets a Wake Up Call

- No Man That Warreth Entangleth
- While many of us could sense 4 or 5 years ago that things were unraveling none of us could have predicted the upheaval that has been 2020.
- This morning I would like to revisit my message from 2015 and 2016 with a slightly different focus.

Review The Biblical Framework For Understanding History

- In my message “How Did we Get to Be in the Mess We Be In?” I sought to establish a Biblical Framework for understanding history by using three simple concepts.
 - The Line—time originated in Genesis 1 and is advancing forward in linear fashion toward a prophesied end, the establishment of the new heavens and new earth. When the Dispensation of the Fullness of Time arrives the purpose for which God created time will have been fulfilled.
 - The Wheel—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. In secular terms we can observe this cyclical nature in the following ways:
 - The business cycle in economics: peak, contraction, trough, expansion.
 - The rise and fall of nations throughout world history.
 - The Chinese Dynastic Cycle
 - Judges 2:10-19—the same cyclical phenomenon is observable within the only nation that God formed on earth, the nation of Israel. The middle section of the book of Judges 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.
 - The Hill—wow that we have seen that both cyclical and linear concepts are both Scriptural all that remains is to combine them into a single explanatory model. For accuracy’s sake, the trajectory of our line is best illustrated by a downward sloping line. Drawing the line in this fashion sets the Christian view of history apart from other linear progressive models. Unlike the evolutionary or Marxian views of history, humanity is not improving but finding new ways and methods to rebel against God.
 - 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 considering the Law of Human Collapse.
- This is best illustrated by envisioning a tire rolling down a hill. When the tire reaches the bottom, it will crash in catastrophe. This is where the course of this world is headed and only the return of Christ can remedy the situation. As believers we need to understand that we cannot alter or fix what has already been set in motion. All we are called to do is preach the word regardless of where the wheel is in its rotation or how far down the hill it is.

Cyclical in American History

- While no one knows for sure when the dispensation of grace will end or how close the tire is to reaching the bottom of the hill. It is possible to know, to some degree, where a nation is at in terms of the seasonal rhythms of history.
- In 1991 William Strauss and Neil Howe wrote a book titled *Generations: The History of America's Future 1584 to 2069*. This book was followed up in 1997 by the publication of *the Fourth Turning: What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*. Since the late 90s, their work has been applied to a host of fields including economics, leadership, and education.
- While a full exposition of their work is beyond the scope of this study there are a couple points that will help us understand our current situation. First, they say that, "Generations come in cycles. Just as history procures generations, so too do generations produce history." Each generation possess a different age location, peer personality, and lifecycle. At any given time in the life of a nation there are four different generations in existence each in its own phase of life.
 - *Childhood* (ages 0-20)—social role: growth (receiving nurture and acquiring values)
 - *Young Adulthood* (ages 21-40) social role: vitality (serving institutions and testing values)
 - *Midlife* (ages 41-60) social role: power (managing institutions and applying values)
 - *Elderhood* (61-80) social role: leadership (leading institutions and transferring values)
 - *Late Elderhood* (81+) social role: dependence (receiving comfort from institutions and remembering values)

- The nature of each generation is shaped in terms of where they are in relation to each of the four turnings.
 - High (Spring)—an upbeat era of strengthening institutions and weakening individualism, when a new civic order is established. Post WWII America.
 - Awakening (Summer)—a passionate era of spiritual upheaval when the civic order comes under attack from a new values regime. 1960s and Vietnam War Era
 - Unraveling (Fall)—a downcast era of strengthening individualism and weakening of institutions, when the old civic order decays and the new values regime implants. Culture Wars of the 1980s and 90s.
 - Crisis (Winter)—a decisive era of secular upheaval, when the values regime propels the replacement of the old civic order with a new one. Where we are currently at.
- Most importantly, the makeup of the various generations is shaped by where they are at in relation to a crisis or an awakening. These formative events forge each generation's archetype or collective persona.
- Our most recent Awakening of the 1960s and 70s was unlike any of the previous ones in American History in that it had nothing to do with the God of the Bible. It was during time that the Bible and prayer was taken out of public schools.
 - 1963—*Murry v. Curlett* removed compulsory Bible reading from public schools.
 - 1963—*Abington School District v. Schempp* established the current ban against state sponsored prayer.
- Fast forward almost 50 years and the Christian residual effect of the Protestant Reformation is gone. The generation that led the Awakening of the 60s and 70s in *Young Adulthood* is now occupying positions of leadership in *Elderhood*. Consequently, they have been able to successfully transfer/impose their values upon the whole of the country and remake the country according to their un-Biblical thinking and agenda.

Corona Virus & The Fourth Turning Crisis

- In 1997 Strauss and Howe predicted based upon the cycles of American history that a sometime between 2005 and 2025 America would enter experience a Fourth Turning crisis that would begin the process of fundamentally reshaping our nation.
- The beginning of a Fourth Turning or Winter season is marked by a “Spark”
 - “A spark will ignite a new mood. Today (1997), the same spark would flame briefly but then extinguish itself, its last flicker merely confirming and deepening the Unraveling-era mindset. This time, though, it will catalyze a Crisis.” (272)
- Written in 1997 here is one of the scenarios given by Strauss and Howe that could spark a Fourth Turning Crisis between 2005 and 2025:

- “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announce the spread of a new communicable virus. The disease reaches densely populated areas, killing some. Congress enacts mandatory quarantine measures. The president orders that National Guard to throw prophylactic cordon around unsafe neighborhoods. Mayors resist. Urban gangs batted suburban militias. Calls mount for the president to declare martial law.” (273)
- Here is what they said about the impact of this “spark.”

It’s highly unlikely that any one of these scenarios **will** actually happen. What *is* likely, however, is that the catalyst **will** unfold according to a basic Crisis dynamic that underlies all of these scenarios: An initial **spark will** trigger **a** chain reaction of unyielding responses and further emergencies. The core elements of these scenarios (debt, civic decay, global disorder) **will** matter more than the details, which the catalyst **will** juxtapose and connect in some unknowable way. If foreign societies are also entering **a** Fourth Turning, this could accelerate the chain reaction.

At home and abroad, these events **will** reflect the tearing of the civic fabric at points of extreme vulnerability—problem areas where, during the Unraveling, America **will** have neglected, denied, or delayed needed action. Anger at “mistakes we made” **will** translate into calls for action, regardless of the heightened public risk. It is unlikely that the catalyst **will** worsen into

- Everything we are going through right now is about a break down in trust and the post-WWII system of politics.
- Climax remakes society under and new social contract. This is what we just celebrated yesterday on July 4th. If you want to understand our current situation go back and study what occurred during past turnings.
- This is why I have thrown myself this summer into a study of the Biblical arguments made by Patriots and Loyalists to justify or oppose our break from Great Britain.

How Should Believers Respond?

- Don’t get caught up in the hysteria of the media.
- Expect things to get worse before they get better (don’t be reckless).
 - II Timothy 3:13
- Prepare for a new beginning.

- History never repeats itself exactly, but it does rhyme.
- Rather than responding in a dispensational appropriate manner the non-rightly dividing church has sought to combat the unraveling and ultimately the crisis by seeking to repossess the governmental power structures for Christ. The hope much of the professing church lies in a postmillennial seizure of governmental power.
 - *Blinded by Might: Can the Religious Right Save America?* by Cal Thomas and Ed Dobson
- In seeking to do so, one could argue that they have exacerbated the problem and enhanced cultural notions of the close-minded nature of Christianity.
- The reality is the church in America is more worried about Rainbow Bright, Care Bares, Star Wars, and Harry Potter than they are what Bible they are using. More emphasis is placed upon political activism than upon Bible study and evangelism.
- Even within Christian circles, decisions are made based upon how something will affect one's own personal peace and affluence rather than considerations for sound doctrine.
- Titus 2:12—we need to let Paul teach us how to live soberly in this present evil world.
- II Timothy 4:12—we need to preach the word regardless of the season in which we find ourselves.
- Colossians 3:1-2—we need to have our affections in order and set in the proper place.
- Welcome to first century Roman American folks. The question we need to be concerned with is WWPD? What Would Paul Do?