

WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHERE ARE WE GOING? (PART 2)

Introduction – Last week we explored the biblical answer to these interrelated questions. The Bible presents two ages. The Present Age is characterized by sinful rebellion and the curse of suffering and death. The Age to Come will be a New Heaven and a New Earth, which will be the home of righteousness where God will be King. We live in the overlap of these two ages.

Matthew 12:32

1 Timothy 4:8

- A. The nature of this Present Age is changing. The First Century world was dominated by Greek culture and Roman Imperial power. Western Civilization, including America, is dominated by a secular scientific society. Germany is an example of how this can go terribly wrong.

John 18:33-38

1. In the 19th and early 20th Century, Germany was the home to the greatest universities in the world and was on the cutting edge of developing new technologies.
2. Naturalism was the assumed perspective in all areas of learning. Naturalism is the belief that only natural laws and forces versus supernatural ones are at work in our world.
3. Darwinian evolution was the answer to human origins. This meant that survival of the fittest or superior species was the mantra behind Germany's racism.
4. Albert Einstein is one example of the intellectual giants in science that Germany produced who rejected the big bang theory because it sounded like creationism.
5. In the area of philosophy, Nietzsche promoted the idea that "God is dead" and what remains is the human drive to seek power.
6. In the area of Old Testament studies, Wellhausen advocated an evolutionary naturalism in the development of the Scripture (JEDP).
7. In the area of New Testament studies, Albert Schweitzer concluded from his research into the historical Jesus that he was a failed apocalyptic prophet.
8. These progressive ideas, along with an economic crisis, allowed the Nazi party to gain political control. It advocated a superior race and considered traditional Christianity to be a superstitious weakness that needed to be replaced with a Pagan Nationalism. The rest is history.

- B. America resisted this progressive movement that swept Germany with a religious movement called “Fundamentalism.”
1. Fundamentalism rejected the assumed world view of naturalism and held to a Christian supernatural world view. The movement began among professors at Princeton Theological Seminary.
 2. They received their name because of the title of a popular book: The Fundamentals. The five fundamentals they insisted on were: 1) biblical inerrancy and inspiration; 2) virgin birth of Christ; 3) Christ’s death as an atonement for sin; 4) the bodily resurrection of Jesus; and 5) the historical reality of the miracles of Jesus.

Matthew 22:23-33

3. There has been a struggle for control of the major Protestant denominations between the progressives and the fundamentalists. By the end of the 20th Century, the progressives control the positions of power in the United Methodist, United Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Christian Church, and Episcopal Church. The Roman Catholic Church has its progressives, but they do not control the leadership.
4. Christian progressives have rejected many of the fundamentals and have replaced them with a social gospel. The Bible clearly teaches that believers should seek social justice, but this is not to the exclusion of other important teachings.

James 1:27

Conclusion – The word “fundamentalist” is a term of derision in our culture. The same social causes behind the demonization of the German society are at work in America and elsewhere. America is at a cultural crossroads. Where are we going?

Romans 12:2

Discussion Questions

1. What is world view of naturalism? How does it differ from a Christian perspective?
2. What does the example of Germany teach us?
3. What are the fundamentals of the faith? How do they compare to the original “fundamentalist”?