

The Rest of the Story or History...What's in It for You?

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You are sixteen years old. You are preparing to go out into the world. Your whole life is ahead of you. Why look backwards when your life lies in the future? It's 8 A.M. Dec. 7th, 1941 at Pearl Harbor - This is NO drill! You broke the code...did you believe the message?

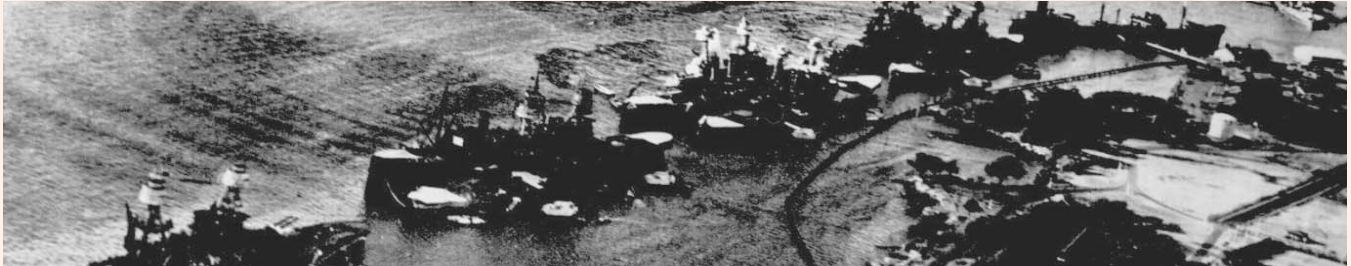
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"My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life, and peace they will add to you. Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute in the sight of God and man."— Proverbs 3:1-4, 21

"And by knowledge a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."— Proverbs 24:3-4

"Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land."— Proverbs 25:25



How many of you have seen the movie, "Tora Tora Tora?" Do you remember how it showed the ship band had just started playing that lazy Sunday morning while almost everyone it seemed was still in the sack. An experimental radar station had picked up a blip coming in from the north a couple hours earlier, but it was probably just a flight of B-17s coming in from California, or maybe some aircraft from the U.S. carriers due in that day. There were rumors that the Japanese would move against U.S. military installations, like they had done against the British and the Dutch in Southeast Asia. The Philippines were in harms way. But Pearl? It was too far away; and too dangerous to attack so far from any Japanese support bases.

And then the aircraft curved into the harbor anchorages, and the bullets and the bombs and the torpedoes rained down and the explosions came up like the shocked gasps of Americans all across the nation.

Well, as incredible as it may seem, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor came as a horrendous surprise to both the American people as well as the military. Incredible you say? Yes! It should not have been a surprise. U.S. Army General Billy Mitchell had warned America about a Japanese attack 17 years earlier. He stated that someday the Japanese would go to war against us. The U.S. military could be excused for not knowing that the attack on Pearl was an essay question on the final exams in the Japanese military academy, but how do you explain their ignorance when they practiced the same attack against the same target in 1932, and again in 1938? And the attackers won! Even General George Patton described such an attack in 1937. And then there was the incredible timely feat by U.S. Navy cryptographers of breaking the Japanese diplomatic and military code in 1940. When the Japanese ambassador delivered the official message breaking off negotiations to the Secretary of State that December morning, the Secretary already knew the content of the message. In fact, all intelligence intercepts for two weeks prior indicated that something BIG was afoot. They just didn't know where it would occur. Surely it would be the Philippines! That was on the doorstep of the expanding Japanese ring of conquests.

But they WERE surprised. And in fact the Japanese attacked both Pearl Harbor as well as the Philippines, and Wake Island and Singapore and Hong Kong to boot on the same day. So the Americans lost nearly their entire Pacific attack fleet of battleships in two and a half hours as well as every major outpost between Hawaii and Australia. Only the carriers were spared because there had been a storm that slowed them down a day. Or they, too, would have been sunk while anchored at Pearl that morning. Wake Island fell within a month. The Philippines held on a couple more months. The only thing that kept the Japanese from moving freely at will were three U.S. aircraft carriers. And before a year had gone by, there would be only one of them left.

But...six months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese advances had been stopped and the turning point of the war had already happened. On June 4, 1942, three U.S. aircraft carriers and all the aircraft that could be scraped together had met the Japanese fleet north of Midway Island and had sunk four Japanese carriers and turned back the rest of the invasion fleet. What happened? Well, the cryptographers figured out what the Japanese invasion plans were. Only this time, somebody listened and the remnants of the U.S Pacific fleet met the Japanese in a surprise trap. Even then, incredible timing was on the Americans' side, or it would have been U.S. carriers sunk. It was what has been called an 'incredible victory!'

But so what? Why has this any importance for you, aside from the obvious that if the Japanese had won, it is very likely that most of you would not be here today. But we did win and we went on to experience a prosperity never ever seen before. The world you grew up in is the consequence of that victory. Your parents have labored to give you an experience they never had, but believed would set you on the best path they could think of. Because we won, they had the resources to do it. And here you are. Homeschoolers have demonstrated that as a whole they rank in the top ten percent of the nation' students. The public won't acknowledge this, but what's more, you have healthier relationships with your family and parents, you have a better self confidence, you are not swayed by group think, you are self starters and self motivated, and surprisingly are able to cope with living in American society in spite of not having grown up in an age segregated education system, i.e., public school. What is more, you are young, and it is a GOOD thing. Your life is nearly ALL ahead of you. Your life lies in the FUTURE—not the past.

I mean really, how can history help you? Those people who are now dead (or half dead, such as those over 30) didn't have the technology or the wealth that we do today. I would much rather be a middle class American today than a king of any time in the past. But their world WAS much slower. They didn't have to keep up with so much new knowledge. They didn't have so many options and selections to choose from. Their world was much closer to home since travel was so difficult. The rate of change today is astounding. Why, I have heard that half the knowledge we have today was unknown when you were born. Your great grandparents grew up with the Victrola. Your grandparents grew up with the radio. Your parents grew up with television. And YOU are growing up with personal computers. Each of those could only be imagined by the preceding generation. And what will your children consider commonplace that is unheard of today? THAT is the world YOU must cope with.

So why does history matter? Well, for one thing, what you do today is ancient history to your children. It is also their heritage. You are now creating your grandchildren's history! That which you do now will affect unknown people years from now. It will also open or close opportunities for YOU at some future crossroad. The ideas you form about life now will occupy your mind (and your life) for the next fifty years. And values you take hold of now will direct your actions for the rest of your life.

You are discovering the world now—what you like about it and don't like about it. The best thing you can do for yourself is to understand who you are and what you are like. That will take a lifetime, so you have time to pursue it. Do you remember the story of how Adam observed and named the animals in the Garden? And then Eve came along and Adam realized right away that here was someone just like himself—bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. Well, learning about others helps us to understand ourself. We learn how alike we are, about our similarities. We find we share a common human likeness. Understanding others will help you to understand the things you don't yet see in yourself today. Other people teach me about myself and how we are alike in what we do.

This is the subject matter of the discipline called anthropology. Anthropology is the study of Man by examining the cultures he creates. The anthropologists I studied under had a point of view. It was an explicit assumption, but it guided how they taught the studies. Interestingly, they accepted evolution to be true. That means that our species is constantly changing, which means that not all members of the species will be changing at the same rate as others, which means that not everyone is human in the same way. BUT... they actively taught that all human beings WERE equal in their humanity no matter how different their technology and social organization and their values and their history were. They believed it and they could demonstrate it. Humankind is one. If we were born into another culture, then we would grow up

like the people in that culture. Pick a culture— any culture. If you grew up in it, no one would think you were an alien left behind from another planet. Now think about this. To believe that all the different cultures that exist, that all the different ways of arranging one's life, that all the different ways that disagree so much about what IS the right way to live, that all these differences actually show that all humans are the same...this is a belief, and not a proof. To see that a child taken from one culture can be raised in another and turn out the same as any other child raised in that culture...this is a demonstration, an evidence, a proof, that all people really are same

Learning about others also teaches us about God and the variety and freedom God made. Learning about others also teaches us about our different-ness. But even our differences have a sameness. All the different cultures when taken all together show the range of our human nature. It shows our "variability." It teaches us to look for and to accept a realm of possible things that people can do that is beyond everything that any one person could do. And, no matter what I can do, there is someone who can do it better. That teaches us to be humble before others. But, in spite of all the people out there, not one of them is like me in all respects, not even a twin brother or sister. The wealth of differences between us teaches us about our own individual uniqueness. We are the same, but we are not alike.

But if people really are the same, how can they be so different in what they believe? We are really looking at the same thing, but now asking a different question about it. If we all have a common humanity, why don't we come to the same conclusions? How can we become so convinced about things that are opposite sides of a question? What does this tell us about ourselves? It tells us that we are free to choose and think as we want. It tells us that an absolute experience, let's call it "nature," must still be interpreted and understood. It shows us to be in some way separate from nature although we are a part of it. We naturally seek to give things meaning. Why do we ask 'why?' No other living creature does.

We have an answer. It comes from outside of ourselves, and is confirmed by our own human character. That answer is, that we are created by God in His the image. And just as natural history teaches us about the physical world, so social history (which we usually just call 'history') teaches us about our human nature and points out what the Bible teaches us about our spiritual history. With all our different-ness, is there a right way?...Yes, God's! Just like Microsoft knows the ins and outs and the total workings of Windows, so the Creator knows what He has created. He didn't just write the book, He spoke the book into existence. Does anyone live the right way? ...No, only Jesus. He is the sum total of all history, of all humankind, the fulfilled purpose of God, THE image of God, THE example of man, THE heritage of all believers, the head of the body called humanity. And as He lives His life in us, then we, too, can live that way, and it will be recognized by others—although not always accepted.

So, understanding history means I can understand someone far away, I can understand someone who lived thousands of years ago. Why? because God made each creature according to its kind. Each kind does not change from one kind to another. Humankind included. And we prove ourselves over time to be the same. We all identify with the conflict Paul experienced and described in Romans 7–8. This is the sameness, the oneness and the commonness that is seen even in our different-ness. A simple thing about human history is this—that throughout all recorded human history, humans look and act the same. We see no change in our nature. Not only could I be raised in another culture and express my humankindness, if it were possible, I could be transplanted into another era and still find myself to be the same as those around me. Name your circumstances and there has likely been a time and place where people have lived it out. We have tried it all out and shown ourselves to be fully human. But more to the point, we have been tried by God. And when we stand before Him we will be without excuse. We won't be able to say *"if only we had tried it this way, we would have turned out differently."* All we will have left to proclaim is *"God, you were right and Your ways are right. Our own lives proved it, both when we did right and when we did wrong."*

So history helps us understand ourselves, understand others, and understand what God is telling us. And history books shows us who we are. And YOU are that book...you and me and all of us. You have been given a heritage, a Christian heritage. Christ broke the code. Do you believe the message?