

Message 1 Does History Repeat Itself?

If you walk about the streets of Sydney, smell the fresh, spring air, observe the lush gardens and amazing buildings old and new, then stop to think that this scenery is at a point of time. Zoom out for a moment to see the flow of events. Only 230 years ago this area was virtually all virgin bush. What has happened to make our country great? Why are we rich, prosperous and world famous for being a country of justice and freedom?

It wasn't an accident. It took blood, sweat and tears to build Australia. And there were the critical moments on which success turned. One of those critical moments, I suggest, was the decision to teach children of the early settlers with reference to the Bible. This helped to build good character, respect, faith, fairness, and hard work into the fibre of our nation.

Our new quarter's theme, taken from 2 Peter chapter 2, is “*Powerful Lessons from History*”. The key verse is 2 Peter 2:9 ... *the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials ...* I begin the series by exploring the question, “Does history repeat itself?”

In the Old Testament book of Judges there is a repeated cycle. It starts with honouring God. The accompanying prosperity soon descends to idolatry and moral downturn. This leads to trouble, oppression with a lack of protection from God. It is then reversed with the raising of godly leaders, national repentance, and Divine intervention. Peace and prosperity are restored only for the cycle to repeat itself. Much of human history seems to be the same. The return to prosperity, however, is never certain. Stopping the downward trend is hinged on returning to honour God.

In Australia, will history repeat? We have had a long period of prosperity but there is now a spiritual and moral downturn. Only 15% of people attend church regularly whereas 70 years ago it was 45%. Principles seem to be replaced by feelings. Are we heading for an economic and social cohesion downturn?

According to the apostle Peter, in 2 Peter 2:1-3, three things in Old Testament history will be repeated in the Christian era

1. There will be false teachers.

v1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Peter warned that there would be false teachers within the early church, just as there had been false prophets in the Old Testament. We shouldn't be surprised then, if in our Australian contemporary church and society such is happening.

It's interesting how the apostle Peter changes “prophets” in the OT to “teachers” for the New Testament era. This does reflect historical change! Prophets were previously prominent in spiritual leadership and authority. They pointed forward in their writings (which became Scripture) to the coming of Christ. Teachers are now more prominent as the Bible is written and they can base their messages within its set revelation. Prophets of today may bring short-term revelations to encourage but not to determine doctrine or override an individual's responsibility. It is, therefore, the teachers and philosophers who are more influential in church and society, and will they be judged accordingly.

In our series, we will investigate O.T. examples to discover lessons for today. Topics will be about **Angels** (spiritual realm), **Noah** (global), **Sodom & Gomorrah** (local), and **Balaam** (personal). We will learn a common factor in the swift judgment of God on false prophets

and teachers alike. Let me first caution, there are teachers ranging from minor errors of belief to extreme false teachers “denying the sovereign Lord who bought them”. Peter warns that the latter will introduce “destructive heresies”.

We are considering the question, ‘Does History Repeat itself?’ We note there will be false teachers, soon to be described by Peter. The second prediction is that ...

2. Many will follow after them.

v2 Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

Sadly, in Australia, there are some false teaching and teachers with many following after them. Our spiritual consciousness was first replaced by the gods of modernity (i.e. ‘science is god’) and then a new morality (i.e. ‘feelings or desires are god’). We now are entering an era when the facts of science even often don’t matter.

For example, young people are told to follow their hearts with assurances they can do anything if they determine to do so. This is appealing and dangerously deceptive. It avoids a sense of responsibility and pursuing more noble causes beyond self. Life has its boundaries and our hearts may have wicked intentions. ‘Love one’s neighbour as oneself’ is a better philosophy. Maxims like – ‘Be responsible’, ‘Be respectful’, and ‘Make a contribution’ hold society together. We are being deceived by destructive heresies. Can we learn from the past? Will history repeat itself? Another point to note about false teachers....

3. They will use fabricated stories.

v3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

In 1912 Charles Dawson claimed he had discovered the missing link in evolution between humans and apes. His ‘fossils’ drew world attention and those questioning it were criticised. Incredibly, 41 years later, the Piltdown fossils were proved beyond doubt to be false. They were simply of human construction. It was a fabricated story. It is preposterous that, with the modernity ‘gods’, the possibility of intelligent design is excluded from contemporary scientific research and then claim from that research there is no creator God.

In the media recently, the Australian Medical Association made a claim that no peer reviewed research indicated there were disadvantages to children of same sex parents. This is not true. Whether such research was accurate is another matter, and certainly where same sex parents are loving and responsible, the children would be expected to grow up well. Many issues are involved in the same sex marriage debate but excluded on emotional grounds. My point is that in this case the AMA lied publically in the face of protests from many of its eminent members. It seems to me the feelings-based, new morality ‘gods’, possibly on both sides of the debate, take priority over being honest.

In conclusion, history repeats itself but never exactly the same. Aware of these differences, we can learn much from the past. We must take preventative measures in Australia to reverse the negative cycle by raising godly leaders. Whatever the nuances of interpretation, we must come back to Scripture as a solid foundation to church and society. ... *everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. Romans 15:4 (NIV).*