

“WORLDVIEW IN FOCUS”
Session 3: “The Impact of the Enlightenment”
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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW: Our grid for approaching worldview:

1. Learn the truth.

“Learn the truth and never reject it. Get wisdom, self-control, and understanding.” Proverbs 23:23 (NCV)

2. Discern what is false

“Don't believe everything you hear. Carefully weigh and examine what people tell you. Not everyone who talks about God comes from God. There are a lot of lying teachers loose in the world.”¹ John 4:1 (Mes)

3. Turn from the world's value system to what God says

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Rom. 12:2 (NIV)

“A wise person is hungry for truth, while the fool feeds on trash.” Pr. 15:14 (NLT)

4. Concern yourself with God's work.

“God will give you all you need from day to day if you make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.” Luke 12:31 (NLT)

I. The Impact of the Enlightenment (including the Renaissance)

Some of the most influential factors in the formation of the Protestant church and the core values of the United States.

The Renaissance 1300's – 1600's

A revival of interest in Antiquity – primarily Greek culture

- Art and Literature – including the Greek New Testament
- Translations of the Bible into heart languages
- The Printing Press – early 1500's
- The Protestant Reformation – Luther in 1517 “95 Theses” published
- Experimental method becomes popular – Example Robert Boyle in 1600's

The Enlightenment 1700's – 1800's

- Questioning of authority of the Church and Monarchies
- Political philosophies re-imagined and based on ancient Greek Democracy from 500 B.C.
- Reason - becomes a dominant and determining value
- A revival of Greek architecture in Germany and America – late 1700's – influencing the design of our nation's capital
- An influential essay “What is the Enlightenment” penned by Immanuel Kant in 1784

A. Defining Maturity:

According to Kant...

“Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude! [dare to know] ‘Have courage to use your own understanding!’--that is the motto of enlightenment.”

Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

Luke 8:14-15

The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

Ephesians 4:13

...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

James 1:4-5

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

B. Defining Reason:

An explanation of cause and effect. A way of coming to conclusions. Reason is contrasted to decisions based upon authority, intuition, emotion, mysticism, superstition, and faith. It is closely related to language and logic, and in the Greek term “logos” or word. Logos is the root word for logic, which when translated into Latin became “ratio” and then to French as “raison”, which then became the English word “reason”.

John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Logos [“the expression of thought”], and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

1 Corinthians 15:14-15

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.

Acts 1:3 and note 1 Corinthians 15:6

After his suffering, Jesus showed himself to these men [over 500] and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

Acts 28:23-27

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: "'Go to this people and say, "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving." For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

Acts 26:25

"I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable."

1 Peter 3:15-16

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

C. Defining Deism:

Reason and observation of the natural world, without organized religion, can determine that a Supreme Being created the universe. This Supreme Being does not intervene in human affairs or suspend the natural laws of the universe. The Creator does want human beings to behave morally. Certain things like freedom and equality are self-evident. Reason can be a tool to expose and reject the nonsense parts of religion – the irrational theological doctrines. Miracles are exaggerations. The goal is the restoration of primitive and natural religion. Some Deists believed in the immortality of the soul, others did not.

Other Cultural Trends of the time

- The influence of Biblical criticism – seeing the Bible is the same as other ancient literature.

- Exploration of other parts of the world, showed a wide range of religious beliefs. Christianity seen as one religion among many.
- Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton – the earth is not the center of the Universe. Natural Law. The Bible not seen as authoritative in matters of Science.
- The Principle of Religious Freedom.
- Deism eventually turned into Unitarianism.
- With the rise of Darwinism (1800's) came the increase Agnosticism and Atheism.

Romans 1:20-22, 25

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised.

Acts 17:24-27

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

For Reflection:

- A. How has revealed truth from the Bible contributed to your becoming more mature? Or have you seen it hinder yourself or others?

B. How have Enlightenment Principles affected your faith? What parts do you agree with and disagree with?

C. Does anything about the Bible seem wildly unreasonable to you? If so, what is the issue?

D. Do you have trouble believing that God can intervene supernaturally today? If so Why?

Coming up:

January 30 The History of Humanism

February 6 Where did we come from?

With more to follow in coming weeks!

The audio and notes for this and previous sessions of this series are available at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org in the Sunday Seminar section