

June 18, 2006 PM

**THE YEAR OF OUR LORD:  
THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH  
1CORINTHIANS 10:1-11**

Purpose: learning some of the theological bases for the observance of the church year.

Last time: biblical images in which we begin to see the grander scale of what God is doing in his purposes of redemption.

- “salvation,” in many ways in evangelical circles, has been reduced to a “substance” which God kind of pours into you like water into a glass. This substance somehow causes us to rise above history or, at least, escape from it as if God has abandoned his original creation.
- God has not come to annihilate but *transform*.
- Biblical metaphors and/or symbols of night followed by day and the Biblical allusions to the eighth day.

Last lesson: **1. *The relationship between original creation and new creation.***

**2. THE HISTORICAL NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

God’s intention to redeem the world necessarily involves his intention to redeem history itself for his own glory.

History or time is part of that created order. It is within this time and space created order that the Christian faith finds its existence.

The Christian faith does not “relate” to history as if our faith were simply holding hands with history.

The Christian faith is historical. It is impossible to pull the Christian faith out of history or make it somehow distinct from history.

**A. REDEMPTION IS HISTORICAL**

The plan of God for the redemption of the world literally became *embodied* in the Person of Jesus.

The incarnation has numerous implications one of which is, in the Person of the historical Jesus we see heaven and earth perfectly united. God joins himself to creation.

In the incarnation we are told of the nature of God’s redeeming work.

God does *not* “save us” from outside of time in such a way that we are called to an escape of some sort.

The incarnation reveals to us that God is not up in heaven throwing down some sort of salvation that would be equivalent to the proverbial lightning bolts.

God himself in the Person of Jesus enters into history in order to reshape and remold it from within into a proper reflection of the image of God, thus, bringing glory to God.

The ancient Christian creeds—the Apostles’ and Nicene—recount the redemption of the world in historical terms.

The Creeds with all of their historical recounting are defining for us the shape of the Christian faith.

To say that redemption is historical does not simply mean that redemption came floating down at some point in time in history. It is true that redemption *occurred* within history. But it is much more than that.

Again, redemption is not, as it were, holding hands with history. It is not an “invisible” thing that substantively fills us within this thing we call time.

Rather than thinking in terms of a substance that fills a container but is distinct from it (e.g., the water and the glass), we should think more along the lines of a marriage relationship.

Never would separate marriage into “real/immaterial” marriage and “physical/historical” marriage. Marriage relationship involves both invisible and visible aspects that cannot be separated. Nor are they simply “joined at the hip.” They are all part of the whole.

So in the history of redemption God does not simply go through “historical motions” while withholding “real redemption.”

Redemption is tied to historical covenants. And through these actions within history God is moving history toward a particular conclusion.

One problem in the church and *one* reason why we may not appreciate a liturgical calendar is because of our view of “salvation” as being ahistorical (i.e., disconnected from history, historical acts, etc.)

A test. Questions: Was the Passover, the exodus from Egypt, the passing through the Red Sea and the eating of the manna and drinking from the rock redemption? Are these historical acts normally what you think of when you think of “being redeemed?”

Many times these examples are taken as physical representations of the invisible. But Paul takes these historical events as their redemption. The water they drank they drank from the rock that was Christ (**1Cor 10:4**). These historical events were aspects of their redemption. Redemption was not understood as something that was outside of time but rather related to time itself.

Bringing this all back around to the liturgical calendar, one way the church can acknowledge our historical faith and Jesus’ lordship over history is through conscientiously defining the calendar in terms of redemptive history.

The liturgical year is a recognition of God’s redemptive work past, present and future. The church year keeps us grounded in history, helping us understand where we’ve come from and where we are going.

### **B. WORSHIP IS HISTORICAL**

Like the redemption which it embodies and enacts, the worship of the church is not merely a “blip” along the historical time line. Christian worship brings together in perfect harmony the past, present and future.

Christian worship as “memorial” ties all these aspects of history together:

- ***Christian worship connects us to the past***  
*anamnesis* - “remembrance”; connects us to the past. “Remembering” in worship is not primarily intellectual or cognitive but ritual and action.

E.g., the Lord’s Supper. Jesus left the church a meal with words and actions. These actions are not unnecessary addendums so that we can get to the “real” substance of the Supper itself. The actions of the Supper are a part of it as much as the bread and wine itself.

Every Lord’s Supper that has been celebrated since that time is connected to that one historical event when Jesus instituted the Supper. We are all participants in what occurred in that room.

This rite brings the past into the present by our re-enactment.

- ***Christian worship anticipates the future***  
Jesus would not drink anymore from the fruit of the vine until he drinks it anew in the kingdom (cf. **Matt 26:29**). Jesus instituted the meal *anticipating* the future in which the meal would be enjoyed again.

Paul: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (**1Cor 11:26**).

- ***Christian worship connects past and future in the present***  
As we participate in Christian worship, we acknowledge that his past work has present application. Based upon his past work, Jesus has an ongoing work of intercession.

This ongoing work of intercession looks toward a future in which all things will be brought to their appointed end.

But for the present, all of these things are pulled together and we presently enjoy what Christ has done and what Christ will do.

God is acting in our historical worship. The liturgical year simply expands upon this.