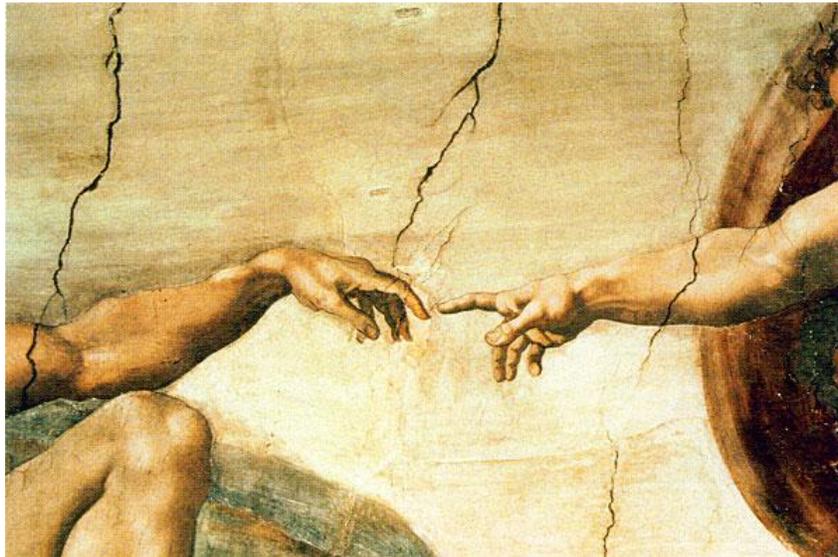


The Bible Vs. History

By Jeremy Lucas

Below is a snippet portion of Michelangelo's painting called The Creation of Adam. Most of you will automatically recognize the sense of God reaching firmly to man while man somewhat leisurely reaches to God. The idea, of course, is that man's desire to reach God only goes so far, but God's reach never ends... for it is perfect and passionate.



Many of us have, at some point in our lives, comfortably picked up a book on George Washington, World War II, the Assassination of John F. Kennedy, or even more recently, the September 11 attacks. While everyone may not be utterly engrossed in historical studies, we have little trouble choosing to read something historical that is more recent. Our hesitation generally comes the further back in time we go.

Early historians, such as Josephus, Herodotus, and Xenophon, were no less desiring to convey the stories of their times, but they happen to have existed during a period we so wonderfully refer to as the writing of "the Word of God." And for this cause, we are ever so cautious in our choice to read this book or that book referring to the time if it is not God's Word itself.

Part of that hesitation is reasonable and part of it comes from a misunderstanding of what history actually is and what it is not. In this brief article, I'd like to suggest that the above picture is a picture of God's Word and the History of Mankind.

Our beloved Scriptures have a powerful ability to transcend any other book when we read the contents because we know above all that those contents are perfect. And we know this because they are God's Words to His creation. Thus, when we pick up another book, whether it be fictional, historical, or biographical, we always find it pale in comparison.

What I'd like you to consider, however, is that the writings of man (no matter whether it be fiction or non-fiction) should not be an "apples and oranges" comparison to the Word of God.

The Word of God is the history of God reaching His hand out to mankind. Through such a history, we have access to a vast myriad of clues regarding HOW He has tried to reach the world for redemption's sake. It is the Creator's autobiographical approach to His own greatest project: the salvation of man.

The history of man, however, is a vastly different thing. Sometimes profound, sometimes ignorant, sometimes consistent, sometimes full of error, but all built by men created by God. Having been separated from Him through sin, history has through time become something that we rarely consider.

The history of humanity is the story of mankind's path to God.

Whether brilliantly epic or tragically broken by false teaching, man has written of his own search for God, his search for life's meaning, and his search for purpose in the world since the fall. And ultimately above all, he is on a daily journey of deciding whether to look up to things above himself or believe he himself is enough of a god to be sufficient.

Histories are indeed a story of man coming up short. Sometimes achieving greatness, legacy, or reputable standing in the world, but always ending with the ultimate need for something greater than themselves.

As you continue to study and research the Scriptures, you have no need to fear the histories of men in that journey. For they are merely the records of men who could only ever reach so far to God. Even the wisest kings and heroic soldiers were never able to extend their hand far enough to touch the hand of God alone. It is only through His Word that man can enjoy the rest of his own story.

Consider, once again, that "the Bible and history" are not like "apples and oranges" (two different forms of the same thing). The Word of God is our Savior's hand reached out to man. History external to the Word is man's hand reaching toward something above himself that he does not and will not always recognize.

Choosing to study the Word first and foremost is the venue by which we learn how best He has intended to redeem the world from what they cannot reach. Choosing to study history second to the Word is the venue by which we learn where man has come up short.