

The Hanging of History
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History is indeed a trip down (or back) memory lane. Consider four important questions.

1. *Who has hung memories' pictures?*

The "memory" cannot be just mine, for my memory goes back only a very short time in the span of history. I am dependent on other people's memories, especially recorded ones, and above all on the fact that God remembers (not only knows the past, but acts in regard to it), and that there is an official "memory" in the books of record, though our access to these is limited at present.

Be thankful for the hangers of these pictures!

2. *Do I really need to spend this time in the museum of the past?*

The importance of history is shown in contrast by amnesia, in which I lose all contact with my past, and thus my identity--who I am, my relation to others, my place in society and history. The implications of the loss of memory for the moving point of the present, as it carries me into the future, are staggering. The choices I make that form the direction I am headed are confused and uncertain if I have forgotten or ignored the past. The absence of history changes the future from an adventure with the personal God of all time, to a fearful foreboding of a myriad of false paths and dead-end roads in an impersonal universe.

Hang around a while in this important place!

3. *What if I encounter confused pictures?*

Since no two eyewitnesses have seen from the identical perspective, I should not expect all records to be the same. They may even seem contradictory. But I must dig beneath the surface to understand both angle and depth. At the same time, I must realize that history can be misunderstood if I don't have enough of the pieces of the puzzle, or if I ignore parts that I don't like or that don't seem to fit. I can also get a wrong view of history if I encounter (as I will) other memories that are incomplete, or even worse, warped. Because some are unwilling to accept the implications of history on their identity, they will tend to revise history to their own suiting.

Don't get hung up on surface differences, but be wise to those who hang warped pictures!

4. *What is the structure on which the accurate pictures hang?*

If I view memories down a lane, perhaps I see the events hanging from the trees, bushes, fences and banks along the way. If I see a hall, then the walls are where things hang. With either perspective, I must see the importance of the backdrop, for the setting molds the picture. The written records of Jesus' day, views of the past and the future, He called "the law and the prophets." And once He made the amazingly important observation that these accounts "hang" on two things, the two walls of our hall, if you please. What were they? Something He called "these two commandments." And what were they? He went to two different places in the historical record and found "hidden" there two statements that encompass in their order and expanse the all-surrounding reality within which we are immersed.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

(Matt. 22:37-40; quoting Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18).

You should hang your life, your identity, your memories, your all, on those! He does.