

Introduction - Chapter 1

Video Transcript

Hi, I'm Ron Sumner. Welcome to *ideas*. We are about to take a journey together, through about 2 ½ thousand years of Western civilization.

We'll talk about art, and why it changed so much over the years, we'll talk about why at times there wasn't much interest in art *or* technology; why art was considered a tool to reach God and science was a mystical alchemy for a time; as well as why art and science became important again, but with an increasing distaste for God.

We'll talk mainly about the ideas that caused all these changes, and believe it or not, it can be laid at the feet of four Greek philosophers, who so influenced Western culture as to shape the direction of it. We are still feeling the reverberations of their ideas 2 ½ thousand years later. We'll go into exactly who they were and what they believed as we get into the text, but I don't want you to worry about us getting into philosophy.

Philosophy is just a set of ideas about how things work, or how they should work. You have a lot of ideas about how things work and how they should work, so it's not that far removed from what you do every day. What's different is that I'll be asking you to reconsider *WHY* you think what you do. Everything you believe is an idea you got from someone else. The key is realizing where those ideas came from. If you know the source of an idea, you can decide its value.

For example, where did man come from? Is he the product of random chance, or something else? And if something else, what, *exactly*? God? Which god? Aliens? Those are ideas man has been discussing for a long time. What you believe about those questions is a product of whether you allow for *a priori* ideas—ideas that came from somewhere else and are prior to man's investigations—or if you believe ideas are only *a posteriori* ideas—ideas originating with man alone and due to his experiences and investigations. Those terms are mentioned often in philosophy and have a lot to do with whether you believe the Bible to be God's Word or not. They help form systems of thought that are philosophy. But, again, philosophy is just a list of ideas or speculations about how things work.

Take the idea that you shouldn't steal. You might be familiar with "Thou shalt not steal," right? That's from the Bible, which helps you decide its value. The Bible is *a priori*, meaning it comes from somewhere other than man. That's been a very contentious idea, but one very important to those who are believers.

For this book, I take my stand with Martin Luther, who believed that Scripture alone—*sola Scriptura*—should be our guide. Not man's ideas, not man's experience, just Scripture. The problem is that throughout history, man has taken other men's ideas to interpret Scripture. Augustine of Hippo, called St. Augustine by many, said that all you needed to do is to change a word or two here and there from Plato and you'd have the very doctrine of God. Thomas Aquinas, called St. Aquinas by many, said the exact same thing about Aristotle, and both of these men allowed these Greek philosophers to change their ideas about how Scripture should be interpreted. It may be surprising to you that you also allow the ideas of men to influence how you interpret Scripture. We'll be talking about that a lot.

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Paul warns us against doing this. In Colossians 2:8-10 he says,

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."

While Paul doesn't rule out all of men's ideas as bad, he rules out any ideas that take away from Christ's authority. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the living embodiment of Scripture, which is why Scripture should always be our measure, not man's ideas.

We'll talk about some difficult issues as we go through history.

We'll talk some about government—all four of the Greek philosophers we'll cover wrote books about government—and interestingly, of the Bible's 10 Commandments only 4 of them talk about man's relationship with God, and 6 of them talk about man's relationship with man. That's all government is — How man should relate to man?

What rules should a culture have? and what does the Bible say about it?

Since the Bible is our only guide to all these questions, and uncovering where all these ideas are right and how they go wrong is important, we'll be talking about the Bible a lot.

Thanks for joining me on this journey. Let's get started.