



The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story Tells Us About Loving God and Learning from History

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The First Thanksgiving: Redefined

History is complicated. Robert Tracy McKenzie, professor and chair of history at Wheaton College (Wheaton, IL), breaks down the common misconceptions about the pilgrims, the first Thanksgiving and how Christians study history in his new insightful text, *The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story Tells Us About Loving God and Learning from History*.

McKenzie, examining the interplay between historical thinking and Christian reflection, credibly and thoughtfully helps us revisit a defining story in history, thus emphasizing the need for Christians examining history to seek meaning and wisdom as well as understanding and knowledge.

Pulling from the writings of William Bradford, Edward Winslow, Nathaniel Morton and others, McKenzie traces out a strong case study for studying, researching and conversing on history both Christianly and historically.

“But I do want you to think about it,” writes McKenzie. “I am a Christian as well as a historian, and I have written this book for fellow believers who want help in thinking . . . about the American past.”

McKenzie provides readers with background on the pilgrims not ordinarily encountered, sketching out their reasons for seeking new land in a timeline: a secret meeting in Nottinghamshire, relocation to Amsterdam, and a transatlantic journey from Europe to Plymouth.

“The story of the first Thanksgiving is central to how we, as Americans, remember our origins,” writes McKenzie. “The subsequent development of the Thanksgiving holiday speaks volumes about how we have defined our identity across the centuries. As Christians, our challenge is to take ‘every thought captive to the obedience of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 10:5), including our thinking about our national heritage. We need to respect our forefathers without worshipping them. We must find a way to learn from the past without making it an idol. If in the smallest way I can further these goals, I will be gratified.”

Most importantly, *The First Thanksgiving* will help readers understand why learning history is important to shaping our ideas about society today. “Revisionist histories were once the rage, as academics sought recognition by shaking us from deeply and dearly held perceptions of the past with revelations of novel and counter ‘facts,’” said Bryan Chapell, president emeritus at Covenant Seminary. “McKenzie works the opposite direction, resurfacing the history we have forgotten regarding one of our most treasured holidays – Thanksgiving – to help reexamine and reinforce our most important convictions regarding faith and culture.”

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