

## THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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## THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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## FLIM-FLAM

Flim-flam is an old trick game of robbery that is played by a group of hoodlums and floaters whose policy it is to catch the new college student, the poor innocent farmer or other unsuspecting persons.

This is the way the game is usually played. For the college students, quite often you will see some boy or girl riding on the campus in a nice car, who will approach a new student in a friendly manner just before he pays his school bills. Of course, after an introduction, they know all about his whereabouts, then in turn, they offer an invitation for a ride to visit some friends who will give them a good time. They take him to a bawdy house and introduce him to some girls whose purpose it is to give him a good time. First they offer him soft drinks, which usually lead to alcoholic drinks. Then they desire to have a little better time so they adjourn to a private room — if the boy is willing to pay his escort five dollars and his girl ten. In this room he becomes intoxicated, and when he awakes, all of his school money is gone, and a stranger puts him into the street. The stranger knows nothing about the escort who brought him there. All the student knows is that his money is gone. It is useless to call the law for someone you cannot identify.

The flim-flammer may live here in the city, but in most cases he is an out-of-town hoodlum. Therefore, we urge the college students . . . don't be too smart. You're here for an education, not on a continuous ball, and you don't know as much about the city as you think you do.

The old flim-flam swindlers work on the college campuses with the students and teachers. On many occasions some fascinating little girl tempts a male member of the faculty. She invites him out for a good time—the teacher falls for it. Three or four months later the girl has to have a private conference with the teacher, usually just as the teachers draw their pay checks and cash them.

"Now, Mr. Teacher, you have me in trouble, and I will have to go home. What will I tell the dean and the matron of the school about who is to blame for this trouble?"

She leaves him for a few hours and returns with a new idea . . . "I have a way to a nearby city where I know a certain doctor who will make things all right for \$150.00, more or less." Of course, the teacher wants to maintain his position, so the only thing he knows to do is to open up his purse and give the young lady the money she asks for. She ends up at one of the city's largest department stores dressing herself well to catch the next sucker.

As for the poor innocent farmer, two or three work together. They approach a tobacco farmer shortly after he has sold his tobacco to offer favors. The first is to help him cash his check. After the check has been cashed, one of the hoodlums asks the farmer to make change for a ten or twenty dollar bill. At the same time one hoodlum remains with the farmer to sympathize with or commend, as the case may be, the farmer, on the progress he has made on his farm. The second person who has gone away to make change, never returns, so the first person leaves to look for him. The third person, meanwhile, inspires more confidence and advises the farmer that he is able to double the value of the remaining money that the farmer has. The farmer gladly gives his money to be increased, and the person leaves, promising to send the first and second persons back with the change, and to return himself in a few minutes with proof that the money has been doubled. The farmer finds himself unable to identify either of the hoodlums. This is the way a flim-flam is usually played on a farmer. It is not robbery, such as being held up with a deadly weapon, but it is a slick way, which is classed as a skinner.

Watch such persons who approach in a friendly manner to make change for money. These are two examples so that you may be on your guard. Such types of hoodlums are studying all kinds of tricks to work on any class of persons — it matters not if you are educated, a student, a farmer, a retailer, or a poor industrial laborer.

Flim-Flam is an "honest" method of robbery. Sooner or later the hoodlums will be caught and are apprehended by their associates. There are many methods of robbery without a deadly weapon, these are just a few. Beware of such persons, this is the season they do their greatest work.

# This Week's Sunday School Lesson

## GOD LOVES ALL PEOPLE What Is Our Concern?

Longfellow once wrote, "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all our hostility." This was Longfellow's way of indicating his recognition of the humanity of all men. Even our enemies are human beings.

Unfortunately, when international tensions are high, we find it difficult to remember the humanity of our opponents. This fact is especially evident during a shooting war, but it is almost as true during cold wars. For purposes of national unity, governments often engage in dehumanizing the enemy. Through propaganda films, tracts, novels, and broadcasts, the enemy is pictured as a cruel, unprincipled, immoral animal.

It is to this kind of inhuman attitude toward one's opponents that the Book of Jonah speaks. Regardless of the original purpose of Jonah, this little book has a deeply rooted view of man that arises critical questions about such dehumanization of one's enemies.

This view is not simply an affirmation of the unity of the human race. All men—whether they believe in God or not—could affirm this view. The Book of Jonah, however, affirms much more. It affirms the love of God for all men and his desire that none of them perish.

### Before You Read The Scripture

Jonah usually is assumed to have been written during the fifth century or later in response to the Ezra-Nehemiah programs of reform. We have seen how that reform emphasized the purity of Israel as a racial group and even called for putting way non-Israelite wives and the children of mixed marriages. The danger was that the Jewish community would come to see itself as the only object of God's love. The Book of Jonah is regarded as a protest against extreme Jewish nationalism and an affirmation of God's love for all men.

The two essential themes of Jonah are (1) the love of God that transcends national boundaries, embracing even Assyria, the ancient enemy, and (2) the fact that God's purpose for his people cannot be thwarted even by man's stubbornness.

One problem that has frequently given difficulty to persons who read Jonah is the idea that a whale could swallow a man. Those who wish to accept the story literally have pointed out that some sperm whales do have throats large enough to swallow a man. This argument is usually most heated when persons assume that understanding the real meaning of the story depends upon its acceptance as a literal account.

The purpose of the biblical writers was always to affirm the love of God and his claim upon men. From the resources at their disposal they selected those materials that would best convey this message. Sometimes they used accounts of historical events; sometimes they retold popular legends and other stories. But neither history nor

story was used for its own sake; each must teach some truth about God's dealings with his people.

The story of Jonah is likely a wonder tale expanded by the author as a means of affirming the universal love of God. We need not take the story literally in order to take it seriously. Even if we were able to prove that a whale actually swallowed Jonah, this still would not prove the author's point that God was responsible for what happened.

Whether we regard the story as history or as a parable, we still must decide whether the point of the story is true. This affirmation we can make only by faith.

### What The Scripture Says

The Scripture for today is Jonah. Selected verses are printed below. See Home Bible Study suggestions in the back of the quarterly.

Jonah 1-5, 10

1 Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time, saying, 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and proclaim to the message that I tell you." 3 So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth. 4 Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's journey. And he cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" 5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them.

10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it. Jonah 4:4, 11

4 And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?" . . .

. . . 11 "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Memory Selection: I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

—Jonah 4:2

### How We Understand The Scripture

Jonah 1:1-3: Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. Tarshish was in the opposite direction. Thus Jonah was not only reluctant but determined not to prophesy. But the very fact that God was ready to send a prophet to Nineveh, whatever the message, indicates the scope of his power and concern.

Chapter 1:4-6: When God's wrath broke forth upon Jonah, the mariners caught in the cross-fire pleaded with their gods for safety. Jonah's lack of concern for others was reflected in his ability to sleep through the storm.

Chapter 1:7-16: The casting of lots revealed the identity of the culprit. The mariners at first reflected better character than Jonah. Though they were in fear of their lives, they still were unwilling to throw Jonah overboard in order to stop the storm. When the ship began to show signs of breaking up, however,

they followed his suggestion. When the sea quieted, the mariners offered a prayer of thanksgiving to Jonah's God.

Chapter 1:17: We are not told explicitly what "great fish" swallowed Jonah. Perhaps the author intended a whale, but he may have meant some great sea monster. The point is that when God set a task for his prophet, he allowed nothing to stand in the way of that task.

Chapter 2: Many Israelites in Jonah's day assumed that God's power did not reach into the grave or outside Palestine. Jonah's prayer stands in stark contrast to such limited views of God. The entire hymn is a confession of faith in God's ability to secure the true worshiper in the midst of distress.

Chapter 3:1-9: Chastised by his experience, Jonah was ready to go to Nineveh when the call came the second time. In response to Jonah's preaching, the entire nation turned to God.

Chapters 3:10 through 4:11: Jonah was angered both by God's decision to spare Nineveh and by his act of destroying the plant. Thus Jonah is shown to have cared more for plants than for people. The tone of the narrative is a criticism of Jonah for his attitude and a reminder that all men and animals are the objects of God's love.

### What The Scripture Says To Us

Jonah is an example of how no prophet should regard an enemy nation. In fact, he is an example of how no one should regard an enemy. No nation is outside the circle of God's love and concern, according to the biblical author. If God loves all men, his people are expected to do the same.

### The Love of God

The basic point of the book is God's love for all peoples, even those looked upon by Israel as dreaded enemies. The great fish did not swallow Jonah for Jonah's own sake but for the sake of Assyria (Nineveh). Jonah survived in order to carry God's word to Assyria. Despite Israel's attitude toward that wicked nation, God loved her. He wanted her saved, not destroyed.

The emphasis upon God's love of all men is a rather consistent theme in the Old Testament as well as the New. Sometimes the reports of Israel's fierceness in fighting her enemies blind us to the over-all theme of God's love for the nations. But Israel had to remain faithful to God if she was to fulfill her mission. The danger that alien ways might cause her to turn aside from God was sometimes used to justify a call to destroy the aliens. However, the Pentateuch was completed by men who were aware of the unity for mankind and the role of Israel for the nations, not over them. (See, for example, Genesis 12:3.)

### The New Testament View

In the New Testament this same general attitude is picked up and reinforced. Strongest of all is Jesus' command to love your enemy. (Luke 6:27-28) In time of war or national fear the tendency is the opposite of love of the enemy.

Love, in biblical terms, expresses itself in the attempt to see that others have what they

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