

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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MORTICIANS AND FUNERALS

On many occasions an individual while in good health, discusses with his immediate family the type of funeral and burial arrangements he would prefer at his death. This is very necessary nowadays, since the funeral business is so profitable. When a bereaved family contacts a mortician for burial rites, the mortician knows the sympathetic sales language. The mortician tells the family the type of burial services he is able to render. He shows the different kinds of caskets, vehicles, attendants and service to be furnished. If the deceased is a mother or father, some member of the bereaved family will remember how the mother or father gave all they had to make every sacrifice to bring the family up. The last respect they can show they feel is to give a decent burial. Of course, the mortician agrees. In some cases, he has a catalog to show the kind and prices of different burials.

The family, in their grief, is so confused they ask the mortician for his suggestions. His answer is, "if you will bring me your insurance policies, we can easily settle the price and type of funeral." The closest relative will tell them they have a \$2500 insurance policy. The mortician then turns to the type of funeral in the catalog which will consume the entire face value of the policy. He begins to itemize the cost of the casket, burial plot, opening of the grave, telegrams and service to his attendants.

The grief-stricken forget about the living's continuous bills of property and the remainder of the investment that the deceased left that will have to be taken care of. They end up putting all of the insurance in the ground. In most cases final rites are held on Sunday so that friends and relatives can share their vehicles and serve as flower bearers to make the funeral look more attractive. Of course, no friend will deny any service on Sunday because they have nothing else to do.

It has been frequently mentioned that if a person, in his health and strength without relatives would bequeath the face value of an insurance policy to his church, organizations, and personal friends as a standing memorial, he would be remembered for his love, admiration and the sacrifice he has made to them. It would also serve as a standing remembrance to the coming generations of his church.

A group of business men were discussing the number of deceased buried in a church cemetery with \$2,000 or more spent for funeral and burial expenses. A hundred dollars or more was spent for flowers. One of the persons in the group once was an attendant at a funeral home and he stated that the mortician profits about 80% at every funeral. Once upon a time if an unknown person died with nobody to assume responsibility of his burial, some good samaritan would solicit funds to give a burial according to the life the deceased lived. Nowadays the welfare or if the deceased was once employed the welfare and the social security will assume the responsibility of his burial. These business men are church-goers and suggested that church members should invest in a church insurance plan. Many wealthy families have been doing this for several years for the benefit of the church. That is why we can see such beautiful churches being completed in some communities—churches with every modern facility.

Many of our readers will say that the face value of the policy should go to the closest living relative instead of the church. The family needs the money to pay bills, and to carry on the family's needs while they live. They forget about the money they will invest in the funeral, which is usually forgotten about five days after the funeral. Furthermore, within a few months they are unable to find the deceased's grave in some of the cemeteries for the rubbish and weeds that have grown up around it. How wonderful it would be if a portion of the money that is spent for a funeral service were invested in the church to which the deceased professes so much love and loyalty! For those who want their coming generations to walk in their footsteps as lovers of the church, there could be no more standing memorial than if the deceased would have willed part of the face value of his insurance policy to the church.

Many while alive and in good health and strength

This Week's Sunday School Lesson

JUDGMENT AND PROMISE

Beginning Where You Are

"Whatever is this world coming to?" asked a shut-in of her pastor when he visited her on Good Friday, the anniversary of the execution of Jesus and the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King. "The news I hear frightens me," she continued. "There are so many riots, strikes, killings, and robberies. Nobody is safe anymore. I'm sure that the world has never been so wicked. Surely, the last days are here, and God will soon destroy the earth."

In a number of biblical passages one finds a viewpoint expressed similar to this shut-in's. The story of Noah and the Flood, found in Genesis 6 through 9, contains such a record. There we read: "The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and . . . every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "And the Lord was sorry that he had made man."

When something turns out wrong, it seems reasonable that the solution is to start all over again. According to the Genesis story, this is the course the Lord decided to take. Creation had proved to be disappointing. Man especially had turned out to be corrupt. Therefore, the Lord flooded the earth, destroying man, beast, and bird. There were exceptions: (1) the creatures of the waters, since presumably a flood would not kill them, and (2) the righteous man, Noah, and his family, along with a male and female creature of all the species of animal and bird life.

Some modern notions about the end of the world do not seem much different from those expressed in the Genesis story of the Flood. Though some may believe that because of gross evil the end of the world must be near, few imagine the absolute end of all life. Somehow, some persons will be spared. And if some are spared, it seems reasonable they should be the righteous. The righteous ought to live, for the world depends upon them.

This idea seems obvious in the Genesis account. Thus, after the Flood, there was a new start. A baptized earth had been washed clean. History would begin once more, this time in the right way.

In theory this solution seems fine; but in actual results it may turn out differently. In Genesis we note that Noah, the righteous man chosen to begin history again after the Flood, gets drunk. Moreover, his descendants are not all righteous.

It seems to take more than a calamity in world history to change the character of man.

Searching The Scripture

The Scripture for this lesson

is Genesis 6 through 9; Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Peter 2:4-10a. Selected verses are printed below. Genesis 6:5-8,13-14

think nothing about final rites. If an insurance agent talks with us about a policy, we will say we are going to enjoy our earnings while we are alive, and when we are dead, it will be up to the living to dispose of our remains. Such persons leave nothing for the grief-stricken family, church or organizations. And such persons usually have no church affiliation.

May we urge our readers to live and invest so that when we pass away our loved ones can say that we left an investment for the church so that the coming generation can say "my deceased mother or father still lives by the sacrifice they made toward their church and family."

5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

13 And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14 Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and civer it inside and out with pitch."

Genesis 7:1,4-5

1 Then the Lord said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. . . . 4 For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." 5 And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him.

Genesis 9:8-13

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. 11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." 12 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

Memory Selection: By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household. —Hebrews 11:7

Exploring The Questions

The story about Noah and the Flood has played a prominent part in our culture and theology. Indeed, many cultures of the world include a story similar to that in Genesis.

The reason given in Genesis for the universal destruction

wrought by the Flood was God's judgment against the general wickedness and corruption of man. The Flood came, then, as punishment for man's sin. Since beasts and birds were also destroyed by the Flood, should we assume that they participated in the wickedness that caused the Flood? Was all flesh corrupt?

Was Noah the only righteous person living at the time of the Flood? If so, why were his wife, their three sons, and their wives spared, plus a male and female of every living species? If through the righteousness of Noah these could be saved, why not others?

When the Flood was over and Noah was able to leave the ark, he offered sacrifices of thanksgiving to the Lord. Thereupon the Lord vowed never again to curse the ground because of man. He would never again destroy every living being, even though man continued to commit evil deeds. What is this story trying to teach us about God?

An interesting detail from the life of Noah is that which tells of his planting a vineyard. From the fruit of this vineyard Noah became drunk. This detail about Noah strikes one as unfitting. What is the significance of this episode, and why was it recorded?

Finding Help

With Your Questions

Legends of a universal flood have been found in the literature of many ancient peoples. The Babylonians had early developed such a narrative. However, the ethical quality of the biblical narrative far exceeds that of the Babylonians. Charles Kraft comments upon the similarities and differences in the two accounts:

"Both Babylonian and Biblical stories give similar specifications for making the ark. Both stories agree as to the launching of the vessel, the sending out of the birds, the resting of the ship on a mountain (Ararat in modern Armenia), the disembarkation, the sacrifice, and the promise that there shall not be another such deluge in the future. But, striking as these similarities are, the contrasts are far more important: The Babylonian conception of deity is utterly polytheistic (having many gods); the gods disagree, and they petulantly blame each other; they crouch with fear 'like dogs' at the terrible storm; and when it is all over, being starved from lack of man-provided food, they swarm 'like flies' about the sacrifice. In startling contrast the one majestic God of the Hebrews has brought about the flood as his own righteous judgment and he remains at all times Master of the universe!"

Apparent differences within the biblical account indicate that the story is a blending of traditions rather than a treatment by a single author. Scholars recognize the contribution of the Yahwist (J) and priestly (P) writers in Genesis 6 through 9. The contrasts in the story as to the blending process by which the number of animals taken into the ark and the duration

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