

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

P. O. Box 20831 — GREENSBORO, N. C. 27420

PHONE 273-1758

Second Class Postage Paid at Greensboro, N. C.

10c Per Copy Published Weekly \$6.00 Per Year

GRADUATION

College and high school graduates are in a stirred-up state of mind making every effort to satisfy the requirements to receive their diplomas. Parents, guardians and friends are making preparations to attend the ceremonies and show their pride in the seniors, who have mastered the tide and made it over.

After graduation, then what? There are so many graduating seniors who just do not know what they want to do. Of course there are many who know what they want to do but are being held back. When they file applications for jobs they hear, "Sorry, we have no openings" or "how many years experience do you have?" The small businesses are after people already trained while the large corporations which have training programs for their employees are after the top in the class. As it ends up the average high school student who gets a job ends up doing the same as drop-outs and the 4-year college student gets a job completely unrelated to his major which could be done by a high school graduate. No wonder so many people are discouraged from furthering their education. Their main question is "why should I." Look at the people here who did go on and are right back here doing the same thing I am. Seems like a waste of time and money to me."

Graduation day is a thrilling day for candidates but it also brings on worries. Many feel like they are being flung out into a cold merciless world. A world that hollered "better yourself through education" and after it is done meets the graduate with "sorry, no vacancies." It is true that unemployment is up and most places just aren't hiring. Well, if you go to a job that is below that for which you are trained the employee refuses to hire you because he figures this job would just be a stop-over until something comes along. Besides those jobs may be reserved for drop-outs by some federal program. Maybe the federal government should establish a program for recent graduates.

Yes, graduation day is a thrilling day for candidates as they hear the music of the processional, the final numbers of the school choir and listen to the well prepared address of the highly educated speaker. Then after graduation they begin to think what these four years of study meant. They wonder, "Shall I continue my education or shall I stop where I am, marry, start a family and be happy with what I have? I criticize the graduate who takes the negative attitude concerning his older sister or brother's occupational misfortune and says, "it is useless for me to go any further with my education". Education means more than a job to earn money. Of course it is a big keynote but one needs an education to cultivate himself. It helps him to become aware of himself and the world around him. The educated person learns to profit from the world rather than having the world profit from him. He learns his rights and how to defend them. There is so much to be done in any given community requiring education. One should not go on strike because he does not immediately find the job he wants. He should continue to cultivate himself just as one cultivates a crop for market. Then when he goes looking for a position he will have a lot more to offer than the person who has only a certificate.

Congratulations go to the vocational graduates also. There is just as much pride in those fields. They too, however, face the same problems. They are asked to work as an apprentice and usually put through the same training on the job as they received in vocational school. Discouragement again to the onlooker. Time and money spent

THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

THE LORD OF HISTORY

Beginning Where You Are

Prophets, because of their uncompromising manner, are often difficult persons to live with; but their penetrating observations are instructive. They teach much to those who will learn from them. James M. Ward has this to say about the teachings of the prophet Isaiah:

"The practical application of the principles of rule taught by Isaiah is exceedingly difficult in any age. It is never a simple thing to 'establish justice in the gate,' or to adjudicate the conflicting rights and claims of men. Nor is the achievement of justice ever permanent. The life of man is a continuous conflict of interests and needs, of privileges and responsibilities, among individuals, groups, and institutions. Freedom and order are threats to each other. Self-interest and pride corrupt the most civic-minded men. Today's victory for justice creates tomorrow's problem. And behind every social achievement looms the threat of physical disaster in the realm of nature, to complicate and frustrate the best purposes of men. But we need not dismiss Isaiah's teaching as simplistic or irrelevant merely because it fails to cover every eventuality or omits a concrete program of political order. Like all the prophets, Isaiah showed his awareness of the imperfection and impermanence of human achievements and of man's eternal liability to judgment and need for forgiveness. He acknowledged the hardness of man's heart and his ability to rationalize evil as good. Thus Isaiah had no illusions about the life of Israel or the life of men generally. His faith was in God and not man, and he proclaimed the creative sovereignty of God in the midst of man's faithfulness and folly. Therefore his hope was not utopian but realistic. His confidence in God was not diminished but tempered by the certainty of judgment and suffering. These were the cost of man's reconciliation to God and the cost of righteousness among men. The victory of faith was not a final, static solution to the conflict of good and evil nor an extrication from the field

of battle to a private realm of timeless tranquility but a trust in the righteousness of God in the midst of conflict. It was a victory that had to be constantly rewon, and its preconditions were always the awareness of one's lostness before the Holy One of Israel and the acceptance of atonement as a gift (Isa. 6). The purpose of the prophetic word was to bring men to this awareness and to facilitate this acceptance. The word of the prophet was necessary to bring Israel again and again to this awareness, but it was rarely sufficient to do so. The historical judgment of God, in the form of social disaster, was also required. Without this judgment the truth of the prophet's teaching was inevitably obscured by the proud ambitions of men. But without the word of the prophet, the fall of the proud would have been a mere tragedy, one to be added to the injustices already committed by the proud, thus swelling the sum of evil. The word of the prophet kept open the possibility of creative response to the disasters of history, as well as the graceful acknowledgment of God's glory in creation, by which means the life of man might be fulfilled."

Searching The Scriptures

The Scripture for this lesson is Isaiah 10:5-15; 14:24-27. Selected verses are printed below. Isaiah 10:5-7, 15

5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger, the staff of my fury!
 6 Against a godless nation I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 But he does not so intend, and his mind does not so think; but it is in his mind to destroy; and to cut off nations not a few.

15 Shall the axe vault itself over him who hews with it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? As if a rod should wield him who lifts it, or as if a staff should lift him who is not wood!
 Isaiah 14:24-27

24 The Lord of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand, 25 that I will break the Assyrian in my

land, and upon my mountains trample him under foot; and his yoke shall depart from them, and his burden from their shoulder." 26 This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. 27 For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

Memory Selection: The Lord of hosts has sworn: "As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand."

—Isaiah 14:24

Exploring the Questions

Did Israel see itself as the center of all reality?

In a good many of Israel's theological statements, one can get the sense of being at the center of the universe. The God of Israel is characterized as the creator of the universe in some traditions. In prophetic traditions, the God of Israel is depicted as the One to whom all men and nations must finally answer.

In the Scripture for this lesson we are concerned with major shifts in the international political balance. Isaiah relates these shifts, which involve the weakness of Egypt and the expansion of Assyria to the west, to the theological values of the Israelite community. The God who upholds justice in the Israelite community has summoned forth Assyria to vindicate justice — or to carry out sanctions against injustice — within the social life of Israel and Judah. But, as a matter of fact, one could write a fully adequate history of the period from 750-700 B.C. with no more than a bare mention of Israel or Judah.

What is behind statements such as the one in 10:5? What would bring a small nation to think of a major power as a punishing rod in the hand of its own God? Is this attitude an expression of an exaggerated self-importance? Is it nationalism and patriotism gone wild? Or are other factors involved that are not immediately obvious? Is this attitude characteristic of the kind of theological confession we find in Israel and Judah — particularly in the prophets,

Finding Help

With Your Questions

Did Israel see itself as the center of all reality?

Any adequate historical analysis of the period that included the life of Isaiah would have to stress the power dynamics of the international scene. An essential part of this analysis would be a discussion of the final breakdown of the Twenty-second Egyptian Dynasty, which had taken power near the end of the reign of Solomon.

This dynasty was followed, sometime after 750 B.C., by a

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for training in vocational school that's going to be repeated once you are on the job, yet they would not hire you unless you had been to training school.

True the discouragements are many but the profits out-weigh them by far. Success is not automatic. One is not successful when he inherits a fortune. Success is the person who starts with nothing and works forward facing all obstacles and struggling on, not giving up because others around him did not succeed.

To the graduate: Remember, don't stop now. Your education has just begun. If you aren't going to further your education in another institution further it yourself. Look at the world and learn from what you see. Cultivate yourself. Graduation is just the blossom of the flower. It is up to you to make it bloom.