

Bible Epitaphs

By Paul R. Blake

Introduction:

- A. Epitaphs are an old custom. Epitaphium, from Latin, a funeral oration; from Greek epitaphion, a funeral at the tomb; English: 1. an inscription on or at a tomb or a grave in memory of the one buried there; 2. a brief statement commemorating or epitomizing a deceased person or something past
- B. Some are quite amusing
 - 1. "I told you I was sick!" - In a Georgia cemetery
 - 2. The children of Israel wanted bread
And the Lord sent them manna,
Old clerk Wallace wanted a wife,
And the Devil sent him Anna.
In a Ribbesford, England, cemetery
 - 3. Here lies Ezekial Aikle, Age 102, The Good Die Young
 - 4. Here lies Johnny Yeast
Pardon me for not rising - In Ruidoso, New Mexico
 - 5. Here lies Ann Mann, Who lived an old maid, But died an old Mann
Dec. 8, 1767
- C. Most are a profound, concise reminder of the impact the depart had in life
 - 1. Washington was "the father of this country"
 - 2. Benedict Arnold was a traitor

I. WELL KNOWN BIBLE EPITAPHS

- A. There are many well known wonderful Bible epitaphs
 - 1. Heb. 11:4 - Abel "being dead yet speaketh"
 - 2. Job 42:17 - "So Job died, old and full of days"
 - 3. Acts 9:36-39 - Dorcas was "full of good works"
 - 4. Gen. 5:18, 21-24 - Enoch "walked with God"
 - 5. James 2:23 - Abraham was a "friend of God"
 - 6. Acts 21:13; 2Tim. 4:6-8; Phil. 1:21 - Paul was ready to die; wrote his own epitaph
 - 7. Rev. 2:13 - Jesus said "Antipas was My faithful martyr"
- B. Wonderful epitaphs can be given to every faithful Christian
 - 1. Matt. 25:21 - "well done good and faithful servant"
 - 2. 1Thes. 4:14 - "asleep in Jesus"
 - 3. Rev. 14:13 - "they rest from their labors, and their works follow them"
- C. There are several bad epitaphs in the Bible
 - 1. Matt. 26:21-25, 27:3 - Judas betrayed the Lord
 - 2. 2Tim. 4:10 - Demas "loved this present world"
 - 3. Luke 12:20 - the rich farmer was called a fool
 - 4. Acts 24:25 - Felix wanted a more convenient season
 - 5. Acts 26:28 - King Agrippa was almost persuaded
 - 6. 1Tim. 1:20 - Hymenaeus and Alexander made shipwreck of the faith
 - 7. Acts 5:4 - Ananias lied to God

- D. Some will be given for every unfaithful Christian
1. Rev. 2:4 - left your first love
 2. 2Peter 2:20-22 - "the latter end is worse for them than the beginning"
 3. Heb. 6:4-6 - "Impossible to renew them to repentance"
 4. Luke 16:25 - "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented."

II. BIBLE EPITAPHS THAT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED

- A. Zedekiah - Jer. 34:4-5 - "Alas Lord!" - begins traditional lament for kings
1. Zedekiah was not a good king. He was taken into Babylonian captivity, where like Manasseh, it is believed he repented. His repentance meant he would have a peaceful passing, but came too late for a peaceful life
 2. Lesson for us: we can repent of a sinful life and go to our graves in peace, but the temporal consequences of sin often remain
- B. 2Sam. 3:33-34 - "Should Abner die as a fool dies?"
1. Alternate translation: "Shall Abner die a death like a villain's? Your hands not bound, nor were your feet bound in the fetters; like one who falls before the sons of guilt, so have you fallen!"
 2. He was not killed by justice, battle, or accident; he died the death of a criminal at the hands of a scoundrel. This lament was designed to be a rebuke of Joab and his companions, sung by all the people
 3. "The coward dies a thousand deaths before his time, but the valiant only tastes of death but once."
 4. The passing of some persons serves as a final rebuke to the living
 - a. For those who mistreated them, lied, cheated, ignored
 - b. Do right to all persons in life; whatever kind words you say at their passing will be meaningless and self-serving
- C. 1Kings 14:1, 13 - Abijah the son of Jeroboam - "in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam"
1. Tell story
 2. Lesson for today: When men do evil, they pull many others along with them into pain, including and especially those who are nearest to them
 - a. Innocent children are better off when taken away from sinful, or worldly, or materialistic parents
- D. Jer. 22:18-19 - Jehoiakim - "He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey"
1. He would not receive the traditional funeral of a beloved king; instead, his carcass would be thrown into the landfill
 2. Lesson: one can live so wickedly or so unkindly toward others that no one mourns his passing - "Well, he was a good whistler"
- E. 2Chron. 21:17-20 - Jehoram - "He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed."
1. The saddest epitaph in the Bible. Nobody loved him while he lived, none lamented him when he died.
 2. The people, even though they were idolaters, felt no obligation to honor the passing of their idolatrous king

3. Lesson: Those who sin to please others or to belong to the crowd cannot expect loyalty and love from their fellow sinners
- F. 2Chron. 24:15-16, 25 - Jehoiada the priest - "they buried him in the City of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and His house"
1. One can receive at his passing higher honors in death than his position in life would seem to merit
 2. Faithful Christians, unknown in this world, will live in heaven
- G. 2Kings 23:16-18 - "It is the tomb of the man of God"
1. At a time when the tombs of evil men were being leveled, the tomb of a righteous man was honored
 2. Medal of Honor recipient Ed Freeman died in August of 2008 and was honored by having a federal building named after him, but the press was busy covering the coward rapper Chris Brown for beating his girlfriend.
 3. Prov. 10:7 - "The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot."
 4. The wicked only prosper for a short while; the righteous will be blessed forever, even if their tombs are forgotten
- H. 2Sam. 1:12-27 - Saul and Jonathan
1. It is God's place to judge the dead
 2. It is dangerous to rejoice over the passing of the wicked
 3. Remember the good, and let God address the evil
 4. Prov. 24:17-20