WHAT LEGACY WILL WE LEAVE?

Abel was the first man on earth to experience physical death. Even though thousands of years have gone by, he still speaks (Heb. 11:4). It is indeed remarkable that this obscure shepherd has left such a lasting legacy. Even in our modern world of space travel and computers, he still speaks. Among other things, he reminds us that by faith he offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Just like Abel, everybody has a legacy. No matter how poor and isolated we think we are, when we die someone will remember. That's why it is important to consider what kind of a legacy we will leave.

Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, was shocked to read his own obituary while he was still living. This happened in 1888 and he didn't die until 1896. It was Alfred's brother who died, but Alfred's obituary appeared in the newspaper by mistake. This journalistic error made a profound impression on the great inventor. He was shocked to realize how he was going to be remembered. The newspaper described him as the "Dynamite King". His discoveries in the field of explosives had revolutionized warfare and greatly enhanced man's ability to kill his fellow man. Nobel was stunned to discover that he was leaving behind a legacy of death and destruction. He read his obituary with horror. This was not how he saw himself, or how he wanted to be remembered. It was at this point that Alfred Nobel decided to rewrite his legacy by rewriting his will. He stipulated that his vast fortune was to provide endowments for those who made the world a better place in which to live. These "Nobel Prizes" were to be awarded in five different categories: physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, and peace. The sixth category, economics, was added later. It worked! Today these "Nobel Prizes" eclipse his legacy as the "Dynamite King".

Robert Burns, the Scotch poet, once wrote: "Oh would some gift the Giver give us, to see ourselves as others see us. It would from many a blunder save us, and many a foolish notion". Even more important than how others see us, however, is the need to see ourselves as God sees us!

In Luke 12:14-21 Jesus told the story of a rich farmer who raised a bumper crop. Based upon this new wealth he decided to expand his operation. In the process of doing so, however, he died. Like so many "successful" businessmen in our own day and age, he died suddenly and without warning. At his funeral the local rabbi, no doubt, could compliment him for a long list of earthly achievements. God, however, called him a "fool".

Herod the Great was more famous than any other member of his family. He earned his title by the buildings he erected and the political victories he achieved. In the Bible, however, he is remembered as the monster who tried to kill the baby Jesus.

It is too late for the rich fool and for Herod, but it is not to late for us. That's why we need to give some serious consideration to the legacy we will leave. Someday we too will die, with or without warning. Friends and neighbors will stand in line to pay their last respects. Our earthly body will return to dust, and our spirit to God who gave it. During the following days our survivors will go through our "things". It is sad, but true, that some of the "things" we treasured will be taken to the dump or given to charity. Other "things" we had will be parceled out to family and friends. We will be "gone" but not totally "forgotten". Every time someone comes across something we had, our legacy will come instantly to mind.

"I bought this car from the man who killed himself". "That house once belonged to the town drunk." "I got this picture from the meanest woman I ever met". Etc. This may not be fair, but this is still the "way it is". Right now you are leaving a legacy that will become indelible when you die. Why not change your legacy while you can into something good? "This is Mary, Jesus once cast seven demons out of her". "This is Simon of Cyrene, he carried the cross for Christ". "This is Paul, at one time he persecuted the church but was transformed into an inspired apostle who wrote more books of the Bible than any other man". Etc.

As long as you are alive, it is not too late! You can do it now! The thief on the cross used the last moments of his earthly life to carve out an niche in God's Hall of Fame. You can too!