THE WAY OF ALL THE EARTH by Andy Diestelkamp

We have reached the end of something in our little corner of the world. For decades, I have been afforded the opportunity to take a turn in writing an article several times a year for the “religion page” in *The Daily Leader* (the local newspaper for Pontiac, Illinois). While the newspaper has not yet ceased publication, I suspect that its days are numbered. The cancellation of the column for which I occasionally wrote has simply become the latest symptom in what will be the eventual demise of the paper. In the grand scheme of things, the cessation of this column is a relatively minor end; but it may also be reflective of a cultural shift away from an interest in things pertaining to Jesus Christ.

The cycles of life touch us all as things come and go in this transient and vaporous existence. In his old age and farewell address, Joshua—the great leader of Israel—observed, “I am about to go the way of all the earth” (Josh. 23:14). Over four hundred years later, King David said the same thing in his old age preceding his final advice to his son Solomon (1 K. 2:2).

“The way of all the earth” is to live and die. Indeed, the observation of the philosopher of Ecclesiastes was, “there is … a time to be born and a time to die” (3:1,2). This is the apparent reality of life “under the sun” (1:3, etc.). The cynical conclusion of those who look at life from this limited perspective is that “all is vanity” (1:2, etc.). In other words, it is impossible to make sense of the billions upon billions of lives which have cycled throughout human history; and, thus, many conclude that life is meaningless and without purpose. However, this is not the conclusion to be drawn about life or death. Rather, what we *should* conclude from all of the cyclical uncertainty of life is not to eat, drink, and be merry “for tomorrow we die” (Is. 22:13; 1 Cor. 15:32) but to fear God and keep His commandments (Ec.12:13).

Everything that pertains to this life has a life-cycle, a beginning and an end. This includes individuals, families, local churches, nations, and empires. Obviously, newspapers and their columns and columnists are no exceptions. We will all, in time, go the way of all the earth. Yet, our Creator has greater plans for us than the apparent vanity of life cycles.

Do not let the end of things that have have been blessings in your sojourn discourage you. It certainly appeared that Jesus went the way of all the earth when He was crucified, but what happened on the third day declared otherwise. Jesus’ resurrection revealed that not even the gates of Hades could prevail against the divine plan (cf. Mt 16:18) to rescue us from the vain cycle of sin and death. This is good news! Those who faithfully follow Jesus have the realistic hope of likewise overcoming death. This truth and reality make the various cycles of life and death meaningful exercises—not in futility—but toward a greater goal and a fuller existence which God has prepared for those who love Him.

So, when the time for you to go the way of all the earth comes and your departure is at hand, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. These things I have written to you, that in Christ you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world (cf. Jn. 16:32)!