

THE BURNING EARTH AND THE GOSPEL

Dr David C F Wright (2006)

The opening of the prophecy of Malachi chapter 4 reads:

For, behold, the day cometh when the earth shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

So wrote the prophet Malachi 400 years before Christ, that is 2, 400 years ago.

It may be said that this prophecy could refer to almost anything since fire and heat are both a sign of God's judgment and He only pours out His judgment on the wicked.

What is clear is that this day is a great day, a day of judgment. Later in the same chapter, Malachi refers to it as the great and dreadful day of the Lord which will happen before the Lord comes. The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3.10 refers to it as the day of the Lord that will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens will eventually pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt like fervent heat and the earth and all its works will be burned up. It is to be sudden when it comes, but sudden, not in the sense of unexpected, but sudden in the sense of not knowing the precise day and hour. In fact the New Testament in Hebrews 10. 25 states that we shall see the day approaching and this was written after the Lord came the first time and after He had ascended into Heaven having completed His work of salvation.

In the last 2,400 years we have not seen any event which matches the descriptions given both Malachi and in the apostles and so it must still be in the future.

Revelation 6 speaks of the day of God's great wrath, noise and earthquake and how parts of the earth such as mountains and islands would move out of their place.

One island in Alaska is currently undergoing this removal and destruction. This is due to global warming, the melting of the ice caps, the raising of sea levels and it is anticipated that in the next few decades sea levels could rise by at least a metre, that is to say just over three foot. It will mean the extinction of some species as prophesied in Revelation 8.9 and, in that same chapter, we read of mountains burning. Global warming is causing more forest fires than ever before and many forests which are at the foot of mountains and on their slopes are burning.

In America there are more storms, tornados and hurricanes than ever before, and they are caused by warm air and the fact that the earth is warming up there is even warmer air and, therefore, more storms and floods. And death and destruction follows.

God created the world. Scientists, particularly those who believe in evolution and dismiss Divine creation, did not and do listen. All these disasters are foretold in general terms the Bible. They are warnings from God but the evolutionists do not believe in God or, if they say that they do, they do not believe in God as He is presented in the Bible.

Global warning is man's fault. The pollution from factories, industry, motor cars and, particularly, aircraft is putting a hot blanket around the earth. The more pollution the thicker the blanket and the hotter we become.

We live in sick societies. We have to get from A to B in the shortest possible time. We have to have all the latest gadgets and labour saving devices and to be top dog and not left behind. Everything must be new and state of the art. And we are ruled by machines with computers, the internet and high-tech items. Many do not agree with the apostle Paul who said in Phillipians 4.11 that he was content in whatever state he was.

Society cannot go without. It must have. Society is materialistic. It is the philosophy of eat, drink and be

merry for tomorrow we may be dead as stated twice in Luke's gospel. People live for the moment and not eternity. The rhetoric question still haunts today, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16.26).

The majority of people have the belief that when you are dead that is it. There is nothing beyond the grave or the crematorium or, there is the other idea that God is a God of love and would not punish anyone. In other words, if there is a God, He is a soft touch and that hell, fire and brimstone is simply not true. And this teaching is given within some denominations. The Roman Catholics teach that after death you may go to Purgatory and wait there until you can be allowed go into Heaven and that depends on indulgences and priest saying mass for you until you are suitable for heaven. Many Anglicans believe that hell does not exist and if you were baptised as a baby (actually that is christening) you became a member of the church and whatever you do in your life you would still go to Heaven when you die.

It is claimed that religion is the cause of most of the wars and conflicts throughout the ages. Christianity, if correctly applied, includes the principle to live at peace with everybody as far as possible (1 Thessalonians 5.13). The Lord Jesus said, Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God (Matthew 5. 9). True Christianity adheres to God's will and standards. The slaughter of nations in the Old Testament was because they were evil and such slaughter was not butchery but surgery. In that sense, God is a God of war. His war is on evil.

Because God is good and pure, He hates all evil and wickedness and will punish the unrepentant and wicked people. If He did not, He would not be holy or just. And yet He says that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18. 23 and 32). Judgment and punishment is God's strange work. He loves judgment because he does not love evil (Isaiah 61. 8); His judgment is always just (John 5. 30).

The First World War was not a religious war. Its origins lay in the great powers reacting to the ambitions and increasing power of Germany. The Second World War was not a religious war. Its origin was in the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 when Germany had to make reparation for the First World War and went bankrupt as a result, and they hated the Jews because of their business and financial acumen. The Boer Wars were not religious; neither were the Wars of the Roses; the war between Russia and Japan at the beginning of the 20th century was not religious. The conflict in Ireland is over the ownership of Ireland and it has to be remembered that in 1154 the whole of Ireland willingly vowed allegiance to the Henry II, king of England, although he was French.

All the wars of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan were not religious wars, but the desire for power and to increase their respective kingdoms. Going back into Old Testament times the wars with Assyria, Persia, the Greeks and Romans were not religious wars but wars to increase territory, kingdoms and power.

While Christianity is often defined as a religion there are many other religions, some of which are warlike, as opposed to peaceful as true Christianity should be.

In fact, the New Testament makes a distinction between Christianity and religion. True religion is undefiled, it is visiting and caring for widows and orphans and not being tarnished or influenced by the world, its standards and methods (James 1.27).

The instruction to the Christian is, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father but of the world.

Sadly, churches today are worldly and secular. They employ types of pop music, dance, disco lights and even encourage the watching of films and television programmes which are violent and indecent. Some churches approve of homosexuality which both the Old and New Testaments condemn. Other churches turn a blind eye to couples lying together who are not married to each other. Some churches have worship leaders,

whereas the leader of worship is not to be any human being but God Himself. Many churches entertain. In many Pentecostal and charismatic churches, there is the evil of pride and the absurd nonsense that if you speak in tongues you have the second blessing and are superior to those who do not speak in tongues.

One of the categories of people under God's judgment is those who are proud. We read this in Malachi 4. In James 4 and 1 Peter 5. 5 we read that God resisteth the proud. It is tragic to report that many Christians are proud. They talk about their achievements and themselves whereas the hymn writer correctly interprets the scripture when he writes

O Jesus Christ grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede
My heart be daily nearer Thee
From sin and self set free.

With the sin of pride comes the evil of power and personal gain and even some Christians and Christian denominations use non-Christian methods to achieve or maintain superiority. Some are ruthless and even in local churches there are undercurrents and power struggles.

As Dr Graham Scroggie rightly said, "There are not superior Christians but there are more obedient ones!"

The key word for most people today is Me, me me. This is another cause of power struggles and consequent aggression. And, it happens among Christians and churches.

The Roman Catholics had the Jesuits, a military branch of the church, who engaged in inquisitions, war and torture and other severe persecution. That was neither religion nor Christianity.

While most Muslims are peaceable people there are Muslims who believe in Holy Wars and terrorism. That is not religion.

Science is responsible for many of the troubles in the world. Science is the branch of knowledge which involves observation, experiment and finding out how things work or providing the means to invent and manufacture items after experiments.

The splitting of the atom was a scientific discovery. It has enabled men to make nuclear bombs. The dropping of two bombs on Japan in 1945 killed and disabled thousands. In Hiroshima at least 150,000 and in Nagasaki over 75,000 killed or seriously injured. Within a few years there were thousands of additional deaths due to cancer from the radiation of the atomic bombs.

In Europe alone in the First World War some 8 million died and in the Second World War some 55 million people died, most of them because of scientific discoveries and the invention and subsequent manufacture of ghastly weapons. But it has to be said that it is the application of science as opposed to science itself that is the reason for all these troubles.

Science is forgiven because it has discovered medicines and other benefits by which society has been blessed. But if there is an earthquake and a tsunami in which thousands die, as on Boxing Day 2004, it is the fault of God whom people do not believe in anyway.

And yet in America and, to a lesser extent, in Britain there are scientists who are using all sorts of methods and militancy to ban the teaching of creation and the existence of God in schools and places of further education.

It can be said that all inventors of things are scientists because an inventor is someone who creates by thought, observation and experiment a device. Somebody invented the catapult and so that is scientific. The

word inventor comes from the Latin which means to find or discover.

And yet, like some religions, science can not only be destructive but fickle. For example, evolution is a theory and yet it is presented as fact. We talk about the theory of evolution. A theory is a supposition or system of ideas explaining something. A supposition is something that is assumed or generally believed. It is not necessarily a fact. What is assumed is taken by some to be true and yet it is not a fact.

Global warming is not a theory, a supposition or an assumption. It is fact. It is a man-made disaster that threatens our planet which is warming up. Only two years ago we have temperatures in Britain reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit. In France about 4,000 people died because of the excessive heat.

The earth is burning like an oven.

Why does not God do something people ask, and yet most of these enquirers do not believe in God.

God did do something. Look at the Cross of Calvary

What is conveniently forgotten is that God created man and gave him a free will, the freedom to choose and make decisions for himself. He did not make us as robots or automations or puppets on a string where God controls every move we make. Just imagine what life would be like if we were merely puppets and God pulled our strings twenty four hours a day every day. That would not be life. It would be bondage.

With man God gave one law which translated really says do not disobey Me. If we were always obedient to God there would be no sin, no conflict and no war. Sin is disobedience to God. The first sin was Eve's disobedience to God and what he had commanded and, in disobeying God, she ignored and defied Him and contradicted His law. She made her husband, Adam sin as well. Therefore, the first conflict and every conflict since is fundamentally due to disobeying God.

We choose whether to obey God, whether to believe and trust in Him or to ignore or defy Him. We are not puppets, robots or automations.

If we live without Christ and die without Him we shall spend eternity in punishment. This is the message of the Bible. It makes no difference if you were kind and honest or that you did not drink, smoke or commit adultery or commit crime or take drugs. There is but one consideration. Did you take Christ as your own personal Saviour and live in obedience to Him?

We cannot alter the Will of God. We cannot get Him to cancel an appointment He has made to pour judgment out on the world.

We read in Revelation that in the last days there will be concern about the supply of oil and how there will be conflicts to obtain. We read of tremendous heat and the sky rolling up like a scroll or the mushroom at the height of a nuclear blast. When these Scriptures were written two thousand years ago these events could not be explained by the people of that time. The apostle John would not know how the sky would appear after a nuclear explosion.

Nuclear bombs and the dependency on oil are comparative recent issues.

But these dreadful things will happen. God will pour out His wrath on the earth. The earth which He made and which man has spoiled and devastated is in the hands of the Almighty.

Does this make a difference to you?

Many Christians are not concerned. They go to church and sing their silly little choruses and modern hymns that sound like pop music and are often spiritually unsound, They raise their hands, they dance as call it worship, they boast that they have the gifts of the Spirit and God has given them a word of prophecy and the Lord has told them to do certain things. To live in sin with someone to whom you are not married or to be homosexual or lesbian is allowed by God and to preach and talk about yourself in meetings is actively encouraged. What a load of rot!

You went to the supermarket the other day and were served by that lovely young lady who does not believe in God or Jesus Christ. She is a lovely girl. She smokes. She bites her nails. She drinks. She goes to parties dressed provocatively. She is living with her boy friend. Yet she is so kind and gentle and very helpful in the supermarket.

But she is not saved and if she were to die now she would be lost and suffer in eternity. The Bible teaches this quite clearly.

Yet she is such a pretty girl and everybody loves her. The Lord does too, but she has no time for Him.

There is a member of your family who is not a Christian and not saved, and yet this person means a lot to you. That person means even more to the Lord.

Are you praying for that person? Are you making sure that your Christian life is unsullied so that you do not deter that person? Or are you foolishly ramming the gospel down their throat?

To quote Graham Scroggie again, "He that winneth souls is wise; he that does not is otherwise."

We are not here to have fun meetings with pop groups, dancers and preachers who tell funny stories and make us laugh. We are not here to sing that chorus over and over again some fifteen times or to stick out hands up in the air or jump around like a small boy urgently needing the lavatory. We are not here to talk about ourselves and show off with dubious spiritual gifts. We are not here to be a clown, tightrope artist or a Buster Keaton lookalike as the early adverts for Spring Harvest stated.

It is not entertainment people need. It is evangelism which centres exclusively upon Christ. Faith in Christ does not come from pop music style songs, dancers, Christian rock bands or seductive girls dancing in the meeting or a handsome preacher. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

A charismatic believer complained that a local preacher was too old-fashioned and had taken Christianity back a hundred years. The preacher replied that he was sorry and wished he had taken it back two thousand years and that we had seen with our own eyes and heard with our own ears the words of the Lord Jesus Himself.

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