

WILL THE EARTH BE BURNED?

WE are obliged to antagonize, not only the Second Adventist views, but the teachings of all the orthodox creeds of Christendom when we declare that according to the Bible our world is never to be burned up – except in a figurative, symbolic sense. The Bible teaches that at the close of this Age a great trouble will be precipitated, which will destroy, consume or figuratively burn up, present institutions – ecclesiastical, religious and social. The raging fire will be anarchy; and its horrible result will be, according to the Bible, the ashes of present institutions.

For six thousand years the world has had its ups and downs, individually and nationally. Christianity has influenced some, and Churchianity has influenced more. The true Christianity has produced the true saints, who have followed in the Master's footsteps and, like Him, have been treated as the filth and offscouring of the earth – *while they live* – after death to be honored as saints and heroes. Churchianity has a *form* of godliness without its *power*. The form has in many respects helped [R5363 : page 366] along to influence and power in the world, leading often to the perpetration of horrible crimes in the name of Christ and His Church.

Now, as the Gospel Age is closing and the Messianic Age is dawning, the lifting of the curtain of the New Dispensation is producing wonderful results amongst men. Darkness, ignorance, superstition, are fleeing before the light of the New Day. The world is awakening because it is Morning. Human thought is quickened; and the wonderful inventions of our day – steam power and electricity – are carrying the thoughts of men to each other the world over. The printing press and the mail are potent factors in the awakening. Knowledge is filling the earth, as the Lord through His

Prophets declared would be the case at this time. – Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14; Dan. 12:4.

But this knowledge is coming to people who at heart are unprepared for it. The hands of the ignorant and unlearned are stretched forth to grasp the throttle of power – political, social, religious and financial. Wrongs are recognized; but those who seek to remedy them will [R5364 : page 366] only make a bad matter worse. All must yet learn that the world's only hope is in God's provision – Messiah's Kingdom.

But before this lesson is learned, the spirit of discontent stirred up by knowledge will grasp the opportunities and gradually and ignorantly, unintentionally, will cause the great wreck of our present social, religious, political and financial institutions in "a Time of Trouble such as never was since there was a nation" – "no, nor ever shall be again." – Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21.

This great cataclysm of trouble, which all intelligent people perceive with more or less distinctness, is described in the Bible under various symbolic terms. Sometimes it is described as a whirlwind; at other times the description is that of a storm; again, of a great tidal wave – the sea (representing the masses) will swallow up the mountains (representing the kingdoms). (Psalm 46:2,3.) Again it is described as a fire, which will consume the whole earth. (Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8.) Yet in each case there is connected with the symbol something to show that it is *merely a symbol*, and that the utter destruction of humanity is not meant. As, for instance, after describing the storm, the Lord through the Prophet declares that He will command the nations to be still and to recognize Him as God, and that the result will be a great calm. (Psalm 46:8-10.) In the case of the *fire*, we read that after it has *consumed the whole earth* (the social fabric), *then* the Lord will turn to *the people* a pure language, a pure Message, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him *with one consent*. – Zephaniah 3:9.

Evidently, the fire which will consume the earth must be a symbolic fire of trouble, consuming the symbolic earth, or social conditions, because the *people* still *remain* and are to receive the *Lord's blessing*. The pure Message that will then be given to the world will be in strong contrast with the confused messages of the contradictory creeds which for centuries have been given to the world, and which many of the world's thinking minds have been unable to appreciate or receive, and which have perplexed Christian minds.

Let us, therefore, take the Word of the Lord and reject the messages of all the creeds of Christendom. Let us not for a moment think that the literal earth is to be burned up at the Second Coming of Jesus; but, quite to the contrary, let us believe St. Peter's statement that at that time will begin "the Times of Restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of *all* the holy Prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21.) Let us remember the declaration of Scripture that "the earth abideth forever." (Ecclesiastes 1:4); that "God Himself formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited." – Isaiah 45:18.

Let us remember that the world has never yet been inhabited. Vast territories have not yet been explored by man. Let us remember that God's promise respecting the earth is that, as Heaven is His Throne, so "the earth is His footstool," and He surely will make the place of His feet *glorious*. (Isaiah 66:1; 60:13.) Messiah's Kingdom will not only uplift humanity, but will also bring blessings of perfection to the earth. Eden eventually will be world-wide. "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

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