

WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE

And Other Evangelistic Messages

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CHAPTER ONE

When the World Is on Fire - II Peter 3:1-15

The atomic experts tell us that unless we came to some sort of a peace league, that unless we invent or evolve some sort of an international organization that will definitely control the nuclear bomb, the result will be that nuclear weapon misuse will destroy the world. I do not believe it at all. The reason these experts seem to believe it is because they do not study the Word of GOD. Nuclear bombs are not going to destroy the earth. That is reserved for the Lord. GOD is going to destroy it when He gets ready. Our nuclear weapons will act just as did gunpowder, or dynamite, or TNT, or cannons, or poison gas, or, before that, bows and arrows, or any other weapons. It will just make one more mess for us to get into. That is all. It is not going to solve any problems. It is not going to stop any wars. It is not going to make wars quicker or easier.

Those of us who are waiting and watching for the imminent coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST are constantly saying that the world will be on fire at His coming. We forget the fact that in many ways the world is on fire already. I believe we have in some way missed this point.

This world of ours is on fire right now nationally. There is no great nation on earth that is fully at peace, not even our own United States of America. Think of the strikes, of the race problems, of the awful and many difficulties that beset us in our land. Multiply them by the tremendous burdens that are weighing down every other nation and you will see that I am justified in saying that the world is on fire. Think of England. Think of France. Think of Spain. Think of Germany and Japan. Think of the internal conflicts waging in Asia.

You will agree with me further that this world of ours is on fire internationally. Nations are at odds, at loggerheads, with each other, seemingly unable to come together on any sort of peace terms. I remember very distinctly, at the end of World War I, some of our preachers even went so far as to say that there never would be any more wars, that the League of Nations would solve, and dissolve war forever. They prophesied that the death-dealing destruction of the awful days between 1914 and 1918 taught mankind a lesson that would preclude forever the chance of our engaging again in any such bitter cataclysm. Now we all know better. We know that wars do not - cannot - prevent wars. Neither can elaborate and impressive peace treaties. Nothing can.

My Bible teaches, as does yours, that there shall be wars and rumors of wars until the Lord JESUS, the Prince of Peace, comes to establish peace.

The world is on fire religiously. Hear me! Some short months ago in a certain southeastern state a group of preachers met together in a conference. One of them from a northern city preached a

sermon on "Hubba-Hubba." This was his thought:

He said that the disciples did not really believe that JESUS CHRIST was the Son of GOD. He said that when Peter cried out, "**Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,**" he was just saying the words as a boy would say them in "Hubba-Hubba" fashion about a beautiful girl. Those other preachers sat there and kept an listening to him instead of rising in a body and walking out of that room. In that same sermon, this preacher declared that when Thomas sobbed out, "**My Lord and my God,**" he did not mean that at all. He meant "Hubba-Hubba." This world of ours is on fire religiously.

There are certain things that GOD expects us to do. It is not enough for Christians to come together in Bible conferences, then go away, their own souls filled, knowing more about the Bible, yet not putting into practice the things that have fired their souls during the days together. My purpose is - my prayer is - that GOD will use me as a man uses a match to strike fire to the heaped-up wood that you already have in your souls. GOD grant that a conflagration might start and spread wherever you go in this nation and to the ends of the earth.

Let us consider, then, an outline based on this chapter of Scripture.

First, there is the contention of the scoffers. Secondly, there is the coming of the Lord. Thirdly, there is the continuance for us Christians, what we Christians are to continue to do in the Name of the Lord while we are waiting for the appearing of the Son of GOD.

THE CONTENTION OF THE SCOFFERS

Travel with me as the Lord leads from one end of this continent to the other. Make contact, as I have by the very force of my ministry, with liberals, with fundamentalists, with fundamental liberals, with liberal fundamentalists. I have the good fortune (sometimes I think it is a misfortune) of having to review scores of books yearly, books pouring off the religious presses. These books would shout an amen to the contention of the scoffers here in our country and abroad.

The Attitude of Anti-Godism

With your permission, may I coin a word about these scoffers? There is the attitude of anti-Godism - not the attitude of anti-godliness, but anti-Godism. The Lord JESUS CHRIST has been destroyed. The Saviourhood of the Son of GOD is being denied. His sovereign rights are ridiculed. He is just one more great teacher, according to so many of these scoffers.

Not only have they denied the Lordship of JESUS CHRIST, but they are also using their penknives on the Word of God. They have taken out of the blessed Book all that pertains to old-time religion, repentance, faith, the new birth. Morality is preached instead of repentance.

Even in so-called fundamental circles, instead of faith, there is a kind of ideology that exalts the manhood and the teaching of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Some of them go so far as to grant Him the rights of divinity, but treating it merely as a historic transaction, having absolutely no echo, no feeling, no responsive attitude in their hearts and souls.

Instead of the new birth, they teach an idealism, a psychology, a kind of Dr. Coue proposition, "Day by day in every way I am getting better and better."

Anti-millennialism

The second contention of these scoffers is anti-millennialism. When it comes to a showdown, there are just two classes of people in this world on the millennium question. Do not let them fool you. It is premillennialism or nomillennialism. The postmillennialists do not preach very much about the second coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. An anti-millennialism here is what you have.

Instead of preaching the Gospel as the panacea for the needs, for the cure, for the salvation of a lost world; instead of preaching the Blood for the remission of sins, too dreadfully many of our churches have gone astray on a social kind of gospel, and are giving their time to social service and activities. Talk to them about it and they will glibly deny it. Nevertheless it is true. They are spending their thousands to promote the welfare of their communities or to build impressive buildings, forgetting the lost on their way to hell around about them.

Those of us who believe that this world is getting worse and worse, that the only One who can straighten it out is the Lord JESUS CHRIST, that there is not much in it, after all, worth saving aside from the souls of men, will major on the Gospel, on preaching, on soul winning, will sacrifice all that we are and have to bring souls to the Redeemer.

But these others will spend their time in P.T.A.'s, in lodges, in civic organizations, in running here, there, and yonder. They have no time to pray, no time for religious visitation, no time for witnessing, no time for the tarrying for the infilling of the HOLY SPIRIT. The tragedy is that so many follow these blind leaders. They do not seem to realize that the thing GOD expects us to do is to call out the Bride of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. I would to GOD that all of us had the same attitude toward these things as did the great D. L. Moody when he said:

"This world is a sea. Men are lost on the waves of it. GOD has given me a rowboat. It is my business to see how many of them I can save from the destroying waves before they are engulfed in the pit of hell."

Scoffers Contend Against Evangelism. The third thing that scoffers contend may be found in the word.

"Anti-evangelism"

But why anti-evangelism? Because of anti-Godism. Because of anti-millennialism. The three things go together. They are intertwined. These scoffers say, "We don't need any evangelism. What we need is better communities, better laws, better peace treaties, better organization, more education. What we need is to solve the racial problem, anti-Semitism, the Negro situation. What we need is to see that communism and capitalism get along, that labor and management do not fight with each other."

You would be surprised how many books are written by preachers, how many sermons are preached Sunday mornings and Sunday nights in some of the mightiest churches of our land, churches that at one time were blazing lighthouses of soul-winning impact, to patch up the crazy quilt that we have in labor disputations, in race difficulties.

These are the three contentions of the scoffers that we have to face as we try to advance the interests of the kingdom of God, to carry out the commission of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. There is again anti-Godism.

The Gideons are here. Thank God for them. The very first Gentile Bible (if you understand my meaning - perhaps I ought to say, the very first Christian Bible) I ever touched, I ever looked into, which started me on the road to becoming a Christian, was a Gideon Bible in the Y.M.C.A. in Kansas City, Missouri. If it had not been in that room that night I might not be a Christian now. But if some of these beloved Gideons have an idea, or if any of the rest of us have the thought that because we have given out and sold more Bibles than we have ever given out and ever sold before in any generation, that therefore there are more Bibles being read, studied, practiced, we are desperately wrong. It is not so. The ignorance of the Bible is appalling.

D. L. Moody said, and every evangelist echoes it to this day, that at the end of his life it was hard to get people interested in the Word of GOD. Holding up his Bible in the last meeting he ever conducted, in Kansas City, he cried out, "There used to be a time when if I appealed to the Bible, the majority of the congregation knew what I was talking about. But now if I say something is in the Bible, many of you do not even understand that I am quoting the Word of GOD."

My heart broke as I read those words, as I thought of the anguish in the soul of that mighty man of GOD, who in a lifetime had seen the Bible relegated to the shelf instead of to the most prominent place in the heart and in the home.

What about this situation? Are the scoffers right? Are they right in their anti-Godism? Are they right in their anti-millennialism? Are they right in their anti-evangelism?

THE COMING OF THE LORD

The second point in this message is the coming of the Lord.

The coming of the Lord is imminent. I believe it with all my soul. He is coming very, very soon. I can almost hear the jingle of the spurs as the angels burnish them up, ready for His use. He is coming soon.

You have heard this said, and it is increasingly true. There is no promise, no prophecy of any importance, of any weight in the Bible, which was to have been fulfilled before the coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST that has not been fulfilled already, or that is not being fulfilled right now. Sooner than most people expect, the blessed Son of GOD is coming.

The Coming Will Be Sudden

There will be no warning bells. Just as He came in Bethlehem's manger on that starry night, even

so He is coming again, only this time in His glory, in His power, in His authority, in His might, in His magnificent majesty. However, it will be just as sudden as it was 1900 years ago. Oh my soul, how afraid I am that too many of us Christians, as well as too dreadfully many of the unsaved, will not be ready for the appearing of the blessed Son of GOD.

I have found this to be true. I am passing it on to you for what it is worth. The Lord has given me the privilege of going across this continent. I suppose I have been in as many different churches as anyone of you reading this book, perhaps more than anyone of you. And hear me, beloved! You show me a church that majors on the premillennial coming of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, next to the Cross, next to the shed Blood, next to the resurrection, and I will show you a church constrained to consecration, compelled to soul-winning.

Surely the person who believes in the imminent coming of the Son of GOD is not going to go to places, is not going to spend money or time on things that he or she would not want to be doing, where he or she would not want to be found when JESUS CHRIST comes to claim His own.

CHRIST's Coming Will Be Spectacular

The heavens will be dissolved. The earth will go up in smoke and flame. The atomic and hydrogen bombs will look like fizzy firecrackers alongside the matchless glory that will accompany the return of the Son of GOD. The Bible teaches it. Most of us, if not all of us, will see it. Then you will not have to take my word for it.

I am jealous for JESUS CHRIST. I am jealous for His good Name. I am jealous for His mighty fame. It hurts me no end to find a brass band orchestra leader paid more money than a dozen preachers of the Gospel. A moving picture actress of any prominence makes more money than a multitude of preachers put together. It is because the world hates GOD and CHRIST. It is because the world is not interested in the things of GOD, in the things of CHRIST. JESUS CHRIST is getting the small end of it right now. I am jealous because of that. But I need not be. Every time I get to thinking about it carefully, seriously, I am reminded of the classic illustration I am sure you have all heard.

A preacher was driving by Stone Mountain outside Atlanta, Georgia, that tremendous mountain of stone the like of which there is not found anywhere in the world. A man was leaning against that mountain, huffing, puffing, pushing, red in the face.

"What are you doing, sir?" asked the preacher. "I am holding up the mountain."

"You do not have to hold up the mountain. It can hold itself up."

"But, preacher, you go on the other side and see what is happening."

The preacher rode around to the other side of the mountain.

There was a man with a little pickax out of a boy's tool chest, chipping at the mountain. About every hour or so he struck a spark of fire, struck off a stone about the size of a pinhead. Coming back, the preacher said to the man supporting the mountain:

"You do not have to hold up that mountain. That man will be trying a long time before any part of it will ever fall."

Neither do I have to worry about the Lord JESUS CHRIST. He can take care of Himself. I heard a preacher say the other day, "You don't have to set a poodle dog to watch a lion, to take care of a lion. All you have to do is just open the cage and let the lion loose. He will take care of himself." It is identically the same with the Lord JESUS CHRIST. I love to think about His coming. He is coming to display His omnipotent power.

There are many of GOD's choicest evangelists in this day who sob their hearts out, weep their souls out, pay with their heart's Blood, with their sweat, their tears, with sleepless nights, with agony-filled days for the souls that they win to JESUS CHRIST. Yet the world goes on in its heedless way. But, thank GOD, praise GOD, it is going to be changed. One of these days the biggest name in the world will be the name of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. One of these days the biggest job in the world will be serving the blessed Son of GOD.

CHRIST's Coming Severe

The second coming of JESUS CHRIST will not only be sudden, not only spectacular, but also severe.

- It will be severe in its searching.
- It will be severe in its judgments.
- It will be severe in its cursing.
- It will be severe in its castigation.

I want with all my heart and soul for JESUS CHRIST to come, yet I cannot fully say it and mean every bit of it. I cannot say with all my heart that I want JESUS to come right now. There are so many unsaved people who need Him, who may be lost at His coming. Yet, in spite of it all, if I could only see Him, if I could only kneel at His feet, if I could only tell Him face to face how much I love Him! But His coming again may be the end of the dispensation of grace to these multiplied, multitudinous millions who are on the road to a devil's hell.

That is the thought that I have like a burning coal in my heart, on my mind all the time. When He comes again there may be no second chance. When He comes again there may be no Gospel preached. When He comes again the HOLY SPIRIT may be withdrawn.

Some say He will be withdrawn; some say He will not - I do not know. But there is the danger for these unsaved myriads at the coming of the Son of GOD.

THE CONTINUANCE OF CHRISTIANS

The last point of my appeal to you is the most important point of all.

Continue in Holiness

Peter beseeches us to do three things in II Peter chapter 3.

First, we must continue in holiness. GOD help us, GOD help me, GOD help all Bible believing Christians in America, to repent of our sins, to confess them humbly, pleadingly, without hiding a single one of them, to GOD. GOD help us to come again and again under the Blood. GOD help us to live victoriously over sin, to eschew even the appearance of evil.

You remember the records of the early Christians. How the Romans hated them! How the Jews despised them! How the Greeks laughed at them! How they were crucified, imprisoned, scourged, their property confiscated, their women and children ravaged! Oh, the fearful terror that was the lot of our brothers and sisters in CHRIST in the long ago! But when they were sawn asunder, when they were thrown to the lions, when they were burned at stakes, when they were crucified, when the Roman world ran with their Blood like a mighty river, people had to say about them, "See how these Christians live, and see how they die."

I saw a certain great preacher in Los Angeles about three years ago. I was in a revival with him there. During that revival he had a stroke. Three of us went out to see him. He was in bed, raging around, wanting to be up, to be doing something. We sat there and talked to him. He told us about his illness.

He said he was in the parlor walking toward the door when suddenly the attack struck him. He fell to the floor. His wife was upstairs cleaning up. He could not talk. He could not cry for help. He did not know what to do. For all he knew, this was his last hour. After what seemed an interminable period, his wife came down. Frightened, she pulled him up to a couch. The doctor came. He was taken upstairs. The doctor examined him, then called the wife out into the hall. Raising himself on his elbow, the preacher called out after the doctor: "Come back here, doctor! Come back here, wife!"

The doctor and the wife came back a bit frightened. They did not know what he was going to say. Looking at the doctor, who happened to be a Jew, the preacher said, "Doctor, you do not have to leave the room. You don't have to tell anything to my wife that you cannot tell to me. If I am going to be a paralyzed cripple all my life, dragging one foot after me, talking from the side of my mouth as I am doing now, tell me. I will hate it, but I can take it. If, however, you are going to tell my wife that I am going to die, Doctor, just stick around and see how a Christian can die."

What is it I am talking about? The biggest argument against fundamentalism is the lack of love, the lack of real faith, the lack of real loyalty among us. The biggest argument against fundamentalism is that we fundamental people are living as though we did not know the first thing about faith, about love, about the precepts of our adorable Redeemer. There is just one hope for us. We must outlive, outlove, outgive, outshine, outsacrifice all the liberals, as well as all the worldlings.

Continue in Hopefulness

Second, not only must there be a continuance of holiness, but there must also be a continuance in hopefulness. I have made up my mind, after some trying days in a revival when the Lord showed

me again and again how little faith I really had, when He gave mighty victories in spite of my benumbing fears, that I was never again going to sound a sour note. GOD helping me, I am not going to do it any more.

Guarhardt Oncken came to Europe to preach the Gospel.

He was arrested and imprisoned and fined times without number. Every time he was freed he preached again. The magistrate before whom he was brought time after time finally lost patience. Standing up, leaning over the bench, shaking his finger in the face of the preacher, he said, "Mr. Oncken, you are not going to preach."

The preacher straightened up, smiled softly, and looked directly into the face of his tormentor: "Your honor, as long as I can see GOD above your finger, I will keep on preaching."

GOD is not dead. We have plenty of hope in GOD. Let us show that hope to a world. Let us exercise that hope. Let us practice that hope. Let us pray for each other that our ministries, our lives, will be filled with hope.

I never shall forget some of the incidents during the first year of my ministry. When I started out to preach, I would go somewhere for a revival. Big crowds would come. There would be few conversions, little power. People would not pray. I would become glum, blue, discouraged, heartsick, unhappy. The Lord would send some old deacon who did not know very much except that he loved GOD and had a lot of faith.

That old deacon would come up to me and say, "Brother Appelman, don't get discouraged. Just keep on preaching. Just keep right on pouring water into that hole. Pretty soon the rats are going to start coming up."

Lo and behold, they did run out after a while, the rats of hell. They ran from the presence of CHRIST.

There is a bare, black, bleak world against us. It is getting worse. It will keep on getting worse. But there is still a GOD in the heavens. His promises are still in the Bible. We are still His children. If we sow in accordance with His promise, in due season we shall reap if we faint not. The promise still is, "**Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom**" (Luke 12:32).

Continually Make Haste

Peter calls to our minds a third thing. There must not only be holiness, not only hopefulness, but also haste.

We dare not play. The hour is late. Men are dying. We are racing against sin, against Satan, against death, against every trick and trap that hell can suggest. We are racing for souls, the prize.

Men, women, children, all about us will either be welcomed by CHRIST in Heaven or be forever

tormented by the devil in hell. The times call for haste. We must not dilly-dally around. We dare not be "**at ease in Zion.**"

We must not just sit around in church and Bible conferences, drinking in until our souls are fat and sleek. We must not sit there and hear lovely choirs sing until it seems that we can hear the angels echo their voices. It is not enough to let the tears run down our cheeks when one of GOD's servants sings about the love of GOD. It is ours to be inspired, then go back home, and say to the devil, "I will give you neither rest nor peace until GOD calls me home. I will keep on thanking. I will keep on praising. I will keep on preaching. I will keep on giving. I will keep on living. I will keep on sacrificing. Devil, I am going to give you a run for your money."

We are fighting a bitter fight. We are fighting a more bitter fight than have our soldiers in recent wars. We are fighting principalities and powers. We are fighting the devil and all the hosts of hell. The prize is not the freedom of our lives here for a few years upon this earth; the prize is immortal souls to reign and rejoice with JESUS CHRIST in Heaven or to be ruined forever in a devil's hell. The cry of GOD to every one of us is to drink, drink deep; to eat, to eat much; to fill our souls, to fill our hearts, to fill our minds, to fill our lives, then to go out and win as many souls as we can, bringing them to the feet of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. Here, then, is the call to holiness, to hopefulness, to haste.

May the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD use us to start the conflagration we have been talking about, praying about, longing for, in the very depths of our hearts.

~ end of chapter 1 ~
