

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

“I have come to set the earth on fire and how I wish it were already blazing”

Luke 12: 49

Frequently I think about the night sky and how, in certain places in the world you can see millions of those stars. I remember such an experience when sailing down in the Caribbean. Also once over in Ireland far away from any large city where there was no light pollution masking the stars. I could see millions of them. I think about God making those stars. Each one is a fireball like our sun which is our star that gives us light and heat and energy and life. Awhile back the number of the stars was measured in terms of millions and then as we studied the heaven more we began to realize there may be as many as a billion stars. Then we began to learn that not only were there a billion stars but there were a billion stars in our own solar system which is just one of many solar systems. There are literally trillions of stars in the universe.

My question. Why has our Creator God made so many of these fireballs throughout all of his creation? There must be some wonderful reality and fascination with the making of fire and in some way these fireballs capture something of the reality of God. With all the above as a background I chuckle to myself when I hear a person dogmatically say that there is no hell because what God would make a place of perpetual fire? Well, the only way one can make such a statement is if he or she is just not paying attention to the world all around. There is fire everywhere and there is molten fire at the core of this planet and molten fire everywhere in the universe.

And then along comes this Jesus of Nazareth and he says: “I have come to set a fire on the earth and how I wish it were already blazing.” But his fire is not the destructive fire but the transforming fire. His fire is the fire not of hell and punishment but the fire of love and new life and warmth and energy and joy. Jesus’ fire is both a destructive fire and a transforming fire. Not just the destructive or punishing fire of that which is evil and is to be purged and purified but His fire, like our sun, gives life. It is love personified in him and visible in his crucifixion and in his resurrection. The searing transforming light in that tomb on the day before that first Easter we will never know. But something happened which unleashed the power and the fire of this love. This world is a better place because of that fire. It is necessary for life to be at all. The end of the world does not have to come in a conflagration of fire. It can also come in the passion of love unbound and set free. You and I get to choose which fire is unleashed—by the choices we make in our lives. Did you realize that? That is the question of the week.