

Up In Flames

By Bob Price

How quickly things can change. Notre Dame (Our Lady) cathedral in Paris, France, burned on April 15, 2019. The cornerstone of the edifice was laid over 850 years ago in 1163. The cathedral that took two hundred years to complete was reduced to ashes and rubble in the space of a few hours. One of the most iconic structures (and indeed, the world) could not survive its material nature.

We are very sorry to see this happen. It will take many years and much money to rebuild the cathedral.

As Notre Dame burned we were reminded of the frailty and futility of material things. We should pause and remember that nothing on this earth lasts forever, including the earth and sky (as the Kansas song, “Dust in the Wind” suggested) — and, including us. “All we do just crumbles to the ground, though we refuse to see” (*Ibid*).

King Louis VII of France (reigned 1137-1180) wanted to build monuments to show that Paris was the political, economic, and cultural capital of France. In this context, Maurice de Sully, who had been elevated Bishop in 1160, had the old basilica torn down to its foundations, and began to build a larger and taller cathedral.” (“Notre-Dame de Paris,” Wikipedia.org). But King Louis died, and so did the Bishop. Now, the great Catholic monument to France is as those who built it — dust in the wind.

We will die, and the things we build will perish, but our spirit will return to God, Who gave it (Eccl.12:7). This is why we live for eternity — we know the outward person perishes. Yet the inward person of the Christian is renewed daily (2 Cor. 4:16). We do not lose heart when the works of men pass away — we know they are temporary. We set our eyes of faith on eternal things, and endure momentary distresses for our faith (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Exquisite as it was, Notre Dame was just a building, made with human hands. We know that “*we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, **eternal** in the heavens*” (2 Cor. 5:1).

Where are you laying up your treasures (Matt. 6:19-21). When death comes, what will they be worth to you then?

*** (slightly edited)