



# **Fire, The Symbol Of God's Judgment Or God's Love**

**A Teaching Outline**

**Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger**

## The Fire of God

### Leviticus 9:24

Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

As a display of his mighty power, God sent fire from the sky to consume Aaron's offering. The people fell to the ground in awe. Some people wonder if God really exists because they don't see his activity in the world. But God is at work in today's world just as he was in Moses' world. Where a large body of believers is active for him, God tends not to display his power in the form of mighty physical acts. Instead, he works to change the world through the work of these believers. When you realize that, you will begin to see acts of love and faith that are just as supernatural.

## Earth on Fire

### 2 Peter 3:11-12

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he just is not on *our* timetable (Psalm 90:4). Jesus is waiting so that more sinners will repent and turn to him. We must not sit and wait for Christ to return, but we should realize that time is short and we have important work to do. Be ready to meet Christ any time, even today; yet plan your course of service as though he may not return for many years.

The day of the Lord is the day of God's judgment on the earth. Here it is used in reference to Christ's return. Christ's second coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in him. But if we are morally clean and spiritually alert, it won't come as a surprise. .

## **Fire Emanating From God**

### **2 Samuel 22:9**

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

It is David's grand tribute of thanksgiving for deliverance from his numerous and powerful enemies, and establishing him in the power and glory of the kingdom.

## **Fire from God's Servants**

### **Genesis 3:24**

So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Life in the Garden of Eden was like living in heaven. Everything was perfect, and if Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they could have lived there forever. But after disobeying, Adam and Eve no longer deserved paradise, and God told them to leave.

If they had continued to live in the garden and eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever. But eternal life in a state of sin would mean forever trying to hide from God.

Like Adam and Eve, all of us have sinned and are separated from fellowship with God. We do not have to stay separated, however. God is preparing a new earth as an eternal paradise for his people (see Revelation 21-22).

**This is how Adam and Eve broke their relationship with God:**

- (1) They became convinced their way was better than God's way.
- (2) They became self-conscious and hid;
- (3) They tried to excuse and defend themselves.

**To build a relationship with God we must reverse those steps:**

- (1) We must drop our excuses and self-defenses;
- (2) We must stop trying to hide from God;
- (3) We must become convinced that God's way is better than our way.

**Fire from Heaven**

**Exodus 9:23**

Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.

After promising to let the Hebrews go, Pharaoh immediately broke his promise and brought even more trouble upon the land. His actions reveal that his repentance was not real. We do damage to ourselves and to others if we pretend to change but don't mean it.

## Fire of Christ

### Revelation 2:18

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

Thyatira was a working person's town, with many trade guilds for cloth making, dyeing, and pottery. Lydia, Paul's first convert in Philippi, was a merchant from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). The city was basically secular, with no focus on any particular religion. The eyes of the angel were like a flame of fire.

## Fire of Evil

### James 3:5

So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things see how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire!

James compares the damage the tongue can do to a raging fire—the tongue's wickedness has its source in hell itself. The uncontrolled tongue can do terrible damage. Satan uses the tongue to divide people and pit them against one another. Idle and hateful words are damaging because they spread destruction quickly, and no one can stop the results once they are spoken.

We dare not be careless with what we say, thinking we can apologize later, because even if we do, the scars remain. A few words spoken in anger can destroy a relationship that took years to build. Before you speak, remember that words are like fire—you can neither control nor reverse the damage they can do.

## Fire of God's Word

### Jeremiah 20:9

But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

Jeremiah cried out in despair mixed with praise, unburdening his heart to God. He had faithfully proclaimed God's word and had received nothing in return but persecution and sorrow. Yet when he withheld God's word for a while, it became fire in his bones until he could hold it back no longer. When God's living message of forgiveness and love becomes fire in your bones, you also will feel compelled to share it with others, regardless of the results.

## Fire of Hell

### Matthew 13:50

And will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

, Jesus is now displaying another aspect of the Kingdom. The contrast becomes vivid in the transaction—the Kingdom pays the ultimate price to possess the pearl, the price God was willing to pay to redeem us.

## Fire of Judgement

### Isaiah 66:16

For the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by the LORD will be many.

This is a vivid picture of the great judgment that will occur at Christ's second coming (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

## Fire of the Spirit

### Revelation 4:5

Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

In Revelation, lightning and thunder are connected with significant events in heaven. They remind us of the lightning and thunder at Mount Sinai when God gave the people his laws (Exodus 19:16). The Old Testament often uses such imagery to reflect God's power and majesty (Psalm 77:18).

## God Appearing In Fire

### Exodus 3:2-3

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

God spoke to Moses from an unexpected source: a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. God may use unexpected sources when communicating to us too, whether people, thoughts, or experiences. Be willing to investigate, and be open to God's surprises.

Moses saw a burning bush and spoke with God. Many people in the Bible experienced God in visible (not necessarily human) form. Abraham saw the smoking firepot and flaming torch (Genesis 15:17); Jacob wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:24-29). When the slaves were freed from Egypt, God led them by pillars of cloud and fire (13:17-22). God made such appearances to encourage his new nation, to guide them, and to prove the reliability of his verbal message.

## Inward Fire

### Psalm 39:3

My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue:

David resolved to keep his tongue from sin; that is, he decided not to complain to other people about God's treatment of him. David certainly had reason to complain. He was the anointed king of Israel, but he had to wait many years before taking the throne.

Then one of his sons tried to kill him and become king instead. But when David could not keep still any longer, he took his complaints directly to God. We all have complaints about our job, money, or situation, but complaining to others may make them think that God cannot take care of us. It may also look as if we blame God for our troubles. Instead, like David, we should take our complaints directly to God. He can take it.

## Lake Of Fire

### Revelation 20:14

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire this is the second death, the lake of fire.

Death and the grave are thrown into the lake of fire. God's judgment is finished. The lake of fire is the ultimate destination of everything wicked—Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the demons, death, the grave, and all those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life because they did not place their faith in Jesus Christ.

John's vision does not permit any gray areas in God's judgment. If by faith we have not identified with Christ, confessing him as Lord, there will be no hope, no second chance, and no other appeal.

## Saved From Fire

### Jude 1:23

Save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

Bringing people to Jesus saves them from God's judgment. We can do this through compassion and kindness. We are to hate the sin, but we must witness to and love the sinner. Unbelievers, no matter how successful they seem by worldly standards, are lost and in need of salvation. We should not take witnessing lightly—it is a matter of life and death.

In trying to find common ground with those to whom we witness, we must be careful not to fall into the quicksand of compromise. When reaching out to others, we must be sure that our own footing is safe and secure. Be careful not to become so much like non-Christians that no one can tell who you are or what you believe. Influence them for Christ—don't allow them to influence you to sin!

As the letter begins, so it ends—with assurance. God keeps believers from falling prey to false teachers. Although false teachers are widespread and dangerous, we don't have to be afraid if we trust God and are rooted and grounded in him.

## The Holy Spirit Described As Fire

### Acts 2:3-4

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

This was a fulfillment of John the Baptist's words about the Holy Spirit's baptizing with fire (Luke 3:16) and of the Prophet Joel's words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28, 29). Why tongues of fire? Tongues symbolize speech and the communication of the Good News.

Fire symbolizes God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others. On Mount Sinai, God confirmed the validity of the Old Testament law with fire from heaven (Exodus 19:16-18). At Pentecost, God confirmed the validity of the Holy Spirit's ministry by sending fire. At Mount Sinai, fire came down on one place; at Pentecost, fire came down on many believers, symbolizing that God's presence is available to all who believe in him.

### **Men walking about in the fire**

#### **Daniel 3:25**

He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

It was obvious to those watching that this fourth person was supernatural. We cannot be certain who the fourth man was. It could have been an angel or a preincarnate appearance of Christ. In either case, God sent a heavenly visitor to accompany these faithful men during their time of great trial.

### **For our God is a consuming fire.**

#### **Revelation 20:15**

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

At the judgment, the books will be opened. The Book of Life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them. These books also contain the recorded deeds of everyone, good or evil. Everyone's life will be reviewed and evaluated. No one is saved by deeds, but deeds are seen as clear evidence of a person's actual relationship with God. Jesus will look at how we have handled gifts, opportunities, and responsibilities.

God's gracious gift of salvation does not free us from the requirement of faithful obedience and service. Each of us must serve Christ in the best way we know and live each day knowing the books will one day be opened.

### **An invitation is given to open your heart's door to Jesus**

#### **Rev. 3:20**

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

#### **To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

#### **References:**

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print