

Baptism Of Fire

“**Fire**” in reference to God represents many different aspect of His divine character. It appears as a symbol of God’s presence and power in **Genesis 15-18**. In the Old Testament, *fire* was closely associated with Israel’s worship and religious life. On God’s direct instructions, a *fire* was kept burning continuously on the altars where burnt offerings were sacrificed (**Lev. 6:13**).

God also used *fire* to guide His people. God spoke to Moses in the burning bush (**Exodus 3:2-12**). In their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites relied each night on a “*pillar of fire*” from heaven to guide them (**Ex. 13:21**). In **Ex. 19:18** it tell us that, “***Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently.***”

Numerous references to *fire* in the Bible emphasised God’s judgement on sin and wickedness (**Ex. 24:17; Duet. 4:24; Heb. 12:29**). **Gen. 19:24** says, “***Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens.***”

Fire was also used in reference to baptism. John the Baptist answered, saying to all, “***I indeed baptise you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire***” (**Matthew. 3:11; Luke 3:16**). John’s baptism placed the individual in the medium of water, which was a type of salvation experience. However, the baptism of Christ places the individual in *the Spirit and fire*. Whereas spiritually, water only cleanses superficially, fire is far more powerful as it can either purify or destroy.

Water was ceremonial and the repentance, though real, did not bring the person to full salvation. John knew this, and he was convinced that when the Messiah comes He would completely overshadow the work he had started. Jesus would be mightier, He would be more worthy, and His ministry would reach farther because He would baptise with *the Holy Spirit and fire*.

Being fully immersed in the Holy Spirit and fire completely purifies God’s people – making them holy as He is holy. At the point of salvation, the old sinful nature is purged with fire and the new man, who is *being transformed into the image of Christ*, is birthed. I believe that the Spirit of Holiness cleanses us from all unrighteousness in order for us to *boldly enter the throne room of grace* (**Heb. 4:16**) – to be able to stand in the presence of the Most High God without guilt of condemnation.

God is represented as a “***consuming fire***” (**Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29**). Therefore, when you are in His presence nothing except purity and holiness is acceptable. Numerous references to God’s fire in the Bible emphasise His judgement on sin, wickedness and unbelief.

The prophet Amos warned, “***Seek the Lord and live, lest He break out like a fire in your house and devour it***” (**Amos 5:6**). **Hebrews 12:28** says, “***Let us have grace by which we may serve the Lord acceptably with reverence and Godly fear.***” But how do we serve the Lord acceptably? **Romans 12:1, 2** says, “***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.***”

I'm sure we are all expecting God to move mightily throughout this year, and beyond. However, in order to have more of God, it will require us to serve Him more *appropriately*. This is an acceptable sacrifice that's well pleasing to Him. Therefore, you cannot expect God to increase His presence and power in an environment of sin and unbelief. And remember this; the Bible refers to believers as "saints" – holy ones. This is how He sees us. This is how He has created us to be.

Fire is a source of both heat and light, therefore, fire is often pictured in scripture as God's agent to purify and also illuminate. The coming Messenger of the Lord is portrayed as a "**refiner's fire.**" **Mal. 3:2-3 - "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire. And like launderers' soap He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."**

If *fire* is heat and light then the tongues "**as of fire**" that came with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost underscored the *illuminating* quality of God's truth (**Acts 2:3**). As we experience more of God, His *refining fire* will increase but so too will the illuminating quality of His infallible word - whether it be *logos, rhema* or personal *prophecy*.

Therefore, don't always look for God in the spectacular, for He might manifest Himself as a *still small voice*. **1 Kings 19:11-12, Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.**

So remember, where there's fire there's also light the illuminating voice of the Lord.