

THE FIRE OF GOD

2. Fire Purifies & Proves



Introduction

In our last study we were speaking about the fire of God. We have seen that God revealed himself to Moses in a fire. When the Apostle John saw Jesus in a vision, he described his eyes as ‘flames of fire’. The Word of God says, “The Lord your God is a consuming fire.” We know God is love, but as we look at this revelation of God as fire, it helps us understand that he is also a God who is holy and powerful. Now we will see that just as fire is used to purify and prove, so does the ‘fire of God’ in our lives.

1. Fire Purifies

Today precious metals like gold and silver are purified at high temperatures. It is interesting to see that God gave similar instructions to the people of Israel thousands of years ago.

- ◆ How were objects that were taken in time of war to be cleansed? Numbers 31:21-23
(Objects taken in time of war had to be put into fire to be cleansed and then purified in water.)
- ◆ Why do you think God gave such a command?
(Many of the objects the Israelites would take in wartime had been used by their enemies for worship of other gods. In order to be cleansed they had to go through fire and water. Not only does fire and water cleanse in the physical realm, but also this is symbolic of cleansing in the spiritual realm.)

God wanted all objects that had been used for worship of other gods to be cleansed, so they could be dedicated to his use. The same is true in our lives. He wants to purify us, so we will be holy. The last book of the Old Testament gives a prophecy about this.

- ◆ Turn to Malachi 3:1-3. What do these verses mean, and what do they tell us about Jesus?
(Verse 1 begins with a prophecy about John the Baptist who would prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. The rest of the verse speaks about Jesus’ return. Verse 2 shows us what Jesus comes to do in people’s lives – to purify and refine, so our lives will be righteous.)
- ◆ What is one of the ways God uses in our lives to purify us? 1 Peter 1:6-7
(God uses all kinds of trials to refine us. He does this so our faith will be proven and become strong, so that our lives will bring praise, glory and honour to Jesus.)
- ◆ Some of us have gone through trials in our lives, and as we have looked back we have seen that God has used these to change us. Share.

Although we may face difficulties and trials, God gives us a wonderful promise in Isaiah 43:1-2.

2. Fire Proves

Not only does fire purify, but it also proves or tests to see what is genuine. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3:9-15. Here we see that our lives are like buildings, and at the same time we are the builders.

- ◆ What is the only foundation that can stand the fire? 1 Corinthians 3:11
(Jesus Christ)
- ◆ Many people profess to believe in Jesus, but according to him, what does believing in him really mean? Matthew 7:24
(It means to believe in him and obey his commandments.)
- ◆ The question we need to ask ourselves is, what are we building on the foundation in our lives, and what are we building in the lives of others? How will the quality of our work be tested? 1 Corinthians 3:13
(It will be tested by fire.)

Paul's picture is clear. If a house is built of wood, hay and straw it will quickly disappear in a fire. However if it is built with gold, silver and costly stones, it will remain, even after a fire. Obviously we need to build with these precious materials.

- ◆ What do you think these costly materials represent in our lives? Also see Galatians 5:6-7, 1 Corinthians 10:31
(It represents only those things that have been done for the glory of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit.)

Conclusion

God is working in our lives to prepare us to be in his presence. Yes, he is a God of love, but as we have seen he is also a holy God – he is a consuming fire. Nothing unclean can stand before him. Revelation 21:27 says, “Nothing impure will ever enter heaven.” He allows trials to come into our lives so we will be purified. This is because he loves us and wants us to be with him forever.