

Forgotten Pictures of God: God as Fire

Our Journey Through This Picture

1. **Biblical Foundations** - Examining fire imagery across the Old and New Testaments
2. **Revealed Characteristics** - Understanding what fire teaches us about God's nature
3. **Application** - Identifying and embracing the implications for our relationship with God

"For our God is a consuming fire." - Hebrews 12:29

Why Fire Imagery Matters

Fire imagery appears throughout Scripture to reveal essential truths about God's _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____—truths that transform our understanding of both God and ourselves.

Fire in Ancient Context

In the ancient world:

- Fire was essential for _____
- Fire was mysterious and _____, inspiring awe
- Many _____ cultures worshiped fire or fire gods
- Fire represented divine _____ and _____

God transformed the use of this universal symbol to reveal His unique nature, distinguishing Himself from false gods while using imagery His people could understand.

Old Testament: Fire Reveals God's Character

Key Biblical Encounters

- **Abraham:** God passes through as _____ and _____ (Genesis 15:17-21)
- **Moses:** The _____ - God's revelation (Exodus 3:2-5)
- **Wilderness:** _____ for guidance (Exodus 13:21-22)
- **Mount Sinai:** "The LORD _____ on it in fire" (Exodus 19:18)
- **Tabernacle:** Fire consuming _____ (Leviticus 9:24)
- **Elijah:** Fire _____ who is the true God (1 Kings 18:38)

What Fire Communicates About God

1. God's _____

- **Visible Manifestation:** Made the invisible God perceptible (Exodus 24:17)
- **Guide in Darkness:** Constant presence through uncertainty (Exodus 13:21)
- **Awe-Inspiring:** Unmistakable and undeniable presence (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

2. God's _____

- **Unapproachable Light:** Creates boundaries that cannot be casually crossed
- **Consuming Holiness:** Nadab and Abihu consumed for "unauthorized fire" (Leviticus 10:1-2)
- **Separate from Sin:** Perfect holiness cannot coexist with impurity
- **Cleansing Power:** Fire cleanses Isaiah for service (Isaiah 6:6-7)

3. God's _____

- **Sodom and Gomorrah:** Fire from heaven (Genesis 19:24)
- **Korah's Rebellion:** Fire consumed 250 men (Numbers 16:35)
- **Elijah and Captains:** Fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10)

4. God's _____

- **Isaiah's Cleansing:** Burning coal removes guilt and sin (Isaiah 6:6-7)
- Same fire that reveals holiness becomes means of purification

5. God's _____

- **Defensive Barrier:** "Wall of fire all around" (Zechariah 2:5)
- **Present in Persecution:** Fourth man in fiery furnace (Daniel 3:25)
- Fire that threatens becomes means of demonstrating protective care

6. God's _____

- **Covenant Making:** God passes through fire (Genesis 15:17)
- **Accepting Sacrifices:** Fire consumed acceptable offerings
- **Perpetual Flame:** Altar fire never to go out (Leviticus 6:12-13)
- **Guidance:** Cloud by day, fire by night (Numbers 9:15-16)

New Testament: Fire Imagery Develops

The Old Testament established fire as God's presence and activity. The New Testament develops this imagery in profound ways, transitioning from primarily external manifestations to **indwelling spiritual reality**.

Fire and the Holy Spirit

- **Promised Baptism:** "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11)
- **Pentecost Fulfillment:** "Divided tongues as of fire appeared" (Acts 2:3)
- **Ongoing Reality:** "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 5:19)

Fire and Jesus

- **Divine Glory:** Face shone like sun in Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2)
- **Physical Description:** Eyes like flame of fire (Revelation 1:14)
- **Purifying Presence:** "Like a refiner's fire" (Malachi 3:2)
- **Division and Decision:** "I came to cast fire on the earth" (Luke 12:49)
- **Perfect Sacrifice:** Bore the fire of God's judgment against sin

Fire and God the Father

- **Consuming Fire:** "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29)
- **Refining Love:** Discipline motivated by love, not to destroy but purify
- **Final Judgment:** Creating "new heavens and new earth" (2 Peter 3:10-13)

Personal Application: Fire in the Believer's Life

Individual Christian Life

- **Tested by Fire:** Trials refine faith like fire purifies gold (1 Peter 4:12)
- **Filled with Fire:** Don't quench the Spirit within (1 Thessalonians 5:19)
- **Burning with Zeal:** Be "fervent in spirit" - literally "boiling/hot" (Romans 12:11)

Spiritual Formation - When We Encounter God as Fire:

- **Illumination:** God's light reveals sin and truth
- **Purification:** His presence burns away what is not of Him
- **Energizing:** His Spirit empowers us for service
- **Warming:** His love melts coldness toward Him and others
- **Protection:** His presence guards us from spiritual enemies
- **Direction:** His light guides our path forward

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" - Luke 24:32

Church Application: God's Fire in Community

The Church as God's Fireplace

A healthy church manifests God's presence through:

- _____: Genuine passion and reverence
- _____: Illuminates Scripture and engages hearts
- _____: Warms with faith, truth, hope, love and care
- _____: Loving, restorative correction
- _____: Zealous service spreading God's light

When Churches Lose Their Fire

- **Warning to Ephesus:** Abandoned first love (Revelation 2:4)

- **Warning to Laodicea:** Lukewarm, neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3:16)

Rekindling: Through repentance, prayer, and renewed devotion (James 5:16)

The Gospel in Fire Imagery

1. **Our Condition:** As sinners, God's fire would consume us (Hebrews 12:29)
2. **Christ's Intervention:** Jesus took the fiery wrath of God's justice upon Himself
3. **Our Salvation:** We receive God's presence to dwell within us (Matthew 3:11)
4. **Our Transformation:** God's fire refines and purifies His people (Malachi 3:2-3)

The gospel transforms our relationship to God's fire from terror to embrace.

Eternal Perspective

Understanding Judgment

- God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11)
 - Judgment respects human choice - consistent rejection leads to consuming fire
 - Should motivate urgent, compassionate evangelism (2 Corinthians 5:11)
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Living in Light of God as Fire

For All Believers:

- **Embrace** God's refining process
- **Don't quench** the Spirit's fire
- **Let your light shine** before others
- **Respond to God** with both love and awe

For Leaders:

- Lead with both **passion and purity**
- Seek to be **filled afresh** with the Spirit's fire
- Create space for **God's refining work**
- Model **reverent intimacy** with God

Conclusion: Rekindling Our Vision

Remember God's _____: Our God is a consuming fire—holy, powerful, purifying, and transformative

Revel in God's _____: Through Christ, approach the fire not in terror but in reverent joy

Reflect God's _____: Become bearers of His light to a world in darkness

"May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." - 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Discussion Questions

1. Which aspect of God's fire (presence, holiness, judgment, purification, protection, provision) speaks most to your current life situation?
2. How can we maintain the balance between intimate love and appropriate reverence for God?
3. In what ways might God be using "fiery trials" to refine your faith right now?
4. How does God as a fire give the church hope?
5. How can our church better reflect the passionate, Spirit-filled community described in Acts?
6. What does it mean practically to "not quench the Spirit" in daily life?