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*DAY 1 BRIAN GIBBS*

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Today, we enter into a chosen time that we set apart unto The Lord. As the family of God, just as it is important to set our priorities to the Word of God, prayer and worship, it is just as important for believers to fast. Fasting is not a religious duty—it's a love language that we share in communion with the Lord—spirit, soul and body.

For the New Year of 2025, we chose the theme of “Burning Ones” specifically to speak and declare the Lord JESUS as our ultimate Burning One, and that from Him and Him alone, we receive the fire of His eternal love as our greatest treasure. He is our great High Priest that keeps the fire upon our hearts burning (see Hebrews 4). Our God is a consuming fire (see Hebrews 12:29). This year as we cultivate revival, we set our hearts to freshly encounter Jesus and burn with His love and holy passions. Thank you for joining us this year and for pressing into the Lord's heart in fasting. May each of you receive a fresh encounter from God, and may it be burning and ongoing each new day.

**BURNING ONES**

Our God is an all-consuming fire. The Scriptures tell us that everything around God is ablaze because of the fire of His holiness. The Prophet Daniel describes His Mighty Throne ablaze: “I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge. His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like purest wool. He sat on a fiery throne with wheels of blazing fire, and a river of fire was pouring out, flowing from his presence. Millions of angels ministered to him; many millions stood to attend him...” (Daniel 7:9&10 NLT).

The Apostle John in the book of Revelation spoke of The Burning One and wrote: “...and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Revelation 1:13-16 NKJV).

When the prophet Ezekiel encountered the throne of God, he beheld The Burning One and wrote: “Above this surface was something that looked like a throne made of blue lapis lazuli. And on this throne high above was a figure whose appearance resembled a man. From what appeared to be his waist up, he looked like gleaming amber, flickering like a fire. And from his waist down, he looked like a burning flame, shining with splendor. All around him was a glowing halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the Lord looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell face down on the ground...” (Ezekiel 1:26-28 NLT).

Seraphim are the angels who worship all around the burning throne of Almighty God. The word seraphim means, “burning ones”. The prophet Isaiah described these fiery heavenly angels as ones who have six wings and worship above The Lord on His throne. (Isaiah 6:1&2)

To encounter God, or when God encounters you, is to encounter fire—His burning, holy unquenchable love! The Holy Spirit is known as “the Spirit of burning.” (See Isaiah 4) The Holy Spirit manifests before the throne as seven flaming lamps of fire— seven for perfection, completeness and wisdom. “And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Revelation 4:5 NASB).

The word encounter conveys the idea of an unforeseen meeting. When Peter, James and John walked up on the mountain with the Lord, they never could have imagined that Jesus would be transfigured before their very eyes and His heavenly glory would be manifested for them to behold (see Matthew 17). They had no idea that something life changing was about to happen. Suddenly, The Lord was turned inside out with a dazzling display of His glory. This encounter was so remarkable that even Moses and Elijah showed up as well.

I think it's very notable that Jesus told them not to tell of this encounter they had witnessed until an appointed time. I believe many things that God reveals to us privately are not always open for public consumption and that our stewardship of holy things is a sure test. Divine encounters are initiated by God. They cannot be manufactured. Divine encounters are available for those who hunger and desire to know God. We must seek first The King and His kingdom. Jesus promised, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). The Bible accounts describe God having unexpected and life changing interactions with people. Since the Lord never changes, He continues to deal with humanity in powerful, unanticipated ways.

An encounter with God can happen anywhere—at home, in church, on a walk, or while driving—but what is certain, wherever He shows up, you will always feel an awesome sense of His loving presence and holiness.

When Isaiah went to the temple one day, he had no idea that something life changing was about to happen. Isaiah encountered "...the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple." (Isaiah 6) When the Lord appeared to Isaiah, He was accompanied by angelic beings who covered their faces in utter reverence for His absolute purity and perfection as they cried out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." This glimpse into the spiritual dimension overwhelmed Isaiah with an awareness of God's glory and holiness. We cannot be so bound to virtual reality in this life that it keeps us from truly apprehending His nearness in the unseen realm. His kingdom is at hand and His name is still Immanuel – which means, God with us.

My prayer for you and for myself during this fast (and the remainder of 2025) is that we all experience a fresh encounter of The Lord himself and His all-consuming burning love.

I'm going to close today with this scripture from Psalm 36 in the Message Translation:

“God’s love is meteoric,  
his loyalty astronomic,  
His purpose titanic,  
his verdicts oceanic.  
Yet in his largeness  
nothing gets lost;  
Not a man, not a mouse,  
slips through the cracks.  
How exquisite your love, O God!  
How eager we are to run under your wings,  
To eat our fill at the banquet you spread  
as you fill our tankards with Eden spring water.  
You’re a fountain of cascading light,  
and you open our eyes to light.”

Psalm 36:5-9 (The Message)