

ZOOM STUDY: IMPORTANT BIBLICAL SYMBOLS

FIRE

1.) Just as we use fire in numerous ways, so too the Lord uses fire in a variety of contexts. Below are five occasions on which the Lord appeared to his people as fire. Why do you think he took on this form on these occasions? What does fire naturally communicate to us?

Genesis 15:17-18a When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram.

Exodus 3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to [Moses] in flames of fire from within a bush.

Exodus 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Exodus 19:18 The LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently.

Ezekiel 1:4-5,26-27 I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, ⁵ and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. ... Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. ²⁷ I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

2.) How do the Scriptures often (but by no means always) describe angels? Why would they appear this way?

Ezekiel 1:13-14 The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures; it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it.

Matthew 28:3-4 [The angel's] appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

Hebrews 1:7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire."

3.) Besides communicating God's awesome power and holiness, how is fire used to describe his work in the following passages?

Matthew 3:11 "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Acts 2:3-4 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire.

2 Timothy 1:6-7 Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

4.) Fire has several beneficial uses. What is being communicated in the following passages?

Malachi 3:2-3 “But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness.”

Isaiah 6:5-7 “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.” Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

5.) What characteristic of fire is on display in the following passages?

Isaiah 66:15-16 See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD.

2 Peter 3:7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Matthew 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Revelation 20:15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

6.) Fire has been all over the news this year. How does it illustrate the power and destructive capacity of God’s wrath and judgment?

7.) Have you ever burned yourself badly? Describe it. What inside does that give you into the punishment that awaits God’s enemies?

Closing Prayer: Holy Spirit, use your Word to burn the wickedness and sinfulness from our lives. Fan into flame our faith in Christ Jesus so that we may bring gospel warmth to those around us. Amen.