

“GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE”

Deut.4:24; Heb.12:29

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This is a side of God we do not necessarily like to think about, and one that many professed believers in God’s existence deny!
2. Nevertheless, it is a Bible fact that should be impressed upon our minds, one that is expressly stated more than once – at least one time each in each of the O.T. and the N.T., and one that is referred to in several different passages in different ways.
3. Naturally we are more comfortable thinking about and dwelling on the fact that the Bible emphasizes in passage after passage that God is a God of love, infinite love, and the God of all comfort.
4. However, it is necessary for our spiritual welfare and even to our service in righteousness and holy living that we always be mindful of the fact that God is not only a God of love and the God of all comfort, but also that “God is a consuming fire”!
5. Being aware of this fact and it alone will help us see and understand the seriousness of being guilty of sin, and help us to see and understand sin as God sees it.
6. No doubt all will agree that conviction determines conduct.
 - a. Whether or not one believes God exists determines one’s conduct before him. Cf. Psa.10:4-11.
 - b. The one who denies God’s existence is not concerned with pleasing him, neither does he fear displeasing him.
 - c. This principle is exemplified daily by those around us. Cf. Psa.14:1; 53:1.
 - d. One whose convictions are that God is simply and only a God of love is normally going to conduct himself as if God only blesses; that he does not condemn anyone eternally; that there is no way God is a consuming fire!
7. Just as it is not enough to simply believe that “God is,” but that he is “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Heb.11:6.
 - a. In other words, that both believing that “God is” and that the believer must “diligently seek” God are necessary in order for God to be his “rewarder.”
 - b. Believing in one without the other is not enough!

8. So it is that one must believe that God is both a God of love and a consuming fire.
 - a. Without this concept of God men tend to think of him only as a kind of loving doting “grandfather” who gives gifts to or rewards his children without any regard for their character or their behavior.
9. Therefore, we emphasize the need for being convinced by Bible evidence that “God is a consuming fire.” Once we are we will then be aware of the seriousness of sin and why we must live righteous lives in obedience to God’s written word!

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, THE TWO BIBLE PASSAGES WHICH SPECIFICALLY DECLARE THAT “GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.”

1. Deut.4:24
 - a. Moses told Israel that Jehovah was “a consuming fire” in order to exhort them to be faithful to the covenant into which they had entered at Mt. Sinai and in the plains of Moab, 4:1,2.
 - b. He reminds them of the unfaithfulness of their forbearers and a few of their peers, 4:3-13.
 - c. He warns against idolatry which has tempted them from the beginning, 4:14-20.
 - d. Furthermore, he warns them by his own example of stumbling which necessitated his own dying in Moab and not crossing over Jordan, 4:21,22.
 - e. Therefore they must take heed and keep God’s word without addition or subtraction because their God is a consuming fire, 4:23,24.
2. Heb.12:29 also characterizes God as “a consuming fire,” in the context of a chapter that deals with patient faithfulness and chastening from the Lord.
 - a. First of all the author urges faithfulness and patience upon one and all looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, as the perfect example of endurance, Vv.1-4.
 - b. He then begins to speak to them of their forgetting the Lord’s exhortation to despise not the chastening of the

Lord, not to faint when they are rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, Vv.5,6.

- c. The writer explains that every “child” is chastened and disciplined or else he is illegitimate, Vv.7,8.
- d. He declares that the Lord’s chastening is not necessarily joyous, but is nevertheless profitable for the believer, V.11.
- e. Believers are encouraged to endure this chastening and not be wearied and faint in your minds in view of the exalted character of the faith of Christ that is contrasted with the law of Moses and Judaism. In the faith of Christ and in the kingdom of Christ we have:
 - (1) A better covenant, Vv.18-21.
 - (2) A better citizenship, worship, fellowship with a better hope, a better system of justice, and a better promise, Vv.22-23.
 - (3) A better Mediator and a better sacrifice, V.24.
 - (4) A kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken or removed), V.28.
- f. Having been presented with the better aspects of the new system as opposed to the old, we are exhorted not to refuse him that spoke from heaven and shook the earth because next time he will shake both heaven and earth leaving only those persons that are indeed citizens of the heavenly kingdom, Vv.25-28.
- g. The writer’s conclusion, in view of the character of God’s impending judgment against all that is unredeemed, is that we should serve God with reverence and godly fear – “For our God is a consuming fire,” Vv.28b,29.

B. ADDITIONAL RELATED PASSAGES REFERRING TO THE FACT OF GOD BEING A CONSUMING FIRE.

- 1. O.T.: Deut.9:3; Isa.10:16-18; 29:6; 30:27,30; 66:15,16; Zeph.1:18; Mal.4:1.
- 2. N.T.: Mt.25:41; Heb.10:26-31; 2Pet.3:7; Jude 7. Cf. Mt.18:8,9; Mk.9:43-48; Rom.11:22.

C. WHOM, WHEN AND WHERE WILL GOD CONSUME WITH FIRE?

1. Many professed believers are mistaken in their view that the one once saved by faith will never come into judgment and condemnation.
 - a. They pervert such passages as Rom.8:1,31-39 seeking to justify their position.
 - (1) Cf. Vv.12,13 as an answer.
 - (2) Also the fact that though no outside being or force can do it, one's own loss of faith can!
 - b. They also seek to justify their erroneous conclusion by Jno.5:24.
 - (1) Cf. Jno.8:31,32 – must continue to be a believer.
 - (2) See Psa.106:12,24; 1Tim.4:1; Heb.2:1-3; Gal.1:6-9; Gal.5:1-4; Heb.6:4-6; 10:26-29; 2Pet.2:20-22.
2. All men will appear before the Lord in judgment to give an account when and where “God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil, Eccl.12:13,14; Ac.17:30,31; Rom.14:11,12; 2:6,16; 2Cor.5:10.
3. At that time the impenitent disobedient will be judged unfaithful and unprepared and will be consumed with fire, Mt.13:49,50; 18:8,9; 25:41,46; Mk.9:43-48.
4. 2Th.1:6-10 tells us about the who, the what, the when involving the flaming fire at the final judgment of the Lord on all men, the just and the unjust. Cf. 1Jno.2:3-5; 5:3 – on knowing God.

III. CONCLUSION

1. It's a Bible fact that in addition to God being a God of love and the God of all comfort, he is a consuming fire.
 - a. He consumed Israel.
 - (1) God threatened them with this from the beginning, Lev.26; Deut.27,28.
 - (2) God kindled the fire during the captivity, Jer.17:27; 21:14; Ezek.20:47.
 - (3) However, he did not make a full end at that time, Jer.4:27; 5:10,18; 30:11; 46:28; Ezek.11:13.

- (4) The time did come when God would and did destroy the Jews, as the physical seed of Abraham, Dan.9:26,27; Mt.3:7-12; Mt.24:1:34; Lk.19:41-48; 21:5-33; Mk.13:1-37.
 - (5) The Jewish economy pertaining to fleshly Israel vanished away with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general, Titus, in AD 70. See Col.2:11-23; Heb.8:7-13; 2Cor.3:1-17.
 - (6) Both the religion, Judaism, and the people (that is, fleshly Israel) have been consumed by God's fire, Mt.3:7-12; Lk.3:9. (Of course, all Jews are offered salvation in Christ on the basis as all Gentiles, on the basis of faith in and obedience to the gospel of Christ; this is the only way either Jew or Gentile can be saved in this dispensation of time.)
 - b. He consumed the Antediluvians of Noah's day.
 - c. As we have seen, he will consume the unfaithful, disobedient, the unprepared, at the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ and the final judgment of all men.
2. The question I ask of you at this time: Are you prepared, faithful and ready to meet the Lord in judgment?
- a. There is only one way you can answer that question in the affirmative and that's to be able to affirm in the light of Bible facts that you have by faith obeyed the gospel of Christ and by faith have continued in the faith of Christ!