

## Week 7: Expectations

### Who is God: God looks like Fire

You could say God is spirit. We call it the Holy Ghost. Yet, in the mist of all those metaphors God seems to appear as fire. God uses fire to illustrate his purpose. I am not sure why God uses fire. The flood is water. God causes earthquakes several times. When it comes to getting people's attention: God chooses the form of fire. My guess is that God cannot be touched. An external current can jolt you. A power pole can kill you. Spiritual visions and power are cool but they don't kill. To touch the source of God would be fatal. So, fire makes sense because we can't touch it.

1. What are the images of God you have pictured in your head?

---

---

---

---

In the beginning of the Bible we are introduced to God as Spirit hovering over the waters. It says God made things but it does not describe God. When God tosses Adam and Eve out of the garden he places a flaming sword over the way back in. I find it curious that he chose that image. We had no fire until that point. Fire is a good way to block an entrance too. Later a covenant was made between Abram and God. A torch of fire went between the two halves of an animal to seal the deal. God again uses fire as his representative.

1. What are some symbols that represent things like for example the eagle and America?

---

---

---

---

The creation or discovery of fire is a big deal. Fire is the only way we feel safe. Fire keeps us warm. Fire feeds us. Fire protects us. Fire is also a way home or a signal of danger. We use fire for so many things. A bomb is rapid fire. We need fire to spark a bullet. Fire flies jet planes, steam engines, and our cars. Fire heats houses and bonds metal together. Fire clears forests and also refurbishes old forests. Fire is friendly and dangerous yet we need it. There are good reasons God chose fire to show himself and his plans.

It's interesting that Christian living is all about fire. We light candles. Some churches burn incense. There is a metaphor of the Holy Spirit burning within us. Do we have the fire of Christ in us? Our study will certainly involve Jesus but to build a fire we have to make a fire. The foundation of knowing God and understanding his character is trial by fire. We should see our lives in God the Father, God the Son, and God the spirit. We call this traditionally the Spirit filled life. They call that life being on fire for God. God could also be called refiners fire.

As one, God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit are God. As individuals, they use fire to explain and show themselves. Jesus eyes in Revelation are described like fire. God is described as a burning bush or pillar of fire. The Holy Spirit is like tongues of fire from heaven.

For next week read the verses below and think about what fires burn in you good and bad: for example, jealousy or a promotion.

**Revelation 1:14** *"The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire."*

**Acts 2:2-3** *"Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."*

**Deuteronomy 4:33** *"Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived?"*

1. God is heard walking in Eden. God is seen within a burning bush and pillar of smoke and fire. Why can't God just show himself. Recently I have been thinking about being near God. In heaven people seem to fall at their feet and worship. I wonder if Gods goodness and holiness is so powerful that we would be overcome with shame, awesomeness, and humbleness. That might make us faint in terror or fall in reverence. Maybe a flaming sword is better than a regular sword protecting Eden. It means God means business more than being lackadaisical.

**Gen 3:24** *"After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side[a] of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."*

2. God chose to appear as fire more than spirit. So, we don't see objects move by themselves or a white sheet hover nearby. I find it interesting that people say God does not exist because we can't see him. The favorite analogy is we can't see the wind. Yet we can see what wind can do. We can feel wind. However, like God, we can't see it. In the Bible, we see God in burning bushes, pillars of smoke and fire. Is that it? No, we see God in miracles, resurrections, and healings. We also see God in Jesus and the changed lives of those who met Jesus. Those touched by the Spirit of God. God is not unseen.

**Ex 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."*

3. Next week we will look at the wrath of God by fire. Most people identify God with wrath and fire. In the Old Testament, God chose to reveal himself by fire. He blocked Eden by fire. God uses fire for his goals. God also uses fire to prove a point. I like the statement *one thing I have learned God is God and I am not him*. I cannot use fire by my will to prove a point. God shows his mighty power with the

mightiest thing: fire. He burns up a city. Causes frozen hail to burn. There is a huge pillar of fire. Yes, God also can use fire to burn up an offering. Leviticus 9:24 is cool because God burns up the sacrifice and the people fell on their faces. Reverence can come in power. It can also come in the form of worship, fear, and terror. Maybe reverence by fire is a smart move.

**Lev 9:24** *“Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown.”*

4. I like to listen to a certain song that is interesting. It’s by Jesus Culture and it’s called *Glory*. The singer is asking us to jump in the fire and that the fire would reign down. Personally, I want to see God’s glory but I’m not that cool on going near it. The fire of God is a dangerous thing. It’s fire and not a shower or confetti. I get why the singer wants to be near God, but stay out of the fire. Acts 2 is a better option. Tongues of fire came from heaven and rested upon the people.

Jesus came down to tell us the truth about God. Jesus said he would send another to help us understand God better. In Acts 2 we find the people receiving the Spirit and it comes down looking like tongues of fire. The people start speaking in their native language, yet all the people understand it as their own. Fire divides like in Genesis 3. Fire burns like in Leviticus 9. Fire also unites like here in Acts 2.

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

Read some extra verses if you like Ex 3:2, Gen 15:17

## **The Jesus Connection**

In the Old Testament Jesus is not used by name. He is depicted as themes of the one to come. So many people discount Jesus because of this apparent discrepancy. They say he is not the Christ that the Prophets predicted. They say he is not Emmanuel as named in the Old books. Jesus will be a warrior. Jesus will be the deliverer of the Jewish nation. In Jesus day, the Jewish leaders were looking for that person. They also had a good thing going and did not want God disrupting their livelihood. As odd as that seems, that is why they were at odds with Jesus much of the time.

So, if Jesus did not use fire, then why call him the one sent by God? The Spirit and God the Father appeared as fire several times. If Jesus is God then why not fire? I believe we mistake the first coming of Jesus with the second. Ok, then why two comings? I feel Jesus needed to do one thing only in the first coming. He introduced a grace period. Let me walk you through this with three verses.

**Luke 21:24** *“They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”*

**Romans 6:14** *“For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.*

**Ephesians 2:8** *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”*

There are so many more verses, but I want to keep this short and simple. In the Luke verse Jesus mentions the time of the gentiles. The Jewish people thought they had a lock on God. Jesus dispelled that notion by saying he would die for all who believe. What he taught was also understood by the scholar Paul and the Disciple Peter. Both were men charged with helping gentiles come to God through Jesus. This period of time is called the grace period.

I heard a man say that grace is a time period when God would look the other way on the personal penalty of death because of sin in order to draw gentiles in to heaven. Read the other two verses and you can see that God is giving us time to move away from the sins of the world and towards himself. Jesus dying on the cross is the final penalty for sin. That sacrifice by Jesus is the fire connection. Tongues of fire rested on people strictly because of Jesus dying and giving us this grace period. Jesus said he must go in order for the Spirit to come. That is the Jesus connection.