

## Week 9: Expectations

### Who is God: God is: Redeemer by Fire

So, God appears to be love. God appears as fire. I suppose that God might appear as many things to many people. Why does God appear to you and me at all? Some call him invisible while others say they have seen him.

**Romans 1:20** says *“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”*

I must admit that it's convenient that God is invisible. My best explanation is twofold. It says in Genesis that God walked in the garden of Eden. Other than that, God appears through visible things like fire. He talks through prophets and spokes persons like an angel. Only once does God walk on earth. The second is holiness and purity. Are there areas of your city you would not go? Why? Is it because it's dangerous? Is it because it's dirty, disheveled, and unclean?

I have been places I felt unclean from afterwards. I would come home and shower or scrub my hands. I have things I won't touch. I was in Miami in a grocery store. The fruit section was covered in flies and other insects. People were buying the produce but I wouldn't touch it? Was it no good? I don't know but I'm not touching it. Maybe God is holy and pure. Touching sinful things is dirty to him. Maybe it makes sense from a clean point of view. Does God come home to heaven and wash his hands with holy water?

1. Why do you think God reveals himself and conversely why do you think he does not?

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So, what does God, fire, and clean have in common? As I said, God is holy. God is pure goodness. Pure must test things to see if there good enough for him to handle. Just like a person with allergies. In Bible terms, this is called the refiners fire. God will test our hearts and deeds through fire. In the story of Daniel chapter 3, three of Daniels friends are thrown in a fiery furnace. God rescues them. You could say redeems them. God refines us by fire to bring out impurities. The fire is trials. In those trials, he redeems us for his own.

In reality God is a redeemer. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God the punishment was death. The death did not come instantly, why? I feel that God is a God of second chances. He is serious about death. In Genesis 5:5 it says Adam died. The redemption came in the offspring. Eve believed that her offspring would overcome the serpent. The expulsion from Eden was the beginning of that journey towards redemption. Yes, it's been a long time. Redemption just might

take some time. I heard a girl say what has been the best part of her journey as a Christian so far. She said with a heavy sigh “time in the desert.” That is where understanding, healing, and redemption come from. Putting us through the fire so to speak.

1. What has been your desert experience?

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I could not find any one verse that says God is curious, yet I believe he is. I suppose that curious means he does not know what could happen. He is just waiting to see. It’s not like that with us but it is. God is methodical. He has a will or plan. Things will go his way. Yet, in some way, we are searching, lost, and being found all at once. God knows where we were going but he lets us chose. I believe that means that we will get to some place, but it may take longer than expected. Does that mean we are predestined for a certain fate? Some say yes and others say no.

A quick look at fate. People make bad choices and die. People make good choices and die. Fate seems to have no reason or mercy. I like the saying “grace is God’s allowances for sin.” I also like “grace gives hope a place to stand.” Are they the same thing? Grace means God has given time for a second chance. Adam and Eve were given time and a chance to change history. God always planned on redeeming his people. It’s the length of time and path we take that is ours. All roads they say lead to Rome. I believe they lead to heaven’s door too. God’s word says all our works will be tested by fire. That is a central theme throughout the Bible.

Check out these extra verses on refiner’s fire.

**Zechariah 13:9** *“And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”*

**1 Peter 1:7** *“So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

**Isaiah 48:10** *“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.”*

**Proverbs 17:3** *“The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.*

1. I love the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 on so many levels. Abraham has a negotiating session with God over who should be saved. Abraham manages to whittle it down to his immediate family there. Jesus says that the Shepard will go and find one lost sheep in Luke 15. The Bible tells of a remnant being found in the Bible several times. Every time it looks like God loses, another person steps up as the saved. God redeems by fire to show that through fire God still reigns, because fire usually wins, yet not with God.

**Gen 19:19-20** *“your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills, for fear the disaster will overtake me and I die. 20 Look, that city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one. Let me escape there—is it not a little one? —and my life will be saved!”*

2. In the Bible, to redeem something, then something must be sacrificed. It’s interesting that Cain’s sacrifice in Gen 4 is rejected. When Cain got angry he killed his brother Abel. God then said that the Blood of Abel cries out to him. Sacrifice and Blood go together. In some places sacrifice also includes fire. Fire finishes the job. Burning up a sacrifice means it’s finished. These are the themes in the Old Testament and the New. Yes, Jesus was not burned, but he did say it is finished. There was blood in his sacrifice of himself. Jesus as redeemer means he redeemed us by his sacrifice. The point is: redemption is final by blood or fire.

**Numbers 28:1-2** *“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Command the Israelites, and say to them: My offering, the food for my offerings by fire, my pleasing odor, you shall take care to offer to me at its appointed time.”*

3. I love this story because it’s funny and hopeful. The King thought he would be able to punish people that disobeyed his laws by fire. The three men were willing to die for their principles. There are not too many who would do that. Within the fire is the ability to burn away all our troubles. The king thought that too. In the fire, the three men had their bound ropes burned away. The things that were holding them back were gone and what remained is three men dancing in faith within a fire. There is a mysterious fourth man in the fire with them. I’d like to think it’s God standing with them in their most troubling moment. The redeemed men come out and God disappears. It’s about the redeemed.

**Daniel 3:28** *“Nebuchadnezzar said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king’s command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.”*

4. If you read 1 Corinthians 3 it begins with saying Paul talks to us as humans. One pastor always said *he preaches as someone willing to leave the cookies on the bottom shelf*. He meant that we should make the message simple and not out of reach. Paul is opening the same way. Paul then precedes to build a foundation of simple truths. If we take the time to learn and listen, we will become strong in our faith. It would be a house that will not be burned. Only through fire will we be redeemed. Only what’s left will survive. What in your life would survive judgment day? Not all people who think their good go to heaven.

**1 Corinthians 3:10-15** *“If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If the work is burned up, the builder will suffer loss; the builder will be saved, but only as through fire.”*

Here are some extra verses if you want more insight **Jerimiah 6:29-30, Malachi 3:1-4**

So, if Jesus does not use fire in his ministry, then why bring him up? Again, the purpose of fire in the Bible is to redeem. It could be called a final contract. Once something is burned, it's gone. You could say it's a sacrifice. In the Old Testament God burned up sacrifices. God also required blood sacrifices. Why? Is it because he is sick or mean? It comes back to finality. Death is final. Fire is final.

**Romans 5:10** *"we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son."*

**Ephesians 1:7** *"we have redemption through his blood."*

**John 14:6** *"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

What is clear in the Old Testament is that God will make covenants and contracts. He will demand payment for sin. Better yet, he only demands payment if he is your God. Does that mean there is a price for his presence in your life? No, heavens no. God is wanting our honesty and loyalty to be free. We are free to choose him. We are free to leave. People who love God freely give to his kingdom because they love him.

The payment is the finality of the contract like a down payment. It's like shaking hands or giving your word. The Jesus part is Gods part. He paid the sacrifice in blood. He sacrificed his son for us all. Jesus is the redeeming payment in blood and that is the Jesus connection.