

God's Fire

For our God is a consuming fire.

– Hebrews 12:29

John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

– Luke 3:16

God uses the element of fire consistently throughout the Word. In some areas it is used for presence, direction, anointing\purifying or power that consumed either His enemies or sacrifices. The word fire is mentioned over 550 times in the Word, but I’m focusing on only the times where God uses it to display himself to His people.

Sword of fire at Eden ([Gen 3:24](#))



- “When he drove the man out, he placed on the eastern side of the orchard in Eden angelic sentries who used the flame of a whirling sword to guard the way to the tree of life.”
- God placed Cherubim and a whirling (moving back and forth) sword of fire at Eden to block the Tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned.
- This would prevent them from returning to the garden and begin their journey out into the world to begin their family.
- This is the first instance of the Word mentioning fire being used by God.

Smoking firepot and flaming torch ([Gen. 15](#))



- Abraham made a covenant with God after God told him his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky.
- After Abraham placed the animals on the altar, he fell asleep and God as a smoking firepot and flaming torch went between the animal parts.
- Research showed me that the firepot (ie. a portable oven) and the flaming torch *represented God's presence moving with his people*. It also *represented God moving the Israelites through Egypt to the promised land* (God warned Abraham in vers. 12-15 that the Israelites would be in captivity before they would come out with possessions).
- Also, in a regular treaty, both people would walk in between the carcasses. However, only God passes through, making the claim to us that God will be faithful regardless of what we do.

Burning bush ([Exodus 3](#))



- This caught Moses' attention since it was a bush that wasn't burning up even though it was on fire.
- God spoke to Moses through this fire and told him He would be used by Him to deliver Israel from Egypt. It was here God *revealed* Moses' purpose and direction.
- Some research tries to say that the bush also represented Israel, suffering under the persecution of Egypt but never consumed.

Pillar of fire guiding Israel ([Exodus 13:17-14:29](#))



- God fire is shown here to guide Israel after they left Egypt. Once again, His fire is a visual representation of Him and His power.
- Later in the passage, God looked down upon Pharaoh's army through the pillar and caused confusion (stopping their chariots when they were in the split ocean path).
- Both clouds and fire would again represent the presence of God in his power and majesty, guiding and protecting his people, by judging their enemies.

Fire coming down on the altar; Elijah against the baal priests ([1 Kings 18:20-40](#))



Elijah and the Prophets of Baal, Pieter Nolpe, 1623 – 1702 Rijksmuseum.nl (colorized)

- In this passage, God's fire proved to the Israelites who was the true God and also consumed not only the sacrifice, but also the wood, 12 stones and water filled trench Elijah made.
- Israel was in so much spiritual adultery at the time, verse 30 mentions God's altar was torn down before this. (Elijah then told all the people, "Approach me." So all the people approached him. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down.)
- It can be assumed that Elijah chose this test in order to make a public display of the enemy and a visual sign of God's power for this wayward generation of Israelites (these were not the same generation who witnessed everything in Exodus).

John the Baptist's prophecy (Matthew 3:11-12)



James Tissot (Nantes, France, 1836–1902, Chenecey–Buillon, France). Saint John the Baptist and the Pharisees (Saint Jean-Baptiste et les pharisiens), 1886–1894. - <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/objects/4449>

- NET “I baptize you with water, for repentance, but the one coming after me is more powerful than I am – I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clean out his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire!”
- Carrying sandals was one of the least worthy tasks servants performed and John didn't consider himself worthy enough to perform that task for Jesus.
- Baptism by fire - Some see one baptism here, and this can be divided further into two options.
 - (a) The baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire could refer to the cleansing, purifying work of the Spirit in the individual believer through salvation and sanctification, or (b) it could refer to two different results of Christ's ministry: Some accept Christ and are baptized with the Holy Spirit, but some reject him and receive judgment.
 - (2) Other interpreters see two baptisms here:
 - The baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the salvation Jesus brings at his first advent, in which believers receive the Holy Spirit, and the baptism of fire refers to the judgment Jesus will bring upon the world at his second coming.

- Personally I believe that this meant the person would not only be physically baptized, but the spirit would be cleansed by His fire to become a place for the Holy Spirit to dwell.

“Tongues of fire” ([Acts 2](#))



- Peter and the other 120 disciples\believers were anointed with the Holy Spirit after Jesus told them to go and wait at Jerusalem for the “Promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4).
- This fire was the Holy Spirit that gave them “tongues spreading out like fire”. This gives us proof that the fire of God lives within His children.
- Through the Holy Spirit, the Jews from different nations who were outside attending Pentecost were able to hear their own native tongue.
 - (verses 9-11 : Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great deeds God has done!”)

- Peter's address on Pentecost



- Peter reassured the people who thought they were drunk that God would pour out His Spirit (verses 17 - 21) upon all people.
- He then went on to preach the resurrection of Jesus, how He was exalted and released His promise (the Holy Spirit), and finally how He is Lord and Christ.

Fire has been a consistent element used by God throughout the Word to communicate with His people. He is still communicating with us today through the Holy Spirit, giving us access to His fire to be cleansed and perform His ministry on earth. We must recognize the power He has given us and continue to sanctify ourselves to be a proper dwelling for His Fire.

References

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