

maranatha

The Fire of God

A burning faith

Fire is a symbol of God's presence. Fire is seen - it is bright. Fire is felt - it is hot.

In the Bible fire is a sign of the living presence of God.

When Moses saw the bush on fire he heard the voice of God and he hid his face because he was afraid to look at God (Ex. 3:1-5). The thought of God being so near was overwhelming.

Fire confirms that **God is not absent**.

Fire symbolises the power and glory of God.

Fire is a symbol denoting the presence of God and His judgement and purifying work.

The Lord descended upon Mount Sinai in fire.

Seven torches of fire burned before the throne of God in Revelation 4:5.

The children of Israel were led by a pillar of fire which gave them light. By this they knew that God was near to them.

The instruction was given to Moses that the fire on the altar had to be kept burning - "*It must not go out*" (Lev. 6:12). The flame of God's

love and the reality of His presence needs to be maintained on the altar of our hearts.

The all-consuming power and presence of God was evident when Moses and Aaron blessed the people and the Lord consumed the burnt offering leaving all the people to shout for joy and fall face down before Him. (Lev. 9:24)

Fire is an image of the way in which the **purifying** heat of God destroys evil. The Bible speaks of it consuming all that is inconsistent with God's holiness. It is a sign of divine judgement, but fire is also a symbol of divine love.

Fire is a sign of judgement, but it is also a constant reminder of the dynamic presence of God.

“The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” (Deut.:4.24).

Fire is a symbol of the **Holy Spirit**. The Spirit convicts us of our sin leading to the **burning up** of all the sin and evil within us.

Prophets are people who have been set on fire by the spirit of God. The Prophets language is charged with fire. It is burning, even explosive. Isaiah's mouth was touched with burning coals.

Fire warms our cold hearts and lightens our darkness.

The prophet invariably has a **fiery tongue** and we read in Isaiah 30:27 that the Lord's tongue is *“a consuming fire, shaking the nations”*.

Fire in the New Testament

God calls us to be on fire with the love of Jesus.

John the Baptist promised Jesus *“will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**”* (Luke 3:16).

Jesus Himself declares *“I have come to bring fire on the earth”* and says *“how I wish it were already kindled!”* (Luke 12:49). The vision of the proclamation of the Gospel is of a fire spreading across the face of the earth.

The mighty power of God released at Pentecost was symbolised with **tongues of fire** which pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4).

The readers of the Second letter to Timothy are urged to “***fan into flame the gift of God which is in you***”. (2 Tim. 1:6)

Fire is a sign of God’s holiness, but it is also a reminder that God is **active**, not passive and that He is **real** and not imaginary.

The prayer of the Christian in Britain today must surely be that tongues of fire will spring up from the smouldering ashes of our churches. Biblical teaching is that this fire is irresistible and Christians are called to light fires in the life of the nation and in the hearts of men and women.

Fire across the centuries

John Cassian the monk (360-435) spoke of ‘***the prayer of fire***’ (oratio ignita). Macarius of Egypt wrote of ‘***the fire which lives inside the heart***’. Diadochus said ‘***If a man begins his progress by keeping the commandments and ceaselessly invoking the Lord Jesus, then the fire of holy grace penetrates even the external sears of the heart***’.

St. Ephraim (949-1022) wrote in a hymn of divine love ‘***As I was meditating, master, on these things suddenly you appeared from above, much greater than the sun and you shone brilliantly from the heavens down into my heart.... O what intoxication of light, O what movements of fire. O what swirlings of the flame in me!***’

Richard Rolle (1300-49) the hermit speaking of the gifts of God’s love and grace as a ‘**spiritual flame**’ he wrote ‘I cannot tell you how surprised I was the first time I felt my heart begin to warm. It was real warmth too, not imaginary, and it felt as if it were **actually on fire**’.

In the sayings of the Desert Fathers a visitor to Abba Arsenius said he was ‘***entirely like a flame***’.

St. John of the Cross speaks of the growing power of the Holy Spirit as the ‘**living flame of love**’. Speaking of the Spirit he wrote ‘the soul feels him within itself not only as a fire which has consumed and transformed it, but as a fire that burns and flares within it’.

'Anyone who is not burning will not be able to set anyone else on fire' - Peter of Rheims (d. 1247).

His fire in our lives - now!

Come as the fire,
and purge our hearts
Like sacrificial flame
Let our whole life an offering be
To our Redeemer's name
Andrew Reed

Breathe on me Breath of God
Till I am wholly Thine
Until this earthly part of me
Glow with thy fire divine
Edwin Hatch

Holy Spirit, love Divine
Glow within this heart of mine
Kindle every high desire
Perish self in Thy pure fire
Samuel Longfellow

Refining fire, go through my heart,
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter Thy life through every part,
And sanctify the whole
Charles Wesley

Burning for the Glory of God!

O Thou Who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
Upon the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work and speak and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me.
Charles Wesley

Our prayer is send the fire!

O God of burning cleansing flame
Send the fire!
Your blood-bought gift today we claim:
Send the fire today!
Look down and see this waiting host,
And send the promised Holy Ghost;
We need another Pentecost!
Send the fire today! Send the fire today!

God of Elijah, hear our cry:
Send the fire!
And make us fit to live or die:
Send the fire today!
To burn up every trace of sin,
To bring the light and glory in,
The revolution now begin!
Send the fire today! Send the fire today!

It's fire we want, for fire we plead:
Send the fire!
The fire will meet our every need:
Send the fire today!
For strength to always do what's right,
For grace to conquer in the fight,
For power to walk the world in white:
Send the fire today! Send the fire today!

To make our weak hearts strong and brave:
Send the fire!
To live, a dying world to save:
Send the fire today!
Oh, see us on Your altar lay,
We give our lives to you today,
So crown the offering now we pray:
Send the fire today! Send the fire today!
Send the fire today!

William Booth

Dennis Wrigley