

The Fire of God – The Purifying Fire

At the final judgment, God's purifying fire will test everyone.

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you in water for repentance, but he who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.*

1 Pet 1:7 that the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

1 Pet 4:12 *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:* – Peter says that believers are already confronted with the treatment of God's purifying fire already in their lives. KJV:... the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. – This fiery trial does not burn people from the outside, but from **inside**. It can test a person for years without this person even realizing what is happening to him. He can experience many kinds of trials and losses, for example economically, etc. When the trials are over, he gets peace and understanding. Things get a new priority. It is noteworthy that **the righteous are experiencing this fiery (figurative) trial already in their lives.**

Why is this happening? The answer is found in the Bible; these people chosen by God will be participants in the first resurrection. They are the Saints described by the Bible, who will rule with Christ for a thousand years. They have been purified during their lifetime, and they will be resurrected among the first, and they will not be judged with others who

are resurrected after a thousand years later.

Mar 9:43 If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having your two hands to go into Gehenna, 44 'where their worm doesn't die, and the *fire is not quenched*.

'49 For **everyone will be salted with fire**, and every sacrifice will be salted with salt. – 'Salting' is a means of preserving the raw material for later use, after this life. Sacrifice 2378 θυσία *thysia*. Mat 9:13 Go and learn what this means: 'I want mercy and not sacrifice.' [Hos 6:6] For I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners." Mar 12:33 "To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and *to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.*"

1 Pet 1:7 so that the **genuineness of your faith**, which is more valuable than gold that perishes when it **is tested by fire**, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Cor 3:13 each man's work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and **the fire itself will test what sort of work each man's work is**. – The fire will test each one of you on the last day. That's when it is decided what each one is paid, how does the 'building' of each person last..

The word **fire** πῦρ *pyr*, for example: Rev 21:8 But for the cowardly, unbelieving, sinners, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their part is in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." – The central question to be solved is: is the fire a concrete fire or a figurative one. The Bible uses the same word πῦρ, so you might think that in all the fire verses the same word determines the quality of the fire. 1 Corinthians letter the fire is purifying fire, with purpose to

cleanse the human being from all the filth of sin. However, these people are saved. The fire, described in Rev 21:8, is mainly directed at sinners who have traditionally been counted as being sentenced to death in the lake of fire.

Strong's states that "of the 500+ times the word 'fire' is used in the Bible, hundreds of times the word 'fire' is used in a *figurative or symbolic sense*".

When the purifying fire of God is purifying at the final judgment, those cleansed are in the spiritual bodies. They are resurrected; Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and Hades gave up the dead in them. And they were each judged according to their works.

1 Cor 3:11 For no one can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Whether a person builds on this foundation with gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw, 13 the workmanship of each person will become evident, for the day [I.e. the day of judgment] will show what it is, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test [dokimázō] the quality of each person's work. 14 If any man's work remains which he built on it, he will receive a reward. 15 If his work is burned up, he will suffer loss. However, he himself will be saved, but it will be like going through fire.

G 1381 δοκιμάζω dokimázō: to test, examine, prove, scrutinise (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals

The purifying fire of God, which we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, is trying testing, investigating, but not consuming to those who are to be saved. How long does purifying take? No one knows. Possibly for different periods of time depending on how much there is to purify.

Could this be the fire that burns in the fiery lake; some would get away from it and enter in the kingdom of God. The fiery lake is a metaphor about the ordeal, in which a man sees

his own sins and evil deeds, and which he will have to undergo prior to purification. Others would have to stay longer before they could get away – or would eventually be destroyed if it were Christ's judgment.

Mat 3:11 I indeed baptize you in water for repentance, but he who comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit. – This fire John is speaking about when baptizing people for repentance, means God's purifying fire.

Isa 52:10 Jehovah has bared His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the **salvation of our God**. – Isaiah, the Prophet of God, knew better than we who remember only the words of the Bible that speak of death and destruction, and of the destruction of evil men. The last judgment ends with God saving all people according to his will. .. all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (Isa 52:10). Some translation uses the word 'bliss', but I think, instead of seeing a bliss, everyone sees – a better word – salvation.

God "who wants all people to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4).

God himself says that the expression of his will, the word of God, will do his will: Isa 55:11 so shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Faith as the basis for salvation. Act 17:31 because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead."

God has appointed a human (his son) as chief justice. Christ condemns all humanity in uprightness. The Bible states that

judgment is based on the actions of each human being. There are different deeds and therefore different judgments. It is certain that the judgments are righteous. Many sinners purify their deeds and receive eternal life. In examining the purifying fire of God in the first Corinthians, it seems to be a prerequisite that the person in question has "built his house" on Christ.

Even the concept of the last judgment means people feel that evil will suffer loss and sinners will be punished and it is only right that the unrepentant sinners are cast into the fiery inferno and eternal suffering.

1 Cor 3:11-15 After all, no one can lay any other foundation than the one that is already laid, and that is Jesus Christ. Whether a person builds on this foundation with gold, silver, expensive stones, wood, hay, or straw, the workmanship of each person will become evident, for the day of judgment will show what it is, because it will be revealed with fire, and **the fire will test the quality of each person's work**. If what a person has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. **If his work is burned up, he will suffer loss. However, he himself will be saved, but it will be like going through fire.**

These 1 Cor verses tell us about building faith on the foundation that is Jesus Christ. Fire tests the building and if it cannot stand, man can be saved as if through the fire. Rescue through the fire is possible, however, only if the foundation is right. A man who has built his life without this foundation can not experience God's saving fire. Fire comes to his destruction, although not in any burning lake.

It is a figurative lake that burns both death and Hades [KJV of Rev 20:14 Death and Hell ...], which are equally figurative expressions. The cleansing fire is not literal, real fire. Also, building materials such as gold, silver and gemstones of the same verse are not real building materials, nor wood,

straw or hay. They just describe human faith. If a man has built his faith ('his house') of the first mentioned expensive materials, his faith is secure and durable. If someone has built his faith from the grass and straw, he finds his house burning. However, he can himself be saved "as through fire" because he, however, had founded his faith on Christ.

The words "as through fire" means there was no real burning fire on those who were saved, but it was a figurative, symbolic fire. Verse 15 says: If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he will be saved, but so as through fire.

The expression "suffer loss" does not really tell what kind of loss this person is having. The Greek word is G 2210 ζημιόω *zēmioō*: to injure, i.e. (reflexively or passively) to experience detriment:—be cast away, receive damage, lose, suffer loss. — On the other hand, it is to be noted that the term of *eternal punishment* is not used here (Mat 25:46).

On what basis does Christ rule the quality of judgment? I'm thinking like this: If a man has built his "house" on Christ, and used valuable materials like "gold, silver, or jewels" fire tests his work, find them good and he will survive and even get wages. If Christ has had a very small part in 'building construction', how is he doing? The fire will try his deeds too; if there are any reprehensible acts, he will experience harder testing and his house may burn to ashes. However, the man himself will survive and be saved. What if the man has in no way used Christ to "build his house"? Lived his life doing bad things. His destiny is the fiery lake with fire and brimstone — forever or just for a long period of time?

Jhn 10:9 I am the gate. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture.

The Bible tells us that the resurrected are in *spiritual*

bodies just as God's angels. So are other angels, like Satan and his angels. 1 Cor 15:44 "It is sown in the natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body". – How does a physical fire affect spirits? Or is there, then, a spiritual fire that would be effective on spiritual bodies? Heb 12:29: "Our God is a consuming fire." The fire of God can be a cleansing fire that cleanses the faithful from sin and all the impurity, all the deeds of the flesh. I also believe that the fire of God, which is spiritual fire, can also destroy a human being without faith. If a man has built his life on the basis of the faith in Christ, according to the measure of faith which God has given him, the fire of God is a purifying fire for him.

It is common to the humans of the above group that they have built their lives on Christ. The fire will try them, but they will be saved. They are those whose names can be found in the Book of Life. God has all the knowledge of man, for the spirit of each person has returned to heaven to him. Ecc 12:7 then the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

Those whose names cannot be found in the Book of Life, will be thrown into the lake of fire.

There are, therefore, two kinds of consequences. Fire tries some, but they are saved. The fate of the second group is to be thrown into the fiery lake. If God's cleansing fire burns away the sin of the sinners, what about the people who receive the damnation? Is the fire that burns them real fire?

Christ gave visions for the future in the Book of Revelation to John as symbols and metaphors, this is clear. What then is the destiny of the sinners spoken of at the end of Revelation, chapters 19-21? Eternal torture in the fiery lake? Many believe that the Bible's description is, in its clarity, quite literally true. Should we now change the interpretation from the figurative and symbolic to the literal?

Deu 4:24 Deu 4:24. Isaiah, in turn, says: Deu 4:24 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is his anger and dense is his smoke; his lips are filled with indignation and *his tongue is like a consuming fire*"

When Isaiah says that God's tongue (word) is like a consuming fire, it must be understood figuratively. God is a spirit, and His word is also a spirit. Deu 9:3 And know today that Jehovah your God is he who passes over before you *as a consuming fire*; he will destroy them, and he will bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and make them to perish quickly, as Jehovah has spoken to you. – Although God's consuming fire is spiritual fire, its effect is to the greatest extent concrete. Fire may be directed to spirit beings such as Satan or angels, or then to living people (as in verse 9: 3) or then to resurrected people being judged in the spirit body. The Book of Revelation tells of John's vision. Rev 1:16 In his [Christ's] right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword. His face was like the sun when it shines with full force. – Also the power of the Son of God is pictured with symbols; two-edged sword that leaves from his mouth. Both the Father and the Son are spirits, and their power come from their spirit reaching the humans in flesh and blood or the resurrected, spirit-like people.

The lake of fire, where sinners are burning, is not a real lake and real fire. It is a figurative expression as I have told repeatedly. However, this fire of God can produce a great deal of pain, even if it is not "real" fire. The pain caused to a man by the burning sins when he sees what he has done in his life, is certainly not milder than the pain of the "right" burning lake that many want the sinners to experience.

Bible scholar Ray Smith (as well as Origen at his time) has argued that all people have access to the cleansing treatment of the Holy Spirit of God. In the case of bad sinners, cleansing is long and painful, but the result is a purified new soul worthy of God. This is because it is the will

of God; God wants everyone to be saved. And what God wants it will always be fulfilled. In addition, some researchers say that man has ultimately no free will and free choice. It is, after all, a matter of God's will and choice. Thus, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and others, mass murderers would all be part of the salvation.

Let's see if there are any phrases in the Bible to solve the matter.

Mat 25:46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. – There are clearly two different consequence here: the sinful goes to eternal punishment, and the righteous people get eternal life. If, then, sinners do not receive eternal life, there remains only a question to be resolved; what is their eternal punishment?

Mat 24:50-51 the master of that servant will come on a day when he doesn't expect him and at an hour that he doesn't know. and will cut him in two, and will appoint his portion with the hypocrites. There will be weeping and gnashing of the teeth. – In this parable, Jesus speaks of good and evil servants when their master arrives at a time they do not know. 24:45-47 Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant whom his master has put in charge of his household to give the others *their food at the right time*? How blessed is that servant whom his master finds doing this when he comes! Truly I tell you, *he will put him in charge of all his property.*

A good servant gives food on time to his master's other servants in accordance with his instructions. 'Food' means spiritual food. The pay of a good servant upon the arrival of the Lord is a promotion to look after all his master's property. A bad servant acts contrary to his master's instructions: 24:48-50 But if that wicked servant says in his heart, my lord delays to come, and begins to beat his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunks, the *master [Christ] of that servant will come on a day when he doesn't*

expect him and at an hour that he doesn't know – The end result we read already in verse 51.

However, the punishment is contradictory: the master of the evil servant ... *"will cut him in pieces* and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The servant's master cuts the servant in pieces! Why? If it is intended that the servant will suffer eternal pain in the fiery lake, do the body parts cut into pieces feel anything? Where ever the bad servant is thrown, his body parts *"will not be weeping and gnashing of teeth"*!

When the Bible says that the fiery lake is the second death, is the second death the same as the eternal separation from God? A complete loss of consciousness? This would mean that some people will be totally destroyed and there is nothing left of them. Or, can God's love for man be so comprehensive that the even the worst wicked, who do not even repent their deeds, will be forcibly purged together with the righteous?

The Bible says that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit is guilty of an eternal sin (Mar 3:29 KJV: ...is in danger of eternal damnation). Such behavior and that a sinner does not repent, I think, are same kind of offenses and deserve the same punishment. If a person cannot be forgiven this sin, he cannot be saved either. This is how I think, but I am not entirely sure. I wish I was wrong and, by the influence of God's love, all would indeed be saved, even against their will as Paul was.

When the Bible speaks of the last judgment, we should remember that God has given judgment to the Son, Jesus Christ. We read in the Ephesians: 1:22: God has put everything under his [Christ's] feet and has made him the head of everything for the good of the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills everything in every way. – The church of Christ is his body, which governs together with Him, and also condemns the world. 1 Cor 6:2 Or do you not know that the

saints will judge the world ... – I have interpreted the teaching to be harsh and all sin and all filth become purified in the fire of fiery lake . The church of Christ will play an important role in the last days. The saints who rule and judge together with Christ are only a small group with respect to other humanity. God has already ordained them to salvation.

Dear friends, we are now God's children, but what we will be like has not been revealed yet. We know that when Christ is revealed **we will be like him, because we will see him as he is.** (1 Jhn 3:2).

Perhaps God and Christ shall call the rest of mankind, just as Christ called Paul, in a bright flash of fire that cleansed him and gave him a new faith.