



Eternal Fire

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Have you ever wondered how a God of love could burn His children in tormenting flames? Are you afraid of burning for all eternity in the consuming fires (or perhaps just as long as one deserves before God kills)? Have ideas like this interfered with your relationship with God? Would you love your spouse more if you believed they would murder you if you disobeyed them?

How do we understand God's love and eternal fire?

The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Isaiah 33:14

Do texts like this frighten you? Then please read the very next verse, you might be surprised who the Bible teaches lives for all eternity in the fire:

He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil—verse 15.

Wait a minute – what is going on here? The Bible is saying the righteous, not the wicked, are the ones who live in the consuming fire! How can this be? Aren't the wicked supposed to burn in the fire?

Let's examine the rest of God's Word and see what the Bible says – God speaks to Moses at the bush – and what did the bush do?

Burned – but did it get consumed? Stephen in Acts 7:30-36 confirms this same account. Exodus 3:2-4.

God came to Mt Sinai and His presence was described as a "consuming fire" did the elements melt like a nuclear explosion? Exodus 24:17 2 Chronicles 5:14 & 7:1-3 informs us that when

Solomon's Temple was dedicated the Priests couldn't enter because the brightness of God's fiery glory was too great – but did the Temple burn down? So was it heat that was keeping the priests out? Ezekiel 28:14 and 16 tells us that Lucifer, before his fall, used to walk among the "fiery stones" of God's presence.

Was this fire destructive?

At the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus, in His human body that was still subject to death for it died on the Cross shortly thereafter, is bathed in fire. His face shown like the sun and His clothes were bright white, but did His clothes burn off or did He receive 3rd degree burns? Matthew 17:2 Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29 States, "our God is a consuming fire." Revelation 22:5 tells us that in the new earth there will be no need for the sun and moon to light the earth for God's presence will be its light!

What is the lie that Satan has foisted upon us? What is the distortion that all too many of us have bought into?

The place you don't want to go, the place you don't want to be is the place of eternal burnings and consuming fire and that place is God's very presence!

The righteous will be transformed by this life giving glory – as Moses was after 40 days with God. Moses came down off the mountain and his face was radiating this fiery glory (Ex 34:29-35). But did Moses have 3rd degree burns? No, the fire was not harmful – but what about the children of Israel, when they saw Moses what did they do?

They begged him to put a veil over his face because this light caused them anguish and suffering. But what kind of suffering?

Suffering of mind, why? Their consciences were guilty, because they didn't value God's methods and principles, because they preferred lies and



selfishness, the light of heavenly love and truth caused them to suffer.

At the second coming of Christ as the righteous are transformed, as we are changed in a twinkling of an eye, as this mortal puts on immortality, as we are invigorated by this life giving fire, this same fire is described in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 as destroying the man of sin.

But what kind of fire is this? How can fire not burn up bushes, buildings and faces and actually transform and heal the righteous but at the same time cause anguish, discomfort, pain and destruction to the wicked? What kind of fire is this?

This is a fire that is to cleanse the earth of sin, a fire that consumes wickedness

To sin, wherever found, "our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12:29. Desire of Ages 107

So let me ask you a couple of questions: What is a book made out of? What is a table or chair made out of? What is sin made out of?

The fire at the end is the fire that consumes sin, not material substances. So what is sin made out of? Sin is an idea, attitude, thought, method, principle and at its root there are two elements that sin is based upon: **Lies and selfishness.**

Now what is it that consumes and destroys a lie? The truth! And the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth.

What is it that consumes and destroys selfishness? Love! And God is Love!

So when God's Spirit comes it is the Spirit of Truth and Love. And at Pentecost, when the Spirit came they saw "tongues of fire"! But did the house burn down or anyone get injured? Then why will the wicked suffer when the fires of truth and love burn freely, when these fires of truth and love transform and ennoble and invigorate the righteous, when the

fires of God's presence are revealed? The Bible does not leave us in doubt but tells us directly:

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:10

What happens in the mind of those who have rejected truth and cling to falsehood when the truth of God comes shining through? Torment of mind, anguish of heart, suffering of psyche! And what happens to those whose hearts are filled with selfishness when pure, undiluted love of God comes shining through? Proverbs 25:21,22 and Romans 12:20 tells us that:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

And what will those who have solidified their minds in lies, who have hardened their hearts in selfishness do when Christ appears, when they come face to face with undiluted, infinite truth, and love?

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! Revelation 6:15,16

Why will they do this? Is God inflicting an external penalty upon them or is their very condition the cause of their suffering when they come into God's loving and holy presence?

God has actually given us evidence that the fire of His presence consumes sin, not material substances. In Leviticus we read about Aaron's sons who, as priests, brought unauthorized fire before the Lord. Notice what happens:

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his



command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD... Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." So they came and carried them, **still in their tunics**, outside the camp, as Moses ordered. Leviticus 10:1-5

Notice that "fire of the Lord" "CONSUMED" them yet their bodies weren't burnt and their tunics were still intact. The fire is the fire of truth and love which totally overwhelms those living in lies and selfishness, those who haven't been healed in heart and mind to be like Jesus.

But what about passages in Revelation that speak about brimstone or sulfurous fire? That sounds like a fire that burns the flesh, a fire of combustion, a fire that consumes bushes and temples and people – what about that?

The word translated brimstone or sulfurous fire is the Greek word "*thion*" which is a form of the word *thios* which means divine, Godhead, divinity. Therefore, the word translated brimstone should more accurately be translated "divine incense" or "holy fire" because it is the fire of God's presence!

This is the fire of the fiery stones Lucifer walked amongst before his fall as described in Ezekiel 28:14. This is the fire that Elijah rode in when the chariot of fire took him to heaven! 2Kings 2:11.

Again the Bible leaves us in no doubt, read this passage, which talks about burning sulfur carefully, noticing where it takes place:

A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur (holy fire) **in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.**" Revelation 14:9,10

Where does the suffering and torment take place?

In the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb.

And what kind of suffering is this?

Mental anguish, suffering of heart, pain of mind, torment of psyche as each person comes face to face with the truth about themselves, their history, their opportunities rejected.

They come face to face with the pain and suffering they have caused in contrast to the total love, grace and goodness of God. And when each individual has reviewed the truth about their own lives, when the truth has burned through all the lies and becomes too overwhelming, when the psychological pain is too great they finally experience the full separation from God they have chosen and eternally die. And then, after all the wicked have died of their own unhealed condition a cleansing fire comes and melts the elements in heat and the earth will be made new the eternal home of the righteous. 2 Peter 3:10-12.