

## UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim: to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead. I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God*

**IN KING JESUS.**

(Philippians 3:13-14)

#07-1314

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December 28, 2013

### ***Lake of Fire***

This is the second death—the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:14 CLV)

Interestingly, the second death is called *the lake of fire*. Conversely, the lake of fire is called *the second death*. So, each describes the other, so that if we know what one means, we should understand what the other means. In this case, it seems that the second death describes the result and the lake of fire describes the process to produce the death. Given this, we must understand the spiritual signification of fire.

In the natural realm, fire is a purifying and cleansing agent, for, in a good sense, it removes impurities and unwanted materials. For example, some credit the Great Fire of London in 1666 for slowing the bubonic plague that is estimated to have killed 100,000 people in England. The fire is suspected of killing off rodents and fleas that carried the pestilence. Another example involves forestry. Well-established forests need to be control-burned periodically so that new and better growth will come forth. These controlled burns are necessary to remove underbrush and dead trees and brush that hinder growth and serve as tinder if lightning strikes and sets the forest ablaze. So, fire can be and often is a good and essential thing, especially for its ability to cleanse and purify.

In scripture, fire is presented and symbolized in many ways. In ancient times, it is clear that God used literal fire to judge nations and cities. The classic example is Sodom and Gomorrah. The more recent example is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Because of examples like this, many have been led to believe that God is going to judge the wicked with literal fire, as well. However, Paul tells us that *the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual* (1 Corinthians 15:46) and that we must be *taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words* (1 Corinthians 2:13). In other words, it is true that God works in the natural realm, but we need to discern and understand that which is spiritual. The Lord wants us to see beyond the natural and temporal into His realm and to see what He is doing spiritually in the earth today and will do in the ages to come.

*God is spirit*, and His fire must be understood in spirit. Another way to state this is that His fire is spiritual fire, not natural fire. In scripture, fire in the natural realm comes first; then fire in the spiritual realm. If fire is a purifying and cleansing agent in the natural realm, then why isn't it a purifying and cleansing agent in the spirit realm? In fact, knowing that God is love dictates that it is more so in the spirit realm. God is spirit and God is fire; therefore, God is spirit-fire. To use the exact scriptural phrase, ***God is a consuming fire***, meaning God is likened to fire.

God is spirit, love, light, and life. Light is one of the components of fire; the other component is heat. There are several Hebrew and Greek words translated into the words *wrath* and *vengeance*, some of which denote heated (i.e., fiery) passion, even to blow smoke (i.e., from fire). In addition, *wrath* is death (not torture), and, as such, God's passion is to bring man's old nature fully into death through the second death of the second man. So, we get an intimation of the fire of God, that is, His heat and light.

The lake of fire will purge and cleanse all the works or deeds of fallen man and the carnal flesh from which it proceeds; no dross will remain. The fire will burn up the carnal flesh and the grave clothes of the dead so that they will be clothed with robes of righteousness of the living. Praise God! This is the purpose of the lake of fire. It is not for torture or annihilation; rather, it is for correction and restoration.

The lake of fire is essential in bringing about God's purpose of the eons. Eventually, all the unrighteous and wicked will be saved, yet so as through fire, not just all believers will be saved, yet so as through fire. **It is a matter of timing and severity.** Will one suffer loss? Yes! Will it be a temporary torment of one's soul? Probably! Will one be tortured

for eternity? No! By the way, some say that the lost will be cast into the lake of fire kicking and screaming. This is conjecture, for scripture is silent on this. Actually, I wonder if it will be just the opposite. Knowing that there is no place to hide and no place to return to, they might realize that there is a much better way for them, even if it will require torment.

In other writings, I have often referred to the lake of fire as the fiery law of God and made the point that God's fiery law is going to judge the dead. This was based on seeing the opened books as God's divine law, His law books. Although I see some truth in this, I no longer hold to it so tightly. Remaining with the principle of spiritual to spiritual, it seems a bit too legalistic and, frankly, natural to inject the law so strongly as if it was something apart from Christ Himself. When the law or even God's word is mentioned, I venture to say that many think of Moses' law and the many translations we use today that are commonly called the *inspired word of God* or the Bible. But what is the word of God, and what is the law of God? The answer is not *what* but *who*. Who is the word of God and who is the fulfillment of the law of God? Of course, it is the Son of God who is the word.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

The One sitting upon the great white throne to judge the great and the small is the word. Most likely, He won't open a thing called the *Bible* and read from it. He won't even open a law book to cite chapter and verse. He is the word, and He is the law. What He speaks is truth, and all that He sees, all that He speaks, and all that He judges is based on His life as truth. His word is truth. The Lord doesn't even need a book of life to know His own, for He knows all that are of His life. The Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19). **He is the Book!**

***God has written a person and His name is Jesus!***

All are judged, whether in life or in death, and judgment brings out the truth. *Jesus is the truth* (John 14:6), and *the truth will make you free* (John 8:32). *So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed* (John 8:36). The goal of judgment is to take away the first order of sin and death in order to establish the second (Hebrews 10:9) so that God the Father may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). *Behold, I am making all things new* (Revelation 21:5). This is the ultimate purpose of God. All will be free indeed, free from sin and death, and all will come into the glorious liberty of the life of the Son, for it is the Father's good pleasure to bring many sons unto glory and to fill His whole creation with the glory of the Lord. This is truly good news!

It is my opinion that the books referenced in Revelation 20 are meant to be taken figuratively or symbolically of the action coming forth from the one on the throne. ***Is not My word like fire and like a hammer that shatters a rock?*** (Jeremiah 23:29) Truly, that which emanates from His mouth is the lake of fire, for like a hammer it will shatter all that is of the old man and his works.

The entirety of the *Revelation* is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. It is about King Jesus. It is about Him being unveiled in all of humanity. All humanity (mankind) will be an expression of the Son of God and the Son of man. He is the new creation. He is filling all things with His life so that His Father may be all in all in all things new. The second death and lake of fire signify the person of the word of God bringing all things into perfection, all to the glory of God.

The whole of the lake of fire is a picture of Lazarus coming out of the tomb after four days and Jesus commanding: ***Unbind him, and let him go.*** And, so it will be for all mankind, every single natural man and woman that came from the soil of the earth. All will come out of death into life. Sin and death will no longer bind mankind. The grave clothes of death will be removed once and for all, never to be applied to man again. Sin will no longer have a domain in which to reign. God's spirit-fire will have cleansed and purified all! Hallelujah!

**Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**