

PROPHETIC

Your message burns in my heart and bones, and I cannot keep silent. (Jeremiah 20:9)

The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10c)

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Book on Fire (Vision)

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for ***I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.*** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; ***when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*** (Isaiah 43:1-2 ESV [bold italic added])

Before sharing a vision I was given 26 years ago, there are two points to be made.

First, I have come to realize that ***the word of the Lord*** (however He speaks to us) and ***experience*** with (or: of) the Lord are vital to ***our spiritual growth***. At times, He gives us revelation of His word through scripture (primarily) and then backs it up with an experience tailored just for us so that His word becomes real to us and is worked in us. Other times, He brings us through an experience that we may not fully understand at the time until, at some future time (perhaps, years later), He gives us understanding through His word. Thus, His word (understanding) and experience are vital components in our growth process; for without experience, His word can become simply head knowledge, but coupled with experience, His word becomes living and active in us. Further, experience along this line strengthens our faith as we go from ***faith to faith***. We are called to ***live by faith***, but what is life if not experience?

Second, what follows is a personal testimony that has made my union with Jesus very special to me; nonetheless, it carries a vital lesson for all of the Lord's people, especially for the conquerors of this generation. To this end, I offer this as an encouragement. You might not have had a vision of your life on fire, but you have experienced God's consuming fire, perhaps not recognizing it as such. I can assure you that if you are on the road to victory (conquering life) in union with King Jesus, then you have experienced His fire. If you haven't, just wait; it will come, for ***everyone will be salted with fire*** (Mark 9:49).

Now, to the vision. On November 24, 1994, I was sitting silently before the Lord when, in a vision (in color), He broke into the time.

I saw a book on fire, but the book was not consumed.

This greatly puzzled me. I inquired of the Lord its meaning but was not given an answer, at least initially. So, I decided to take a walk, which I did. To this day, I recall exactly where I was on this walk when the Lord broke into my day once again and spoke to me. He said:

I am purifying every chapter of your life.

After all these years, this vision continues to fascinate me as I have meditated on it many times over these years. Clearly, it was both retrogressive and progressive. After all, God sees the end from the beginning. For me, this is an example of having the experience before the understanding. Many years lapsed before I saw a much greater depth of God's fire as a purifier for all humanity.

Again, although this is a personal vision and word, nonetheless, it is something for all the Lord's people—and it is on this ground that I offer the following comments.

Based on the Lord's word, **the book symbolizes one's entire life broken into chapters—most probably, based on periods of time or experiences—and the fire symbolizes God's consuming spirit-fire that purifies the person without consuming the person** (i.e., without total destruction or annihilation).

In some respects, this vision is very much like the day Moses encountered the marvelous sight of a blazing fire coming from the midst of a bush and yet the bush was not burned up (Exodus 3:1-6). As with so many topics found in scripture, the theologians have various views of (and arguments over) the meaning of this bush. To me, it seems simple: The bush represented Israel and the fire represented God as the consuming fire, meaning God was going to bring Israel through His purification process to burn up all the chaff. History reveals that, in fact, God has done this and continues to do this. One of the proofs in our day is that God has His true Israel, that is, His spiritual Israel. All who have been grafted into the olive tree are the Israel of God. It is called the *ekklesia, which is the body of Messiah Jesus*. Jesus is building His church, and part of the process is through spirit-fire that produces a people having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing, becoming holy and blameless and without any accusation. The finished product is called *New Jerusalem*, the wife of the Lambkin—the holy city, having the glory of God.

In pointing to Jesus, John the Baptist declared that the one to follow him would immerse people ***in spirit and fire***; that He would burn up the chaff (carnal nature inherited from Adam) with unquenchable fire (a thorough burning until no chaff remains, and then, when all its fuel is consumed, the fire ceases). In other words, Jesus would baptize humanity in His spirit (i.e., holy spirit) and in His fire. Later, Jesus declared that ***everyone would be salted with fire***, as well. Through Jeremiah (23:29), the Lord asked: ***Is not My word like fire?*** His word, metaphorically likened as fire, goes forth to divide spirit and soul. And of course, this reminds us of Hebrews 12:29: ***Our God is a consuming fire!***

I have written quite a bit on the subject of God's fire, so I refer you to these writings.

Salted with Fire — <https://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc635.pdf>

Lake of Fire — <https://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc585.pdf>

Second Death — <https://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc584.pdf>

Second Death—Lake of Fire — <https://www.kingdomandglory.com/art/art61.pdf>

The takeaway from this vision is that a book on fire is a good thing and not something to fear or feel embarrassed over, or something that indicates one's life is lost or a mess—even though, apart from Jesus, we are lost and a mess. But the good news is that we have Jesus or, even better, Jesus has us, so that a book on fire actually becomes a comfort, even a joy, for it means we are on track to be conformed into the image of God's Son, becoming sons of God ourselves. Like Daniel's three friends who were thrown into a furnace with the heat turned up seven times and yet came out of the inferno unscathed, we who are in Christ are destined to go through all the fiery ordeals in our life unscathed—not hurt by the second death. How and why? Because Jesus is in us and we are in Jesus, just as there was a fourth man in the furnace with the three Hebrews.

However, don't think being unscathed means we escape the necessity of dying to our self-life (soul-life), a necessity for our spiritual growth. Our lives (based on the old man or the life inherited from the first Adam) are anything but filled with the character of God; therefore, our stories (or: history) must be

purified, removing all that is not of God and His Son (i.e., our inherited carnal nature) without destroying who we are. These things must be brought into the second death (i.e., Jesus' death). A death in our soul life may not be a pleasant experience; it is what comes out on the other side of the experience that counts. What is on the other side? More of Christ!

This leads me to another comment about Daniel's friends in the blazing furnace. Some might think that this story does not quite line up with what I am saying. After all, scripture says that the fire had no effect on their bodies nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them (Daniel 3:27). Ah; don't overlook the fact that they were thrown into the furnace all tied up, meaning they were totally bound so that they could not move or even run out of the fire. It was the fire that broke these bonds so that they could freely roam the fiery blaze along with the Lord. I submit that the cords that bound them signify being bound by a carnal nature. The burning off of the cords speaks to the death of the soul-life that is contrary to the life of the new humanity in Christ. Metaphorically, God's fire is so effective and precise that it burns up the chaff while retaining the wheat.

Have you ever wondered why the second death, that is, the lake of fire will not hurt or have power over the conquerors? Here's a thought: The consuming fire of God is not a one-off event for humanity but an on-going process, especially for those who are truly in Christ. However, there is a final "furnace event" for all, without exception. I suggest that we need to stop thinking of the lake of fire as a one-off event or a place. It is not only an ongoing process but also a **consummational event** for all. All will go through a final metaphorical lake of fire. Here is my suggestion: The conquerors will go through a final consuming spirit-fire that will have no power over them. It will be like a final testing (a touchstone) of the character of the person, ensuring that no vestiges of the old man remain. The good news is that only the **all new** will be present, proving the second death has no power to hurt them. Absolutely nothing can or ever will harm the very life of the Son of God completed in His people. When they come out of the fire, they will be like Daniel's friends. The only smell they will have is the aroma or fragrance of Jesus as they are fully transformed into His image, being made **complete in Christ**. Thus, it is finished!

Now, there is one more aspect of fire being worked in our lives and it deals with the testing of our faith through various trials (James 1:2-3) or what Peter called *fiery trials* or *ordeals* that *test the genuineness of our faith* (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12). Paul adds to this by telling us that *fire will test what sort of work each one has done* (1 Corinthians 3:13). So, not only is God a consuming fire, but various trials are also likened to fiery ordeals brought into our lives to test our faith, and ultimately, God's fire will test our works to see which ones emanate out of faith. Further, both Paul and Peter speak of these trials as sharing in the sufferings of Christ. Obviously, there is a lot to be said along these lines that I will not pursue here. I mention this to highlight the importance of fire in scripture, especially in the life of the Lord's people. However, keep in mind that God's spirit-fire and fiery trials and works tested by fire all go hand-in-hand.

It seems to me that the vision of the book represents not so much what we would write about our lives but what God has written about us from before the foundation of the world. In God's eyes, the book is the finished product, so to speak. And, the gloriously good news is that the final product is the completed life of God's Son in us. The fire ensures that it is so!

In my experience, God gives us glimpses of the results of His *spirit-fire* purifying the chapters of our lives. I must add that some of the chapters in my life were truly an experience of the death of my soul; they were deeply painful fiery trials and, in at least two cases, fearful. By the way; some of the most painful experiences came through church life.

Intuitively, I know that, from our perspective (not God's—for remember; He sees the end from the beginning), He re-writes those chapters and reveals the good that came forth from His purifying work. Regarding certain periods of my life, I have sensed God giving me a fresh perspective on the experiences during those times. This is why I say that He re-writes those chapters, meaning He gives us His perspective on the positive aspects of them, not the negatives that we so often are tempted to dwell upon. In this way, when each chapter is purified, it represents a perfected history in which sin has been eradicated and a new life is formed. As the book of Hebrews reminds us—the holy spirit testifies: *And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more* (Hebrews 10:17). God's purification burns up all the carnal nature, leaving only that which is of His Son's life. In this way, each chapter of life's journey becomes a new chapter that speaks of an aspect of the new creation in Christ, with the totality of the book speaking of the process through which the Lord has taken us to ultimately make us a completed new creation. Using an expression from Paul, the entire book reveals how we become (became) *complete in Christ*. *Complete* means *finished, mature, perfect; as having reached the goal*, which is in Christ. This goes to the heart of Paul's letter to the Philippians: *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*.

Now, someone might ask: What about the years I was not "saved" or not following the Lord? As I see it, whatever experience one has had as the defining moment of their salvation, this moment in time was simply the Lord's way of opening one's eyes to something that was set in motion before the foundation of the world. I know this goes against the grain of evangelical teaching, but for those who truly are the Lord's, meaning (as Paul challenged the Corinthians) they pass the test of faith, their destiny was set before they came out of the womb. The years prior to the "salvation" experience were all part of the process of the Lord rescuing us from ourselves. Given this, I see the book as an entire history from birth to death (or: transformation for those who are alive and remain).

If curious, here is another writing you might be interested in.

When Were You Saved? — <https://www.kingdomandglory.com/tuc/tuc637.pdf>

In conclusion, my desire in posting this vision is to encourage any believer that might dwell on the negatives, even the seeming failures in their life—to the point of even questioning and doubting their destiny in the Lord. All I can say is: *Don't go there*. Instead, go directly to the Lord Jesus and ask Him whether any of what I have shared is true, and if so, ask Him to reveal to your heart how He has been working in your life, especially during the hard times. He knows the depths of your heart and all it contains.

Jesus is the beginning and the end, the faithful and true witness who says: *I know!*

What does He know? He knows you by name, which makes it very personal. Just think about it: The Creator of all knows you by name. And, even greater news, He says: ***I will write on you, the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name*** (Revelation 3:12). Wow! What a promise to those who are called out as His conquerors.

To Him, you are not just a face lost in a crowd. You are precious in His sight!

King Jesus says: ***You are Mine! I have formed you—even in your mother's womb. I have redeemed you!*** Yes; you! And, ***when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you***. How could this be? King Jesus says: ***Because I am with You!***