1) SINNERS & SAINTS IN ZION

“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" -Isaiah 33:14

“For our God is a consuming fire,” -Heb.12:29

When our holy God, the Consuming Fire, meets with us, the sin in our lives will be exposed- fear will seize the hypocrites in Zion! Sin will no longer be hidden, or tolerated, or excused. The sinners in Zion will have to face the Holy God Who is a Consuming Fire!

2) QUESTION: Who can dwell w/ the God who is consuming fire? ANSWER: Only the pure, nothing to be burned up!

The Prophet Malachi warned about this same thing: "…And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple…. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire…. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.” -Mal.3:1-3

The Jews in Jesus’ day were zealous, waiting for the coming of the Messiah- but many of them were not ready when He came- for He came as a refiner’s fire! When Christ first came to the Temple as recorded in John 2, He came with a whip and overturned the tables of the money changers! Only *after* He cleansed the Temple did He heal the sick and preach good news to the poor.

3) Fire can have 2 purposes-

#1, Fire can burn away and cleanse: clear a field for planting, or burn up garbage by first

 setting it on fire- cleansing!

#2- Fire can also empower. Burning coal can power an electric plant, burning gasoline can

 power your motorbike or car.

WHEN WE MEET THE GOD WHO IS A CONSUMING FIRE, IF WE LET HIM FIRST CLEANSE US, THEN HE CAN EMPOWER US! “He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.” We need to be first cleansed by fire, to then purely serve the Lord!

**4) THE REQUIREMENTS TO DWELL WITH GOD, THE CONSUMING FIRE:**

“He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from oppression and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes to avoid seeing evil,” -Is.33:15 NIV

HE WHO WALKS RIGHTEOUSLY AND SPEAKS WHAT IS RIGHT- Speak what is right- and practice what we preach!

WHO REJECTS GAIN FROM OPPRESSION AND KEEPS HIS HAND FROM ACCEPTING BRIBES- We can oppress others when we do not give them what they fairly deserve: if you have helpers at your home pay them a proper salary (not like Laban, who changed Jacob’s wages 10x when it benefitted himself). You have helpers at your church- were they promised financial help that they are not regularly receiving? Are there church planters or missionaries that you pledged support for, but did not continue to support? James 5:4 OPEN VISION: I saw prayer, like incense, rising from a nation for weeks and months… the prayers of a missionary who had been promised support, then left to suffer in a far away land while the home pastor lived in comfort, continually eating expensive meals at restaurants. God heard the cries of the missionaries and was not happy with the church that was not faithful to their promises… 15 years later judgment fell on that church and the pastor was not able to live like a king anymore! BE GENEROUS TO YOUR WORKERS & GOD WILL BE GENEROUS TO YOU! Don’t give promises of support to the church workers and then forget your promises- The church workers who are counting on your promises will not forget them, and the Lord will not forget your promises either!

WHO STOPS HIS EARS FROM HEARING ABOUT BLOODSHED AND SHUTS HIS EYES TO AVOID LOOKING AT EVIL- Guard ourselves from sin!

-Don’t watch violence & murder on TV or movies- it pollutes your spirit! (How can the love of God fill our hearts & minds if we are filling them with hate & revenge & violence?)

-Keep yourself away from looking at sinful things: Job did, Jb.31:1

**5) THE BLESSINGS FOR THOSE WHO DWELL WITH GOD, THE CONSUMING FIRE:**

Isa 33:16 He will dwell on high; His refuge will be the mountain fortress; Bread will be given him, His water will not fail.

HE WILL DWELL ON HIGH- Seated with Christ in heavenly places, above the problems & pressures of life!

HIS REFUGE WILL BE THE MOUNTAIN FORTRESS- they will have strong protection- as David said in Ps.18:2, “The Lord is my Rock & my Fortress & my Deliverer”

BREAD WILL BE GIVEN HIM- The Bread of the word of God to feed us & make us strong.

HIS WATER WILL NOT FAIL- The water of the Holy Spirit will always refresh us- it will never fail!

Is.33:17 “YOUR EYES SHALL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY” – Those who have been living a righteous life will be able to dwell with the Holy God- and see Him in His Beauty!

When Isaiah was a young priest, he was ministering in the temple when he saw the king- but his life did not qualify him to see the king in His beauty! Let’s read from Isaiah 6:1-4,

6) “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs (Fiery Ones), and they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

7) Isaiah saw the King, but he did not see the king in His beauty- Isaiah saw the king in His fiery holiness, and it confronted his sinfulness!

8) Then one of the seraphs (Fiery Ones) flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." -Isaiah 6:6-7

The Seraph burned Isaiah’s lips with the burning charcoal from the altar of God. This was painful! -but Isaiah was cleansed -by heavenly fire- from his sin. He was no longer a sinner in Zion, to be surprised with fear to see the Holy God.

 9) Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" -Isaiah 6:8

Isaiah was no longer confronted by the holiness of God- as a cleansed saint, he could now dwell with the Consuming Fire! Isaiah could then see the king in His beauty- as he heard the heart cry of God- “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

God’s desire is that we will be His messengers, His co-laborers, sharing His heart and speaking His words!

10) Isaiah’s true ministry started when he saw the holiness of God and had his sinfulness burned away by heaven’s fire- Isaiah then began to see the King in His beauty and declared God’s beauty to the world!

It was Isaiah who proclaimed the virgin birth of Christ:

Is.7:14 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call His name Immanuel”

Isaiah saw more of the beauty of the king who would be born:

Isaiah 9:6-7 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end,”

Isaiah saw much more of the beauty of the King who would come: he prophesied of the ministry of Christ which our Lord Jesus quoted when He began His ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness…

Isaiah prophesied in chap 11:2 about the 7 anointings that would be upon Christ… he also wrote the Servant Songs that were prophetic of Christ’s ministry. We all easily remember the last of these prophetic songs in Isaiah 52 thru 53-

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

11) More than anyone else, Isaiah described the beauty of our Suffering Savior- His death- & his triumphant exaltation!

“When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His offspring and prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. By His knowledge My righteous Servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the mighty, Because He poured out His soul unto death.”

-And in Isaiah 52:15 “So shall He startle and sprinkle many nations, and kings shall shut their mouths because of Him; for that which has not been told them shall they see, and that which they have not heard shall they consider and understand.”

12) And in Isaiah 49:6 God the Father said, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to… restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.”

LIKE ISAIAH, DO WE WANT TO SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY? AMEN! BUT ARE WE READY? PERHAPS WE MUST FIRST LEARN HOW TO DWELL WITH THE GOD WHO IS A CONSUMING FIRE!

Let us look back at the final blessing given to the righteous saints in Zion, back in Is.33:17-

**13) “****YOUR EYES WILL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY, YOU WILL SEE THE LAND THAT STRETCHES AFAR” “a land that stretches into the distance” (NLT), “the land that is very far off” (NKJ)**

If we become purified saints, we will be able to see by the Spirit, about the land that is far away- This can be far off in distance, or far away in time.

Isaiah lived in a time when his nation had become sinful and weak, a powerful neighboring nation was enlarging their boundaries as Israel was defenseless to stop them, then Assyria invaded and almost destroyed the nation.

but Isaiah saw by the Spirit what God was yet going to do for their land in the distant future. Isaiah could look far into the future to reveal what God was going to yet do for His people in Zion! Isaiah looked further, to see the future of his land in Isaiah 2:1-4 where he declared,

14) “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains… and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

15) He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Isaiah saw how the Lord would exalt Zion in the Last Days, and how the nations would come to hear the word of the Lord when King Jesus will rule the world from Jerusalem.

16) Isaiah prophesied about this in Isaiah 24:23 “…for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His elders gloriously,” –Is.24:23

His prophecy will find a complete fulfillment in the Millennial reign of Christ after the Second Coming, but even now we can partake of a spiritual fulfillment of How the Lord will exalt His people who dwell in spiritual “Zion.”

17) Is. 4:4-5 “When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering.”

When the sinners in Zion are cleansed by the spirit of burning, the saints in Zion will have the glory of God as a covering. (This speaks of the physical city of Zion or Jerusalem, but also those who spiritually abide on Mt. Zion. -For every spiritual dweller on Zion, and for every assembly, for every church on Spiritual Mt Zion, that is cleansed by God’s fire!)

ISAIAH WAS TRANSFORMED FROM A SINNER TO A SAINT WHEN HE SAW GOD’S HOLINESS- When the fire of god cleansed him! CHANGED from a SINNER 2 A SAINT- from a PRIEST 2 A PROPHET!

18) THE LORD ALSO WANTS TO TRANSFORM US SO THAT WE CAN LIVE WITH THE GOD WHO IS A CONSUMING FIRE- SO THAT WE CAN SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY & enjoy God forever!

CLEANSED BY FIRE- THEN EMPOWERED BY FIRE! PURITY BRINGS POWER!

William Booth was a famous revivalist that changed the nations through the Salvation Army that he started- their motto was “Blood and Fire” as they carried the gospel throughout much of the world. When William Booth was dying at age 83, he encouraged the leaders of the Salvation Army to keep the fire of God burning bright in their hearts. Some of his last words were, “Look well to the fire of your souls, for the tendency of fire is to go out; take care of the fire on the altar of your heart.”

Gen. Booth’s dying exhortation was from God’s command for the O.T. priests in Lev.6:13, which was, “The fire shall always be burning on the altar, it shall never go out.” The fire was to burn away sinful flesh-we need that now!

19) OPTION # 1 -FACE THE FIRE OF GOD NOW- to be cleansed & empowered & to gain eternal reward!

-But if we don’t let God’s Holy Spirit convict us & burn away our sins- if we live our lives as carnal Christians- we will still experience God’s holy fire when we die and stand before the Lord!

OPTION # 2 - OR FACE THE FIRE AT THE END OF OUR LIFE- Christians will be saved, but have little eternal reward! 1 Cor.3:12-15 “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” So what should we do? FACE THE FIRE OF GOD NOW- it is the best for our life, to purify us and prepare us for eternal rewards- or else at the end of our life WE WILL FACE THE FIRE OF GOD AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST- to see much of the works of our life burned up, as worthless!

GOD’S FIRE WILL EVENTUALLY PURIFY US- but if we wait, we may become like “Lot”! Lot was saved thru the fire, but he lost most of the results of his carnal life- his house & wealth, burned up! His eldership, wiped out! His family- some lost, only 2 daughters saved- and they were corrupted & his life brought forth very little of eternal reward!

20) OPTION # 3- If anyone avoids God’s cleansing fire now, and if they reject Christ’s salvation to not receive Christ’s cleansing fire later, then these people will still stand before God at the very end of time, at the Great White T. judgment & receive the THE LAST FIRE: THE ETERNAL LAKE OF FIRE, Rev.20:11-15

21) LET US EMBRACE THE FIRE OF GOD’S HOLINESS in our HEARTS AS SOON AS WE CAN! DON’T WAIT!

Is.4:3-5 “When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion….by the spirit of burning, then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering.”

God’s fire can confront us- or empower us! If we let God’s fire burn away our sin, our wrong motivations, our compromise- then the fire of God will be able to abide in our heart to empower, not destroy! To fill us w/ the fire of God’s pure love!

Moses’ bush was not consumed- we can be like it! On fire, but not consumed! Burning, but not burned out!

Psalm 104:4 “Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.”

LET US PREPARE OUR LIVES, FOR THE FIRE OF GOD’S HOLINESS TO BURN BRIGHT ON THE ALTAR of our hearts! As God cleanses us, we shall be empowered to serve the Lord- we can dwell on high in Zion!

22) OUR EYES SHALL SEE THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY!

WE SHALL SEE THE FUTURE PURPOSES OF GOD!

“THE LORD’S FIRE IS IN ZION, AND HIS FURNACE IS IN JERUSALEM” – Isaiah 31:9