

BAPTISM OF FIRE

TEXT: MATTHEW 3:1-12

INTRODUCTION:

1. John the Baptist emphasized "repentance" (Matt. 3:2, 8, 11). After people repented and were saved they were baptized in the Jordan River (3:5, 6).
2. John said that while he baptized "with water unto repentance," someone else was coming – someone "mightier" than John – and this greatly superior personage (Christ) would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire (3:11).
3. Here we see that John referred to three different baptisms:
 1. The baptism of repentance (3:11a) – this baptism is for repentant sinners after they are converted. It is always by immersion. The word "baptize" is transliterated from the Greek *baptizo*, which means "to dip, submerge, plunge under, or immerse." No one in the Bible was ever sprinkled. John the Baptist was not John the Sprinkler or John the Pourer. John 3:23 says John baptized in the river "because there was much water there." The proper mode of baptism is seen right here in Matthew 3:16. Have you been scripturally baptized?
 2. The second baptism is the baptism with the Holy Ghost (3:11b; cf. Luke 24:46-49) – this too is for believers. Sometimes unbelievers will fool the church (and sometimes they are even fooling themselves) and they go and get baptized. But they will never experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit until they get genuinely saved.
 3. The third baptism John speaks of is the baptism with fire (3:11c; cf. 3:12 "unquenchable fire"). John referred three times to fire (3:10-12). Some teach that the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the baptism with fire go together but they do not. For example, right before He ascended into heaven, our Lord said, "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." You will notice that our Lord made no mention of fire. But He does in Matthew 5:22, and in Matthew 7:19, and in Matthew 13:41, 42, 49, 50.
4. Some say that fire came down on the day of Pentecost, but that was not a baptism of fire. In fact, there wasn't even any fire. Acts 2:3 says, "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."

1. **FIRE REVEALS**
2. **FIRE CONSUMES**
3. **FIRE BURNS**

I. FIRE REVEALS

1. Many years ago, R.A. Torrey felt the Lord wanted him to preach this text, “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (Matthew 3:11, but he felt inadequate. He said to himself, “How can I preach this text when I myself do not really understand it?”
2. So, he prayed. And he preached this text.
3. And here is what he said, “God heard my prayer, and the first thing that came to pass was that I had such a revelation of myself as I never had before in all my life. I had never dreamed that there was so much pride, so much vanity, so much personal ambition, so much downright meanness in my heart and life as I saw that night. And men and women, if you get a baptism with fire, I believe one of the first things that comes to you will be a revelation of yourself as God sees you. Is not that just what we need, a revelation of ourselves today that will spare us the awful humiliation of the revelation of self in that day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ?”
4. “In that day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”
5. The Bible says, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (I Corinthians 11:31).
6. Fire reveals. In I Corinthians 3:13, we read: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire..." “Reveled by fire.”
7. In Jeremiah 23:29, we read, “Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD?” Fire reveals, so read your Bible, and God will reveal many things to you.
8. God will show you many things, and if you are cold, you will get warmed up! Fire reveals, and fire consumes.

II. FIRE CONSUMES

1. The Bible says, “For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29).
2. In Matthew 3:10, John the Baptist said fire will consume the unfruitful trees, and in Matthew 3:12, the fire consumes the chaff.

3. Therefore, the context indicates “the baptism of fire” is a fire of judgment (3:11).
4. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of the consuming power of fire (Ezekiel 24:9-14), and the fire of judgment that would consume the filth and dross of Jerusalem.
5. Think of all the fire it will take to consume all of the filth and dross of New York City!
6. Fire consumes, and fire purifies. R.A. Torrey said, “There is nothing that purifies like fire. Water will not cleanse as fire does. Suppose I have a piece of gold, and there is some filth on the outside of it; how can I get it off? I can wash it off with water. But suppose the filth is inside it, how will you get it out? There is only one way: throw it into the fire. And, men and women, if the filth is on the outside it can be washed away with the water of the Word; but the trouble is that the filth is on the inside, and what we need is the fire of the Holy Ghost penetrating, into the innermost depths of our being, burning, burning, burning, cleansing.”
7. Fire consumes, and fire burns...

III. FIRE BURNS

1. Many of the references to fire in the Bible refer to the hot wrath of God. Psalm 89:6 says, “How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself forever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?”
2. Referring to God’s judgment upon Korah and his followers, Psalm 106:18 says, “a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.”
3. Nahum 1:6 says, “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire.”
4. Many of the references to fire in the Bible refer specifically to the fires of hell. Many people do not believe in literal hellfire. Billy Sunday used to say, “You may not believe it now, but you will believe it five minutes after you get there!”
5. A number of years ago, the editor of *Christianity Today* magazine said that he had not heard a sermon on hell in 30 years.
6. Most Roman Catholic priests and Protestant ministers do not preach about the fires of hell. A few years ago, Pope John Paul II said that hell is not a physical place but “the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God.”

7. The pope denied that hell is a place of fiery torment and described it rather as “the pain, frustration and emptiness of life without God.”
8. The current pope, Francis, holds similar views. He has said that there is no punishment for sinners, only annihilation.
9. These statements contradict the Bible. Jesus said, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into afurnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:4, 42).
10. Our Lord preached more about hell than any other preacher in the Bible (Matt. 5:29, 30; 8:12; 10:28; 11:23, 24; 25:41, 46; etc.).
11. Fire burns, and the fires in hell never go out. John the Baptist said it is “unquenchable fire” in Matthew 3:12.
12. Three times in Mark 9, our Lord said, the fire in hell is not quenched.
13. The repetition is important – “The fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43, 44, 45).
14. Second Thessalonians 1:9 refers to "everlasting destruction."
15. In Mark 3:29, our Lord referred to the "danger of eternal damnation."
16. In Matthew 25:46, our Lord warned about "everlasting punishment."
17. Hebrews 6:2 warns of "eternal judgment."
18. Jude 7 warns of "the vengeance of eternal fire."
19. In Matthew 18:8 and 25:41, our Lord warned about sinners going into "everlasting fire."
20. Daniel 12:2 describes hell as a place of "shame and everlasting contempt."
21. Revelation 14:11 says, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..."
22. These Scriptures all warn about eternal torment in the lake of fire!
23. At a steel manufacturing plant in Kentucky, workers were terrified when an employee fell into a vat of molten steel more than 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit. His body disintegrated right before their very eyes.
24. That is a terrible story, a frightening story, but consider this: hell is hotter than that. And the soul of man can never disintegrate (cf. Luke 16:19-26; Rev. 14:10, 11).

“A Voice from Hell” — Oscar C. Eliason
 Oh, why am I here in this place of unrest
 When others have entered the land of the blest?
 God's way of salvation was preached unto men;
 I heard it and heard it, again and again.

Why did I not listen and turn from my sin
And open my heart and let Jesus come in?
For vain earthly pleasures my soul did I sell
The way I had chosen has brought me to hell.
I wish I were dreaming, but ah, it is true.
The way to be saved I had heard and I knew;
My time on the earth, oh, so quickly fled by,
How little I thought of the day I would die.
When God's Holy Spirit was pleading with me,
I hardened my heart and I turned from His plea.
The way that was sinful, the path that was wide,
I chose and I walked till the time that I died.
Eternally now, I must dwell in this place.
If I from my memory could but erase
The thoughts of my past which are haunting me so.
Oh, where is a refuge to which I can go?
This torture and suff'ring, how long can I stand?
For Satan and demons this only was planned.
God's refuge is Jesus, the One that I spurned;
He offered salvation, but from Him I turned.
My brothers and sisters I wish I could warn.
Far better 'twould be if I had not been born.
The price I must pay is too horrid to tell
My life without God led directly to Hell.
Oh, soul without Christ, will these words be your cry?
God's Word so declares it that all men must die.
From hell and its terrors, Oh, flee while you may!
So, come to the Saviour; He'll save you today!

CONCLUSION:

1. I read an article yesterday, "Why is the idea of eternal damnation so repulsive to many people?" (gotquestions.org)
2. The author said, "In the shifting winds of modern cultures, the idea of everlasting torment and damnation is difficult for many people to grasp. Why is this? The Bible makes it clear that hell is a literal place. Christ spoke more about hell than He did of heaven. Not only Satan and his minions will be punished there, everyone who rejects Jesus Christ will spend eternity right along with them. A desire to reject or revise the doctrine of hell will not mitigate its flames or make the place go away. Still,

the idea of eternal damnation is spurned by many, and here are some reasons for it...”

3. First: “The influence of contemporary thought. In this postmodern era, many go to great lengths to assure no one is offended, and the biblical doctrine of hell is considered offensive. It is too harsh, too old-fashioned, too insensitive. The wisdom of this world is focused on this life, with no thought of the life to come.”
4. Secondly, the author mentioned “fear.” He said, “Never-ending, conscious punishment devoid of any hope is indeed a frightening prospect. Many people would rather ignore the source of fear than face it and deal with it biblically.”
5. This is strange. What if your auto mechanic told you that you needed new brakes, and that if you did not replace them immediately you could get into a car accident? Would you say, “I don’t want to think about that! I do not want to deal with that!”? That would be very foolish.
6. What if your doctor told you that unless you had surgery you would only have six months to live? Would you ignore him?
7. Third: “A flawed view of God’s love. Many who reject the idea of eternal damnation do so because they find it difficult to believe that a loving God could banish people to a place as horrific as hell for all eternity. However, God’s love does not negate His justice, His righteousness, or His holiness.”
8. Fourth: “A downplaying of sin. Some find it shockingly unfair that the recompense for a mere lifetime of sinning should be an eternal punishment. Others reject the idea of hell because, in their minds, sin isn’t all that bad. Certainly, not bad enough to warrant eternal torture. Of course, it is usually our own sin that we downplay; other people might deserve hell—murderers and the like.”
9. Fifth: erroneous ideas such as universalism (everyone will eventually make it to heaven), annihilationism, purgatory, reincarnation, etc.
10. Sixth: weak, wishy-washy preachers. The author said, “Many contemporary pastors who do believe in the doctrine of hell consider it simply too delicate a subject to preach on.” (They ought to get out of the ministry.) The author says, that rejecting or revising the biblical doctrine of hell, and attempting to air-condition hell, will only result in more and more people winding up there.
11. Seventh: Satan’s devices. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (II Cor. 4:4). And because sinners are spiritually blind, they deny hell. The author goes on to say, “Convince the unsaved that there is no judgment, and they can ‘eat, drink and be merry’ with no care for the future.”

12. Do not let the devil deceive you. Hell is real. Judgment is certain.
13. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke more about hell than He did about heaven. The Bible is clear that all those who reject Jesus Christ will spend eternity weeping and wailing in this terrible place called hell.