

A CONSUMING FIRE

Introduction

- 1) **FIRE**, which is the visible effect when chemical processes result in combustion, can be a very helpful thing (cooking, heating)
- 2) It can also be a very destructive and fearful thing (forest and structure fires)
 - a) News reports bring scary images and terrible stories
- 3) God is described as a “consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29)
 - a) Description first found in the Old Testament (Deut. 4:23-24; 9:1-3; Isa. 30:27; 33:14)
 - b) A reference to God’s wrathful judgment and His awe-inspiring glory (cf. Ezek. 1:27)
- 4) What should we understand when we consider our God as a “consuming fire”?

I) **Do Not Ignite a Consuming Fire**

- A) We should be very careful to not ignite a fire that can destroy us and others
 - 1) Evil itself is like a fire that destroys (Prov. 6:27-29; Jas. 3:5-6; Prov. 16:27; Eph. 6:16)
- B) Sin will provoke the fiery wrath of God (Deut. 4:23-25)
 - 1) Wickedness is both self-destructive and brings God’s punishment (Prov. 16:18; Isa. 9:18-19)
 - 2) The end of the wicked will be eternal punishment in hell fire (Rev. 14:9-11; 20:10, 15)
- C) To avoid igniting fires of sin that will destroy us and bring the consuming fire of God’s judgment, we must avoid evil and seek God’s way of righteousness (1 Thess. 5:21-22)

II) **Avoid the Path of a Consuming Fire**

- A) We see pictures of people desperately fleeing the danger of raging fires
- B) When people do not change their sinful ways, they are in the path of God’s judgment
 - 1) Sinful nations of old had continued in their wicked ways (Deut. 9:1-5; cf. Gen. 15:13-16)
- C) Good news!! God is long-suffering, forbearing, and slow to wrath (Psa. 145:8-9)
 - 1) This “slowness” of wrath is what gives man the opportunity to escape (2 Pet. 3:15)

III) **Escape the Destruction of a Consuming Fire**

- A) A slow-moving consuming fire gives time for those who aren’t paying attention to wake up and save themselves
- B) There is hope and opportunity for the faithful to escape God’s wrath (Lam. 3:22-24)
 - 1) God does not want anyone to perish in their sins (Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9)
 - 2) Man is quick to judge and destroy, but God is slow and compassionate (Lk. 9:51-56)
 - a) We are to learn to be slow to wrath and merciful (Jas. 1:19-20; 2:13)
- C) Jesus is the path for all sinners to be delivered from the wrath of God (1 Thess. 1:9-10)

IV) **Fear the Power of a Consuming Fire**

- A) If we fear the destructive power of fire, we will treat it with respect and act accordingly
- B) Citizens of God’s kingdom learn to accept the grace of God and serve Him with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28-29)
 - 1) God wants everyone to be saved from sin and its destruction

Conclusion

A consuming fire is a fearful thing – sin brings the fiery wrath of God! Repent and turn to God with all your heart and enjoy His comfort for the soul (Joel 2:12-13; Nahum 1:7)!