

## THEOPHANIES

- A. What are theophanies? A theophany is a manifestation or appearance of God to man. God-appearances. When human beings see God.
- B. Why study theophanies? For devoted followers of God who have given their lives to love and serve Him, it would be inconsistent for us to not know about these encounters with God.
- C. Theophanies affect the way we think about God. This affects the way we pray and the way we live. We can pray to God as He has revealed Himself. This is the greatest thing that we can do, to gaze upon God. This is absolutely practical theology. When we peer into the spiritual realm, it gives us a different perspective on life.

*A. W. Tozer (The Knowledge of the Holy): "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."*

## I. ENCOUNTERING THE FLAME

*Ezekiel 1:25-28 A voice came from above the firmament that was over their heads; whenever they stood, they let down their wings.*

*<sup>26</sup> And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. <sup>27</sup> Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. <sup>28</sup> Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. So when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of One speaking.*

- A. **Ezekiel** lived and prophesied during the years that Israel lived in captivity in Babylon. His name means "God strengthens." Ezekiel 1 records the first encounter that he had with God. It leaves him utterly stunned for 7 days. He saw the glory of Jesus on His throne.
  - 1. There is a throne that looks like sapphire (blue). There is Jesus, who looks like a man. He has the appearance of fire all around and within him. There is brightness all around Him (light). And there is a rainbow (indicates God's mercy in His dealings with mankind).

- 2. One of the first revelations in the Bible of God is as a consuming fire.

*Deuteronomy 4:24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

*Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.*

- a. Whenever people encounter God's glory, there is an accompanying manifestation of fire, clouds, lightnings, thunderings, voices, the sea of glass mingled with fire, the throne of God.
  - b. Holy fire surrounds God's throne. A river of fire comes from the throne, and the seven lamps of fire and seraphim (Lit: burning ones) burn before it. The sea of glass is ablaze with fire.
- B. **Moses** encounters God on Mt. Horeb and sees His glory manifest in the burning bush (Exo. 3:2, 6). Fire. God is holy, separate. This is the first revelation of God's holiness.
- C. **Isaiah** (Isa. 6:2) sees Seraphim (lit: burning ones) around the throne of God that call out "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"
- D. **Daniel** sees the throne of God a fiery flame and its wheels a burning fire (Dan. 7:9). In Ch. 10, Daniel encounters a man (probably Jesus) whose face is like the appearance of lightning and his eyes like torches of fire.
- E. **Peter, James, and John** sees the brilliant face of Jesus.  
*Matt. 17:1-2 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup> and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*
- F. **John** sees the God of sardius-like passion upon His throne.  
*Rev. 4:2-3 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. <sup>3</sup> And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.*
- 1. John also sees the 7 lamps of fire burning before the throne and the sea of glass and the other heavenly beings and creatures around the throne.
  - 2. The jasper stone of John's time was probably a deep red gem, possibly fiery-like. God has fiery desire and burning passion. This gives us insight into what He feels like.  
*Deuteronomy 4:24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous (full of zeal, passionate) God.*
  - 3. This is one of the first revelations of God in the Scriptures: God as a consuming fire, a jealous God. God has consuming zeal focused on one that is loved and this zeal desires exclusivity in relationship.

## II. CONSUMING FIRE AND JEALOUSY

- A. God's fire is connected to His jealous love. He is a consuming or devouring fire who jealously desires us and destroys all that hinders love.
- B. Jealousy in the OT comes from a word that can take 2 forms: negative or positive.

1. The principal OT term rendered as jealousy comes from a root word meaning ‘to become dark red.’
2. The word in the English Bible is translated: jealousy, zeal, fervor passion.
3. Jealous: (Mirram-Websters) intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness

C. **Negative application:**

1. Negative sense: envy: (Mirram-Websters) painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage. e.g. “red with envy.”
2. Jealousy causes us to turn to other people rather than depending on God Himself. Envy and jealousy can harm healthy relationships (Gen. 30). We must repent and not give place to this in our heart and mind.

*Prov. 14:30 A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.*

*1 Cor. 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (c.f. 2 Cor. 12:20; James 3:14)*

### III. GOD’S DIVINE ZEAL AND COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE

A. **Positive application:** Same word, translated zeal, fervor, passion.

1. Divine jealousy indicates God’s zeal for and commitment to His people.
2. Divine jealousy is a consuming single-minded pursuit of a good end. It is often used in association with the marriage relationship. Jealousy for an exclusiveness of relationship is central to the continuing of a marriage covenant. He claims exclusive love. He will have no other gods.
3. It signifies a high level of commitment that demands completely exclusive relationship that excludes all others. God is represented in the OT as the spouse of His people: (Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:18, 19). God loves His people totally and completely. The Bridegroom God is filled with benevolent jealousy. He will not relent in His pursuit until He has all our heart.

*Exodus 34:14 (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)*

4. God reminds His people not to forget the covenant. Don’t make carved images.

*Deut. 4:23-24 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. <sup>24</sup> For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

*Deut. 32:16 They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. (c.f. Deut. 32:21; Exo. 20:4-5)*

5. God has great pleasure in His heart towards us. He is overcome with emotions of joy or delight. God describes His heart as overcome with emotions of delight for His people. This is true even toward immature believers.

#### IV. REMOVING EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS LOVE

- A. God's seal on our heart is the fire of love that cannot be quenched. It is as strong as death. Nothing in the natural realm escapes the power of death. Its grasp is comprehensive. God's jealous love is unrelenting in pursuing us until He has all.

***Song of Solomon 8:6 Set me as a seal upon your heart, As a seal upon your arm; For love is as strong as death, Jealousy as cruel as the grave; Its flames are flames of fire, A most vehement flame.***

1. God will go before His people to bring down their enemies.

***Deuteronomy 9:3 Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.***

***Ezekiel 36:5 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country."***

2. God will shake everything. He is a consuming fire. Receive the kingdom that cannot be shaken with reverence and godly fear.

***Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. <sup>29</sup> For our God is a consuming fire.***

- B. People often think of God's fire first in terms of judgment. God's fire is first an expression of His passionate emotion. Yes, it does destroy that which hinders love.

- C. Paul experienced godly jealousy when believers went after different gospel than the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul is like John the Baptist, the "friend of the bridegroom" - John 3:29). He shares the bridegroom's jealousy of his bride.

***2 Corinthians 11:2-3 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. <sup>3</sup> But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.***

1. Fire consumes or takes possession and control of everything in its path. God's love is not passive. Love is not toleration, but desire. Desires implies want, but not lack. Jesus lacks nothing but still wants us. Not because He is needy, but because He is love, the very fountain of desire.

2. The jealousy of God is essential to His moral character. It causes worship and confidence in His people, and fear in all who come against that fiery love.

## CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

God is a Consuming Fire. The throne of God is ablaze with fire (Dan. 7:9, 10), there is a river of fire coming out of the throne. The place that the saints stand to worship is on a sea of glass like crystal that is mingled with flaming fire (Rev. 15:2). When Jesus returns (2 Thes. 1:7), He will be revealed in blazing fire. When Jesus looks at the Bride, He will awaken Divine fire in her all through eternity.

***Rev 1:14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.***

- A. By faith, bring your heart before the fire of God. God's fire tenderizes our heart as fire makes metal soft. He melts our cold hearts as fire melts ice. When we feel cold in our love and service, gaze upon God.

***Luke 3:16 John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (c.f. Acts 2:3; Luke 24:32).***

- B. Understand the desire of God for you. Receive the warmth and the purity of the love of God for you. Many Christians do not believe that God loves us. Do not feel loved. They barely understand it intellectually. But when we get a revelation (lights come on) that God loves us, then we are able to love Him back and mature in our love for Him.

***John 17:24 "Father, I want (desire) those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.***

- C. Let the fire of God bring purity and clarity as to what really matters in your life. Fire purifies or consumes impurity in God's people. Jesus as a refiner's fire will purify what is precious as fire purifies precious metals and removes what is worthless in our lives.

***Malachi 3:2-3 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire And like launderers' soap. <sup>3</sup> 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.***