

## WHY THE FIRE

WILLIS 2/24/10

Mal3:1-5a

We are continuing today in our focus on the fire of God. **We have spent the past 5-6 weeks addressing John's prophecy saying; "one would come mightier than him and He would baptize us with Holy Spirit fire."**

- It is important to note John was not speaking independently or of himself. In fact Malachi posed a prophetic question 400 years earlier asking, **"Who can stand when He appears for He is like a refiner's fire..."**
- One of the last words spoken by God for 400 years was "God is like a refiner's fire." Then after 400 silent years God speaks again and one of the first things He says through John is "Jesus will immerse you in Holy Spirit fire."
- So the last words of the Old Testament speak of fire and the first words of the New Testament speak of fire. **After 400 silent years the heart of God was still to come as a Refiner's fire.**
- Through John, Jesus came as fire. In Jn5:35 Jesus said, "John was the lamp that was burning..." John was 30 years in the fire before he became a voice for the fire. **To be a messenger of the fire we must be messengers refined by the fire.**

Heb1:7 "He makes His angels ministering spirits and His minister's flames of fire." **Fire is the fundamental disposition of the believer. Fire is the surrounding atmosphere of His minister's.** The writer of Hebrews says God will make us flames of fire...burning ones.

- Why did people go out to see John? This was a man who lived amongst wild beasts. He ate grasshoppers and honey and wore camel skins as clothes. There was nothing in the natural that drew people. We read, "He did no miracle"...had no healing ministry.
- So what was the draw? The only draw of John the Baptist was the fire of God. John was a voice that burned for God. **There is no greater testimony on earth than an individual on fire for God.** Everybody loves a fire. "Catch on fire people will watch you burn."
- We won't lay hold of the goal through "spontaneous combustion." A "fire in the belly" doesn't light itself. We catch fire and burn because we submit ourselves to the furnace. We catch fire and burn because we are becoming intimate with The Refiner.

Malachi says, "Behold He is coming...and when He appears He will be like a refiner's fire and fullers soap." **Before the "Second Coming" there is the continual coming. One of the defined ways of His continual coming is as the "Refiner's Fire."**

Before He comes to take us up; He comes to burn us up. Before He comes to rescue; He comes to refine. Before He comes to catch us away in the Rapture; He comes to conform us in the furnace. **The furnace of purification is the manner of His continual coming.**

- This is not a destructive fire but a refining fire...a fire that purifies. Please note the Lord is not like a forest fire or a house on fire, both of which destroy indiscriminately. We read, "He is like a refiner's fire." A fire that purifies but doesn't destroy. This is a fire that burns selectively with divine intention.
- **The refiner's fire is a fire of separation not a fire of destruction.** The refiner's fire is a fire that burns away our past before our past burns away us. The refiner's fire is a fire that separates us from destruction before destruction separates us.
- The refiner's fire is a fire that cleanses and conforms but doesn't consume. Mal3:6 says, "I the Lord do not change therefore you are not consumed..." **You may be feeling the burn but fear not, you will not be consumed.**

So Scripture breaks down for us God's redemptive purpose in the fire.

1. **The Fire Reveals: 1Cor3:13-15 In an age of redemption even the fires of judgment are the fires of grace.** Grace means we live in the benevolent judgment of God daily...so as the Lord reveals by fire we have sufficient time to adjust and rebuild.
  - **The fire of God is the coming of revealing grace.** As we saw last week, ashes are the result of what the fires reveal. Revealing grace is realized in that ashes are a place of exchange not a destination of destiny.
  - **When going through the ashes of revealing grace...don't stop.** God gives beauty for ashes. As we read in Ps113, turn your ash heap in for a throne
2. **The Fire Refines: Mal 3:2** How many know, **saved and going to heaven does not equate to refined and representing the Kingdom?** The fire is for the purpose of straining and extracting the dross. Fire is the purest and most effective filter in the Kingdom. The fire filters you out of you. It filters the treasure from the earthen vessel.
  - **The fire of God is the coming of refining grace.** As Jesus immerses us in Holy Spirit fire, we get forged in the fires of refining grace. We all love saving grace, even enabling grace, the Lord comes this year to forge us in the fires of refining grace.
  - Our hearts can be fully saved while our minds are full of thoughts needing to be extracted. **The refiner's fire extracts what self talk or cheap grace permits.** So Malachi says, "He will sit as a smelter..." (I asked Larry Robert's, our in house Geologist to explain the smelting process)
  - He said the purpose of the smelter is to extract the silver of value from the host rock of no value. So the Scriptures say, "He sits as a smelter," that is...He presides over the process for only He knows how long, how hot, how far the fire needs to go.

- Larry said **smelting is a 3 step process: 1. Pulverize;** Rock is put into a Ball Mill. **2. Wash;** removing of all soluble materials. **3. Smelt;** adding of intense heat and “reducing substances.” Reducing substances are needed for the extraction
  - Suffering, offenses, difficulties...these are the “reducing substances” God uses to extract the treasure from the earthen vessel. **When in the natural you feel like you are being pulverized, know in the Spirit you are being refined.**
- 3. The Fire Purifies: Mal3:3 Purify is the Hebrew word “tahir” it means “to make innocent.”** The fire of God is a purifying factor in our lives that has power from God to deliver us from guilt and restore us to innocence.
- “When I’m with The Smelter my innocence is restored.” **The fire of God is the coming of purifying grace.**
  - When the Black Plague swept through London, 68,000 people died and they were unable to stop it. Providentially fire broke out in the city destroying 13,200 homes and 89 Churches. Sovereignly, the plague was stayed by the purifying of fire.

In v.2 the Lord draws from another metaphor to illustrate the purifying grace of God. Malachi says “...**He is like fullers soap.**” Again Larry helps us explaining, **soap is a surfactant, a factor that breaks down organic compounds helping the substance to dissolve quicker.**

- Larry went on to explain; when water is used for cleaning it has a property known as “surface tension” which causes the water to bead up. So the surface tension must be reduced so the water can spread evenly wetting the entire area needing to be cleaned.
- **Fuller’s Soap is a “surfactant” used by God to break down the “surface tension” of His purifying process.** The Fuller comes to wash us from the tension of our resistance.
- How many feel like you have a few too many “organic compounds,” too much “surface tension” left in you that doesn’t seem to be breaking down as quick as you would like? The Lord knowing our need comes as “fuller’s soap” to purify us from ourselves.

The Hebrew word for “fuller” is “kabac.” Kabac means to “trample, tread and wash.” Or, to wash by trampling and treading. Kabac represented the old school manner of “beating the clothes clean” like we would “beat a rug clean” today.

- **In those times when it seems that life is trying to beat us silly, it is actually the “Fuller” using life to beat us clean.** Life goes so much better when we realize that what seems to be circumstantial is in fact providential.
- Sovereignty means our life is an orchestration where we are being carried along. The fire and the soap are simply tools in the hand of the Lord to reveal, refine and purify...that we might as v.5 says “draw near.”
- Near enough to be touched. Near enough to be fired.

**The fire of God is the means of God to reveal, refine and purify that we might draw near to Jesus and live in the touch of the Almighty.**