



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, May 9, 2010

Earth Wind & Fire

Jesus Christ — Redeemer (Week 4 of 4)

Matthew 3:11-12 — *The Word from the Bible (Today's New International Version)*

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

How Do We See God?

E. Stanley Jones, the great writer and missionary to India states, "All religion is humanity's search for God. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only story of God's search for a relationship with us."

Any study of the nature of and experience of God begins with what is called "the Trinity." God can not be understood with one single truth. The nature of God is far beyond human comprehension. In the Christian faith, we understand God as Father or Creator, Son or Savior, and Holy Spirit – Sustainer. Each of these gives us only a partial understanding of the nature of and action of God in creation and in our lives. But at least it is a beginning to understanding the immense presence of God.

Even in the Trinity, our knowledge is limited. We are still left with questions about how God relates to and interacts with creation. Finally, we are left with descriptions like "**mystery,**" "**holy,**" "**awe inspiring**" or even "**unknown.**" The scripture promise that one day we will see all things clearly, as if "**face to face**" (I Corinthians 13:12)

This week, we look at the savior we know as Jesus Christ. In Jesus, we see the truth of John 1:1, "**In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, the Word became flesh.**" As such, we understand Jesus is the incarnation of God on earth among us as a human. The Council of Nicaea (327 AD) tried to resolve the identity of Jesus. Bishops settled on a Trinitarian formula and balancing the humanity of Jesus (being born, suffering) and the divinity of Jesus (being resurrected, seated at the right hand of God). Jesus himself said that when we see him, we see God. In his humanity and in the power of his presence, he showed the way to God. This affirmation is based upon both the humanity of Jesus that we see in his human life and suffering and his divine presence through his authority over nature, evil, illness and even death.

In Paul's letter to Ephesus, he proclaims in verse 2:8, "**For by grace we have been saved through grace, it is not any of our own doing, but a gift from God.**" This is the action of which E. Stanley Jones speaks when he proclaims, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only story of God's search for a relationship with us." As humanity searches for the divine, only the Christian proclaims that God has opened the door and paved the road for a relationship with us. This is the only proclamation that truly bridges the gap between the limitations of humanity and the divinity of God's presence.

In Jesus, we see the full power of God's love. God is completely and wholly love. The action of creation, the bridge over the rebellion of our sin, and the power of the Holy Spirit comes through God who is love.

Our primary scriptures for today come from the John's first letter and from the proclamation of John the Baptist as recorded by Matthew. John the Baptist refers to the baptism of Jesus by fire. We will review this fire as an unquenchable fire that burns away all our sin. In I John, the writer refers to the eternal and all-consuming nature of God's love. As such, the love of God is a fire. An all-consuming fire that burns away all our faults and failures to leave only what God has created us to be.

In Christian circles, we often associate fire with the negative aspects of punishment — hell. But a review of the scriptures shows us that there are far more images of fire that are positive. God speaks out of a burning bush to Moses. The Hebrew slaves are led out of Egypt away from the oppression of Pharaoh by God's presence in a pillar of fire. The prophet Isaiah is cleansed and commissioned to preach when an angel of the Lord touches his lips with a burning ember of coal. Both the prophet Zachariah and the book of Revelation refer to the work of God as an act of purification as one would refine precious metal with fire. Jesus refers to the presence of God as a lamp that can not be hidden in the Sermon on the Mount. In the book of Acts, we see the image of the Holy Spirit coming as tongues of fire.

The Baptism of Fire – Matthew 3:11-12

John the Baptist offers two contrasts between himself and the one **who is coming**: (1) The Coming One is mightier than John, and (2) he will baptize **with the Holy Spirit and with fire**.

Most scholars tie this fire to the coming judgment. For this group, the separation of the wheat and the chaff is a separation of those who accept Christ and those who do not. It has also been suggested that John's original prediction was simply of a baptism with fire and that the early church added the mention of spirit baptism following the Pentecost experience where Luke speaks of the spirit as tongues of fire. Notice that John says that Jesus comes to baptize with water **AND** fire. These are two different baptisms that will happen to those who accept Him.

Let's look at this from the standpoint of love. God's love is so complete that God is willing to die to bring healing to a broken world. God is to suffer to make the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the earth one. With this in mind, our need is to have all that separates us from God burned away. The separation of wheat and chaff was a well-known process in Jesus' day. The wheat was brought to the threshing floor, where it was crushed or beaten until the husk (chaff) of the wheat was broken away from the heart of the wheat. Then it was tossed into the air to let the wind carry away the lighter husk (or chaff) to leave the pure wheat grain. Typically the chaff was then raked together and burned. This is a wonderful picture of the Holy Spirit (wind) and the purifying presence of Jesus (savior) working together to make us the person God created us to be.

Perfect Love - 1 John 4:7-5:3

In the preceding sections, the author has developed his themes with reference to the statement "**God is light**." He has said repeatedly that the truth of God and knowledge of God cannot be separated from the character of daily living in obedience to God's righteous commandments. Now in conclusion he turns the same arguments around the statement **God is love**. All he has said about truth is now said about love. Christian belief and Christian life are inseparably linked. As one believes, so one lives. As one lives, so is one's real belief.

The initiative is always from God. God loved first, God sent a Son to forgive our sins, to be our Savior. God has given us the Spirit. So if we believe in him, confess him, and show our love for him by loving our neighbors, we may confidently face the coming **judgment** without **fear**. To live in love is to live victoriously over all error and all anxiety.

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Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Have a great week!

Knowing someone's name means you know that person. Jesus Christ has over 200 different names and titles in the Bible. These names and titles reveal important insights about His life, character, and ministry. Praying the Names of Jesus will enrich your prayer life as it leads you into deeper intimacy with Jesus, and builds your faith by revealing the promises contained in His names.

And He Shall Be Called

Advocate (1 John 2:1) ♦ Lamb of God (John 1:29) ♦ The Resurrection & the Life (John 11:25)
Shepherd & Bishop of Souls (1 Peter 2:25) ♦ Judge (Acts 10:42) ♦ Lord of Lords (1 Timothy 6:15)
Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3) ♦ Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23) ♦ Master (Matthew 8:19)
Faithful & True Witness (Revelation 3:14) ♦ Rock (1 Corinthians 10:4) ♦ High Priest (Hebrews 6:20)
The Door (John 10:9) ♦ Living Water (John 4:10) ♦ Bread of Life (John 6:35)
Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1) ♦ Alpha & Omega (Revelation 22:13) ♦ True Vine (John 15:1)
Messiah (Daniel 9:25) ♦ Teacher (John 3:2) ♦ Holy One (Mark 1:24)
Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5) ♦ The Beloved (Ephesians 1:6) ♦ Branch (Isaiah 11:1) ♦ Carpenter (Mark 6:3)
Good Shepherd (John 10:11) ♦ Light of the World (John 8:12) ♦ Image of the Invisible God (Colossians 1:15)
The Word (John 1:1) ♦ Chief Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) ♦ Savior (John 4:42) ♦ Servant (Matthew 12:18)
Author & Finisher of Our Faith (Hebrews 12:2) ♦ The Almighty (Revelation 1:8)
Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6) ♦ Shiloh (Genesis 49:10) ♦ Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5)
I Am (John 8:58)
King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15) ♦ Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) ♦ Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15)
Only Begotten Son (John 3:16) ♦ Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6) ♦ Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23)
Son of Man (Matthew 20:28) ♦ Dayspring (Luke 1:78) ♦ The Amen (Revelation 3:14)
King of the Jews (Mark 15:26) ♦ Prophet (Matthew 21:11) ♦ Redeemer (Job 19:25)
Anchor (Hebrews 6:19) ♦ Bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16)
The Way, the Truth, & the Life (John 14:6)

Jesus Christ

Daily Readings

Each of these passages include stories where fire represents the presence and action of God through fire. In every case, God keeps his promises. Examine your faith and dependence on God. What areas of your life need the saving grace of Jesus Christ and the unquenchable fire of His love? The study guide readings allow us to dig deeper.

Monday, May 10 – Read Exodus 3:1-12 — A burning bush catches Moses eye. By itself a burning bush would be unusual in the hot arid dessert of Moses home. But this bush was different; it continued to burn and not be consumed. Moses approaches the bush and hears the voice of God speaking from the bush giving instruction for the purpose of his life. How do you know the purpose of your life? What are the burning bushes that have guided you through life and helped set your priorities? Are you intentionally listening to the voice of God or just casually waiting without paying attention?

Tuesday, May 11 – Read Exodus 13:17-22 and Exodus 14:15-25 — Egypt at the time of the Hebrew slavery was a major political, economic and military power. Yet one man, Moses, through the supernatural actions of God, convinced Egypt's Pharaoh to free these people. One man wholly in the hands of God is more powerful than all the nations of the earth. Early in the escape, the presence of God went before the Hebrews, giving direction as a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day. Then as the Egyptians approached to attack the pillar of smoke and fire stood between the defenseless Hebrews and the army of Pharaoh until they could escape across the Red Sea. What directs your life? Where do you find protection when you a defenseless?

Wednesday, May 12 – Read Matthew 5:13-16 — In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus refers to the presence of His disciples as salt and light. Salt preserved and seasoned food. Light gave direction and comfort from the dark nights. How have you been a light for someone today?

Thursday, May 13 – Read Acts 2:1-13 — On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had promised. Fire represented the presence of God. Out of this fire came the inspiration and understanding of the racial divisions that existed in that day. Everyone heard the message of God's love with one voice. How do you experience the love of God?

Friday, May 14 – Read Isaiah 6:6-13 — The angel of the Lord touches Isaiah's lips with a coal of fire. Afterwards he says, ***"Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sins are forgiven."*** Here fire is a symbol of God's forgiveness and restoration. Just as we receive the forgiveness of Christ and God's love burns away all our sins and failures, Isaiah received this same forgiveness. Have you received the forgiveness of Christ and allowed the unquenchable love of God to make you whole?
