

**Exodus 3:1-15** Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." <sup>4</sup> So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground." <sup>6</sup> Moreover He said, "I *am* the God of your father -- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who *are* in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. <sup>8</sup> "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup> "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> "Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who *am* I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this *shall be* a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." <sup>13</sup> Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, *when* I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What *is* His name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup> And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" <sup>15</sup> Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.'

See this great sight!  
- Fire in midst of bush  
- Bush is not burnt

Moses saw something strange, something amazing and he

said to himself - I will turn aside and go see this great sight. The Holy Spirit records this for us as something to take note of and wonder at - that the fire was in the midst of the bush but the bush was not burnt. What is so amazing about that? Well the obvious answer is the rules of physics were broken but what is more interesting than the physics is the theology involved. Moses turned aside to investigate. Let us as well. This display, this demonstration of a fire in the midst of a dry thorny desert shrub but the bush not being burnt and consumed by the fire was a representation, a symbol of what God was about to say and do. It was representation of the one true God choosing a people as His own and dwelling in a special way in their midst and despite Him being a holy just God and the people a dry thorny material ready and deserving to be burnt and destroyed, yet they are not. This is indeed a great sign - **God making a people His very own and them not being consumed by His holiness.**

Israel is often represented in scripture as a plant. A vineyard that didn't produce grapes, a fig tree that didn't produce figs. Here it is represented as a desert shrub. It is not a proud and noble tree but a

lowly thorny desert shrub. As God said of Israel in Deuteronomy 7:7 *"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; <sup>8</sup> "but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, ."* Israel was like a lowly desert shrub. And the Lord is a consuming fire as Deuteronomy 4:24 says, *"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."*

So yes, what Moses saw, a fire in the midst of a bush and yet the bush was not consumed by the fire, portrayed the relationship God would have with His people. In this very place, where God was talking to Moses in the form of fire in the midst of a bush, in this very place, God would set up His covenant with the children of Israel as Deuteronomy 5 records.

God choosing a people for His own and dwelling in their midst. God making them the apple of His eye and burning with fierce love for His people. As <sup>NKJ</sup> **Psalm 34:15** says *"The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry."*

The Lord knows everything that happens on the earth, and hears what everyone says whether it is out loud or just in their head. But for His people, He hears their suffering and their prayers as a father hears the suffering of his own child.

God chose Israel and made them His people and made them righteous through the promise of the Savior. And so God didn't just hear and see and know how the children of Israel were being treated severely by the Egyptians, He saw and heard and knew it as a fire in the midst of His people, burning with zeal and protective love for them. God would burn Egypt for touching the apple of His eye.

You see this throughout the Old Testament. His people, by their sins, opened themselves to be oppressed and hurt by surrounding nations and God allowed it as the just consequences of Israel's sins and as a chastisement to Israel, but God, who is a consuming fire, a jealous God, burnt with wrath against the nations that dared lift their hands against His people. For example, you can read in the book of Amos about all the nations that hurt Israel and how God, God the consuming fire, the jealous God, would eventually burn them to the ground for the atrocities they had

committed against His children.

Let me ask you. Do you want such a jealous, zealous God who is a consuming fire to be your God? Do you want such a God in your heart? Do we as a people want Him in our midst? Once you think about that you realize the dangers. Yes, God is a fire, a consuming jealous fire against His peoples enemies, but if you play with fire you get burnt. Joshua knew this. You are familiar with Joshua's famous statement of faith "*as for me and my house we will serve the Lord*". But are you familiar with the rest of that section? Joshua's said that it was enough. Israel had flirted back and forth with serving JEHOVAH and their idols. Let them there on the verge of entering the promised land decide who they would serve- the LORD, Jehovah, the I AM God, the one who exists, the only God who exists or the false gods of the world. The people responded "*we will serve the Lord*". And you know what Joshua tried to do? He tried to talk them out of it. He told them . **Joshua 24:19-22** *But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God....* <sup>20</sup> *"If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do*

*you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."*

The ground which Moses approached was holy ground for God was there in a special way. The I AM God is a consuming fire, a jealous God for He alone is God and He will not give His glory to another. He is a holy and just God who punishes sin. Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look. He knew that if he saw God in God's true glory and holiness, he, Moses, would die. Not even the angels in heaven can look fully on Jehovah, the I AM God, as the vision of Isaiah reveals, they cover their faces with their wings. Remember too when God later in this very spot partially revealed His power and glory to the people of Israel on top of the mountain. **Exodus 20:18-19** "*when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.* <sup>19</sup> *Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."*

I ask again do you want such a God, the one True God who is a consuming fire, a jealous God who cannot abide sin to be your God?

Before you answer that I want to you realize something else. The LORD is the one true God who is a consuming fire, a jealous

Holy God who cannot abide sin. This is God's Name and His Memorial to all generations but this not all of His name and memorial to all generations. Come let us to turn aside with Moses and see this great sight, see God's full name and full memorial to all generations- The fire was in the midst of the bush but the bush was not consumed.

Why, how can the fire be in the midst of the bush that should go up like kindling and yet the bush is not burnt? Because His Name is JEHOVAH , the I AM God, The God who keeps His promises, the God who is a burning fire, burning with zeal and love for His people. **Malachi 3:6** *"For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

Don't you see how we are like kindling soaked with the gasoline of our sins? How we daily do evil in thought, word, and deed? God is holy and just. He is light in Whom is no darkness at all. He cannot abide sin. He cannot abide sin. It must be destroyed. We should be burnt and consumed but the bush was not consumed because God is not just holy but also love. He is a consuming fire in our midst who in love and justice destroyed our sin and our guilt

without destroying us!

How can the fire dwell in the midst of the bush without being burnt? Because of Christ. We are wood, flammable sinners. He is a burning fire yet we are not consumed. Turn aside and see this great sight. As wood should not be able to exist with and in fire without being consumed, we sinners should not be able to have God dwell in our midst but because of His burning love, God sent our Redeemer - His own son to be the redeeming sacrifice for all our sin. In Christ, punished for our sin, our sin was destroyed, was burnt away and God purified you for Himself , His own child. This is Name and memorial to all generations - God dwells in the midst of His people and they in Christ are not consumed. They are His. You are His and He burns with protective love for you. A burning zeal that destroys all that would take you from Him. Death, Hell and Sin consumed. And we will dwell with God above. See this great sight. Amen .

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Pastor Aaron Ude