



*“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isaiah 43 verse 2).*

This text illustrates two elements we often take for granted, namely fire and water, but the scriptures teach that both these are employed by God as means of judgement and blessing.

In the Bible we read of certain individuals and masses of people going INTO the fire or water and others going THROUGH them – what is the difference?

I shall start with going INTO the fire or water. This pictures God’s judgement. Let me give you some examples. First consider Noah. God repented that He had made man and the state of the Earth was such that He had no option but to destroy it and its inhabitants. This as we know took the form of a mass flood which destroyed every living thing including animals and man.

In our Lord’s sermon on the mount He spoke of two men building their houses – one on the rock and one on the sand. The latter could not stand up to the elements of the weather and so collapsed into the water and was destroyed. At Gadara Jesus permitted the evil spirit possessing the demonic man to go into a herd of swine feeding nearby and they ran violently into the sea and were drowned. That shows judgement by water – now look at the fire.

If you read the first two chapters of the book of the prophet Amos you will see God pronouncing judgement on eight cities, and the penalty in each case is that He would send fire on all of them.

There is also an interesting example of both fire and water when Jesus descended from the Mount of Transfiguration: He was met by a man whose son was an epileptic and was often cast into the fire and into the water.

Having looked at the negative or judgemental side of our discourse we come now to the positive side as depicted by going THROUGH the fire and water.

Look at Noah again. He and his family were safe inside the ark but nevertheless they went through the waters. Consider also Daniel’s three companions – they went through the fiery furnace but nothing was destroyed except their bonds. The other

house spoken of by Jesus withstood the elements but still passed through the waters. Our Lord's disciples faced that terrible storm on the lake of Galilee and they also passed through the waters until Jesus calmed the storm.

The apostle Paul and his fellow voyagers also faced a terrifying storm on the journey to Rome – but arrived safely at Melita – again going through the waters.

I have now looked at the two possibilities; so, are you travelling through life INTO the fire and water or are you going THROUGH them?

Since we are all born in sin and estranged from God there is for each of us a FEARFUL ENTRY into the first category, the way of judgement and a lost eternity. However, think of Elijah when he prepared the altar and set the bullock on it. He called on God to answer by fire and the fire fell on the sacrifice – thus depicting the fire of judgement falling on the Lord Jesus thereby providing for us a FREE ESCAPE if we turn to Him in repentance and faith. After that there is for us a FAULTLESS EXIT from the fire of judgement and then we come into the second category but we are still passing through the fire and water. The hymn writer writes “There is a work for Jesus none but you can do” so there is for each of us a GUIDED PATHWAY and we can be sure that will lead us through many trials and adversity comparable to fire and water. Notice please our text reads “When” – not “if” – “thou passest through the waters”, so there will be many “thorns on the way”.

However, we are not alone – there is for us a GRACIOUS PROVISION. The Lord Himself will be with us and He will see us through to the end.

Then there is awaiting us a GLORIOUS PROSPECT of eternal joy and bliss in the closer presence of Our Lord.

There is one more aspect of fire and water: we read of the water of life – described by our Lord to the Samaritan woman – and of the fire of the Holy Spirit – as introduced at Pentecost. The question now as we approach the festive season again is:- Are you drinking at the fountain of living water, and are your hearts on fire in your search for souls to “pluck from the burning”? How many souls will you point to Jesus this Christmas? That is the message and challenge I will leave with all my readers as I wish them all a Blessed Christmas and prosperous New Year.

I will close with some words from Psalm 66.

“Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads: we went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (verse 12).

I hope we will all set many on their way to that beloved holy place. Amen.