

# **SABBATH OF PASTORS – 10th OF OCTOBER, 2015**

## **THE BURNING BUSH**

**Scripture Text: Exodus 3:1-10**

All little children know the story of Moses, who was saved from the water by one daughter of Pharaoh. Older children know that this little Moses grew up in the court of Pharaoh and it was planned that he would also become a Pharaoh, until the day he killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a hebrew.

Because of this murder, Moses had to flee from Egypt because Pharaoh wanted to kill him.

Moses found himself in the land of Midian, away from the luxuries of Egypt. Jethro welcomed him and gave him as wife, Zipporah, one of his daughters. Moses lived happily with his wife and his sons; he was keeping the flock of his father-in law, when, one day, the strange phenomenon that we have just read happened: a burning bush that was not consumed. We are so used to seeing strange things that there are times, we read this story and many others, just as stories, without asking ourselves any questions. But the Bible is not a history book, it is not there to tell us only about what happened thousand years ago, but it is there so that we can hear and understand what God is saying to us today through the facts that it narrates.

In the desert, under the heat of the sun, it was not unusual to see bushes catching fire; usually these bushes were burning very quickly and the fire was extinguished when the twigs were burned; but the one we are talking about here had something special, it was not consumed and we understand Moses' reaction, intrigued by this unusual phenomenon.

His curiosity was aroused; he turned to see what was happening, certainly asking himself some questions about this unusual phenomenon; and how about us! Do we ask ourselves any questions? Does this phenomenon call us out to any questions today? Does it teach us something?

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If we approach the stories in God's Word as stories which we have heard so many times and that there is no longer anything to learn, then we may have some difficulty to hear God's voice?

I wish, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will have a new perspective on this old story and that we will be able to hear what the Lord wants to teach us.

The story begins by saying that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses inside a flame of fire. Therefore, it was the Lord Himself who appeared to Moses.

It should be noted that this is not the only time the Lord is called the Angel of the Lord, nor the only time that we find Him associated with a flame of fire.

When Gideon was called to deliver Israel, we read in Judges 6:21 that, at the moment he was offering a sacrifice, the Angel of the Lord stretched out the end of the staff that was in his hand, touched the meat and the unleavened cakes, and fire went up out of the rock, and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes.

In chap. 13, the Angel of the Lord paid a visit to Manoah, who told Him in verse 17: "What is your name?" The angel answered, "it is wonderful." And while Manoah was offering a sacrifice to the Lord, there happened a miracle.

We read in verse 20 that the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame which was raising over the altar. Manoah, then, said to his wife in verse 22, we will die because we have seen God.

It is worth noting that the Angel of the Lord is not the fire, nor the flame, but the Lord Himself who appears in the midst of the fire or in the flame. This is also what happens to Moses since the text says (Exodus 3:2) that the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush.

But what does this bush truly symbolize? In the light of the word of God, there are several explanations possible, but on this pastors' day, I choose one that can be taken as an

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encouragement for pastors, one that he could also address to every member so that everyone can find encouragement in it in his personal life.

Therefore, my suggestion is, let's consider this bush as each one of us. Brothers and sisters, this bush, it's you, it's me! It's your home and mine! It's the church where we gather every Sabbath. The flame of fire in the midst of this bush represents all the difficulties we face, when we are beset by diseases, privations, when we are victims of the infidelity of one who is close to us, when we are touched by death or when we are invaded by doubts...

The flame of fire in the midst of this bush represents the difficulties that the church face because of the lack of love, lack of faith, lack of loyalty, lack of brotherly relationship, lack of piety ... etc.

This flame of fire is not the Lord and it does not come from the Lord. The apostle Peter wrote in his first epistle:

*1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, don't be astonished at the fiery trial which has come upon you, to test you, as though a strange thing happened to you."*

Those who suffer are like the burning bush which was in front of Moses. This flame of fire in the midst of the bush, which represents us, is the work of the enemy of our souls, who is seeking to discourage us, to consume us, to annihilate us, intending to make us disappear with all kinds of privations, afflictions, trials, tribulations, misfortune . . . and we would probably not be here this morning, if the angel of the Lord was not in the midst of the fire that burns within us, that burns in our homes, that burns in our church.

When the Lord is present in us, present in our homes, present in our church, we have nothing to worry about the flames of fire of the enemy because He will never allow us to be destroyed by these flames.

That is the certainty that the three companions of Daniel had. The king threatened to throw them into a fiery furnace if they did not worship the statue he had built, but these three young

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men answered him: *“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”*  
(Dn. 3:17, 18)

All three of them were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace, which was a symbol of the will of the enemy to destroy them; but suddenly the king was scared. He was scared because he saw four men instead of three, walking amid the fire and who didn't feel any pain; and He said that the face of the fourth looked like that of a son of the gods. The Angel of the Lord was there standing in the midst of the fire.

While Moses was coming closer to see what this great vision was, a voice called him from within the bush: *“Moses! Moses!”* It was God who was calling him by his name.

The Lord knows us; He knows each of us by name; surely, he has already called us while we were in the grip of a flame of fire: like the choice of studies, choice of career, choice of spouse, or simply the choice of life; did we hear His voice?

On this Sabbath, day of pastors, I thank the Lord for all those whom He has called to serve Him. I thank the Lord for all who heard His voice and responded to His call.

The burning bush was God's message to tell them, the same message He said to Moses, that the task would not be easy, that there would be opposition, that they would perhaps experience some periods of doubt, and when they are surrounded by the flames of difficulties they might be tempted to give up, but that He, God himself, would be in the midst of the fire to prevent them from being destroyed.

Pastors, we do not know all the difficulties that you have undergone and that you may still be facing. We do not know the intensity of the flame that burns in you, but the burning bush is the message of the Lord for you and for all those who have engaged in His service. It is the message of God, which tells them that their own home may, one day, be put on fire by the enemy to the

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point of making them doubt their ministry, but in those times, the Angel of the Lord will be in the midst of the fire.

The burning bush is the Lord's message to all who have engaged in His service, to tell them that their homes could be, one day, subjected to the flames of the enemy, due to their dedication in the ministry and the feeling of loneliness their wives or their children may experience as a result of their repeated absence at home ... but in those moments, the Angel of the Lord would be in the midst of the fire.

The burning bush is the Lord's message to all those who have committed themselves to His service, to tell them that the churches they are in charge of could be submitted to the flames of the enemy, but in those times the Angel of the Lord would be in the midst of the fire.

The burning bush is each of us, who is wrestling so hard with the flames of afflictions, sorrows, difficulties, conflicts, to the point that we have the impression it will consume us, but just as He called Moses in the midst of the fire, the Lord calls us amid our fire, telling us that he will never allow us to be destroyed by this fire.

To you pastors and to each of us as well, the Lord sends this promise we find in the book of the prophet Isaiah: *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, and flame will not scorch you.”* (Is. 43:2)

The burning bush is also the time when the Lord calls everyone wherever he/she is, whoever he/she is, and during which He introduces Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

It is possible that this way of introducing oneself has no importance for us, but Moses understood that the God who spoke to him in the midst of the burning bush, had nothing to do with those he was acquainted with in Egypt.

The gods of the Egyptians, whom Moses has come to know for many years, were dominating gods who blessed only the powerful and forgot the weak. These gods were gods of places or

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gods of positions, as in the case of some Eastern religions, where we find the god of the sea or the mountain, the god of rain or the sun, the god for prosperity or deliverance, etc.

No! The God who speaks in the midst of the fire, is not the god of something, nor the god of a situation, nor the god of one place; He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This God is the same yesterday, today and forever; He is a God who is close to us, human beings; a God who is the same for everyone and for all situations in life.

This God who speaks in the midst of the bush is a God who sees, who hears, and who is sensitive to what his people is experiencing. We understand Him when He told Moses, *“I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.”* (Ex. 3:7, 8)

We have just said that the God who speaks in the midst of the bush is the same yesterday, today and forever; this God, who has seen the affliction of his people in Egypt, also sees the suffering of his people today, in all continents and in all places, wherever they are.

This God, who heard the cries of his people in Egypt, also hears the cries of his people today ...  
This God, who knew the pain of his children in Egypt, also knows our sorrows...

And the plan he announced to Moses in the midst of the burning bush is the same today. What is this plan?

*“I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”* (Ex. 3:8)

God's plan is a twofold plan; First, He wants to deliver His people from the modern Egypt and secondly, He wants to bring them out to a land flowing with milk and honey.

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For the first step, God is looking for co-workers; of course there are the pastors, the missionaries, the pioneers, the evangelists who are already engaged in this task.

Yet, there is a lack of men, women who want to engage themselves in this wonderful work of salvation of souls. And this morning, through the burning bush, the Lord calls each and every one of us by his/her name and tells him/her: “Take your sandals off of your feet,” that is to say get out of your daily routine, forget a little bit about your comfort, your safety. Turn away from your usual path to listen to the voice of God, who can help you discover unsuspected treasures.

Your pastors have heard this call a long time ago, more or less, and have already responded to it; the task is not always easy, they encounter burning bushes, but the Angel of the Lord is always in the midst of the fire.

**(Optional) call (to engage oneself in the ministry) followed by a prayer in which we also pray for the pastor and his family.**

The time has come when the Lord will appear on the clouds of heaven to take his people and welcome them, not in the earthly Canaan anymore, but in the heavenly Canaan.

Until that glorious day, we will be subjected, at one time or another, to the fiery darts of the wicked, but the Angel of the Lord will be in the midst of the fire to enable us to remain standing to welcome our beloved Lord.

For the Angel of the Lord is the safety amidst the difficulties; the Angel of the Lord is the assurance of victory over evil; the Angel of the Lord is the certainty of the success of the mission that the Lord has entrusted us, the Angel of the Lord is life for eternity.

Amen!

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