

**Sun., April 25 - (Member Sunday) Strange Fire #3: Final Fire**

Series: "Strange Fire: Spring Message Series"

Memory Verse: "I, Jesus, ... am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." - Revelation 22:16

Message: Strange Fire #3: Final Fire -Pastor David

Text: "There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 22:5

Sermon Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Revelation 21:22-27

Reading of Scripture: Revelation 22:1-7

Blurb: God's fire burns throughout the Bible, and we see it dramatically at the End Times in Revelation. But what is the purpose of God's burning fire at the Last Day? It's not for punishment! Rather, it's for purity. We invite God's fire to purify us, and then it lights a fire under us to go live today by sharing the joy of Jesus with others.

**[Recorded Worship Beginning]**

**ACOLYTE & DOXOLOGY:** Lighting the candle symbolizing the presence of God -Pastor Andrew

**WELCOME** -Pastor Andrew

Membership Sunday. Receiving into Membership: Brian & Julie Bernier, Lynn Ersbo, Julie Hovey, George & Annelle Mix, Dolores "Dori" Vaughan, Susan Flaherty, Transferred back: Lee & Tracy Hansen, Affiliate Member: Maxene Schwanke.

**MEMORY VERSE:** -Pastor Andrew

"I, Jesus, ... am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." -Rev. 22:16

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET** -Sanctify

*Even So Come*

*Stronger*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

**[Live Worship Beginning]**

**GATHERING SONG:** *For God Alone (Psalm 62)* -Sanctify

**ACOLYTE & DOXOLOGY:** Lighting the candle symbolizing the presence of God

**WELCOME** -Pastor David

**MEMORY VERSE:** -Pastor David

"I, Jesus, ... am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." -Rev. 22:16

**WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify***Days of Elijah**Consuming Fire**Even So Come*

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

**[Both Recorded & Live Worship]****SCRIPTURE READING: Revelation 22:1-7 (CEB) -Reader:**

**Revelation 22 describes heaven recreated on earth, perfect and beautiful. Listen for how light is provided in this perfect world. Revelation 22:1-7,**

**1 “Then the angel showed me the river of life-giving water, shining like crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb 2 through the middle of the city’s main street. On each side of the river is the tree of life, which produces twelve crops of fruit, bearing its fruit each month. The tree’s leaves are for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in it, and His servants will worship Him. 4 They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 Night will be no more. They won’t need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine on them, and they will rule forever and always.**

**6 “Then he said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.**

**7 “‘Look! I’m coming soon. Favored is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy contained in this scroll.’”**

**GROW MOMENT: Photo Scavenger Hunt -Sue LaVigne****LOVE MOMENT: Receiving of New Members**

Introduction of new members:

Professing/Full Members:

Brian &amp; Julie Bernier

Lynn Ersbo

Julie Hovey

George &amp; Annelle Mix

Dolores “Dori” Vaughan

Susan Flaherty

Transferred back: Lee &amp; Tracy Hansen

Affiliate Member: Maxene Schwanke, retains primary membership at Richfield UMC

Membership vows

Prayer Shawls

Prayers for new members.

**APOSTLES' CREED -Bethany Bonsell**

Hello. My name is Bethany Bonsell. This is my version of the Apostles' Creed. Please join me.

I believe in the all-powerful God, who created everything.

And in His Son Jesus, who was born as a human, beaten and whipped by Romans, and later crucified for the world's sin. He was buried in a tomb, but rose on the third day. Later He rose into heaven, where He waits with God until His return to Earth, when He will judge everyone.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, and in the Church. I believe that all the believers are still with God, in forgiveness from our sins, in our resurrection from the dead, and eternal life with Jesus. Amen.

**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Pastor Andrew****MESSAGE: Strange Fire #3: Final Fire****PP#1: Final Fire**

"There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever." -Rev. 22:5

Final Fire. At the end of the end times, as it says in Revelation 22:5, "There will be no more night. [God's people] will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

**PP#2: Image of the quote, "Some people are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good" -Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.**

"She's so heavenly minded that she's no earthly good!"

Mrs. Fike make this quip about another lady we were chatting about as I paused on my paper route. She knew I was a pastor's kid, and somehow we got talking about the school custodian's wife. I guess they went to church together, and Mrs. Fike was frustrated with the other lady's constant talk about heaven. She didn't seem too worried about doing very much in life now because she was just waiting for heaven, when everything would be perfect. "We've got to be ready for when Jesus returns, and that means get busy now!" Mrs. Fike continued. "Don't forget, there's a big battle between heaven and now!"

Mrs. Fike was talking about the end times, and the climactic battle we call Armageddon. We know from Scripture that those who trust in Jesus survive the battle and end up in heaven. The other lady, I guess, was so focused on heaven that she didn't really do a whole lot now for Jesus. Mrs. Fike told me that disciples ought to be busy getting ready for what was coming. That meant not just resting in your own secure future but to live in a way where we help others to get to know Jesus better, too.

I've often thought about Mrs. Fike's comment. Does that describe me? Do I tend keep to myself about Jesus just glad that I'm going to heaven, or am I a disciple who also makes disciples? Am I so heavenly minded that I'm no earthly good? It's a good question for all of us!

**PP#3: Image of God's light shining on the darkness of the earth and making a new creation.**

Our series, “Strange Fire: God Is an All-Consuming Fire” lights a fire under us to get busy and be some earthly good! You see, the end times described in the Bible shows us that God is up to something: He is working toward a specific goal; He has a plan. We’re learning that God is a purifying fire, and the plan that God is working is purifying His creation to return it to the way He intended. So, God purifies us from our sin—both in forgiving the sins we confess and in curbing our desire to sin so we can become more holy—but that is not the end of it. Yes we get to go to heaven, but before we get there, God calls us to join Him in His purifying work. That means doing some earthly good to help others come to know the saving grace of Jesus and to work for love and peace and righteousness in our world today.

**PP#4:** Final Fire: God in the end times as an all-consuming fire!

To light a fire under us, God then provides us with just enough revelation of the end times so that we get busy. Often we read the Book of Revelation and other biblical passages on the end times with general curiosity or because we want to know what will happen *to us*. But—this is amazing!—the end times passages are given so that we will know what will happen *to them*! This is part of the reason that the end times story seems somewhat confusing. It’s not told to give us a play-by-play so that we can feel comfortable and in control. It’s given in a way to disrupt our comfort so that we will feel compelled to get out there with urgency and do some earthly good! Be watching! Be ready! And that means do all you can to tell your neighbor about how awesome Jesus is!

The end times show God as an all-consuming fire. God, in mercy, constrains His burning holiness to allow sinful people to find their way back home through Jesus. But the time is coming when God’s holiness will break out, consume all things—purify all things—and recreate all of creation. God’s strange fire will become the final fire that creates heaven and begins eternity.

**PP#5:** The Seven Cycles of Seven in Revelation

|            |                               |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| Rev. 1-3   | The 7 Letters to the Churches |
| Rev. 4-7   | The 7 Seals                   |
| Rev. 8-9   | The 7 Trumpets                |
| Rev. 10    | The 7 Thunders                |
| Rev. 15    | The 7 Angels with 7 Plagues   |
| Rev. 16    | The 7 Bowls                   |
| Rev. 19-22 | Concluding cycle of 7         |

Let me just take you on a quick overview of the last four chapters of Revelation. Revelation, you may know, is the account of the end times in the Bible. It’s written in apocalyptic style, and that means lots of bizarre symbolism, numerology and poetic imagery. There are seven cycles of seven in Revelation, each one revealing more and more of the end times. Each cycle escalates the drama of the swell of evil and God’s outpouring wrath, as the frantic urgency drives toward the climactic conclusion! In Revelation 18 we hear foretold the fall of the Harlot, the Beast, and Babylon: all symbols for evil, the ungodly, and the wicked of the earth.

**PP#6:** *Image of The Rider on the White Horse (with fiery eyes) in Revelation 19.*

And in Revelation 19 we see into God’s throne room. The armies of God are excited and shouting “Hallelujah!” The Four Living Creatures of Ezekiel lead the multitude in singing what

Handel put to song in his *Hallelujah Chorus*. And then, the heavens open and out comes the Rider on the White Horse. White–light–imagery for God’s fire pouring out. And verse 19:12 says that “His eyes are like blazing fire.” He is dressed in linen white and clean. Here comes God’s all-consuming fire! The Rider is called “Faithful and True,” “Word of God” and “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” The creature who announces Him, it says in verse 19:17–notice this!–is “an angel standing *in the sun*.” Look out! God’s holy fire is coming! Prepare for war! Prepare for carnage!

**PP#7:** *Dramatic image of Armageddon, or the battle in Revelation 19:18-21 or 20:8-10*

The Beast and the false prophet gather with the kings of the earth and all their vast armies to make war against the Rider on the Horse with His angelic army. It doesn’t go well for them. Verse 20, “But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that come out of the mouth of the Rider on the Horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”

Did you see the image? The fiery eyes of the holy Rider “see” to it that the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake. Here is the final fire of our God, who is all-consuming fire.

Chapter 20, Satan gathers a resurgence of the world’s armies and rides against God’s people. He completely surrounds God’s people with an uncountable hoard like the sand on the seashore. Verse 9, “But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown.”

**PP#8:** *Image of the final judgement, with a gleaming throne, from Revelation 20:11-15*

The final battle is over, and it is time for the final judgement. Everyone, it says in Revelation 20:12, are raised from the dead and are judged before a *gleaming* white throne. Verse 14, “Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

**PP#9:** *Typical image of hell of fire and a smiling Satan, with a big question mark over it*

People ask me if Hell is a real place where people burn eternally in torment of fire. I don’t know how to answer that question. But it’s not because of their intent with the question. Usually people ask me this to see if I believe that fiery Hell is an actual place, or if I think that Hell is a symbol in the Bible of being separated from God. Now, I believe that fire is real, but I struggle to answer the question because in the Bible the fiery lake is not the burning Hell we all think about with Satan in charge. The burning fire *is God*! The fires are not punishment and torment. They are God’s purifying holy presence. And when the beast, the false prophet, Satan, and all those not written in God’s Book of Life are thrown into the fiery lake, they’re not being thrown into Hell. They’re undergoing purification by God’s holy fire. The problem is, that because of their evil, the purifying ends up consuming them. You see, purifying fire consumes the dross and leaves only what is pure. And unless you have Jesus’ purity applied to you, that fire reveals nothing to leave behind.

Jesus describes this eternal fire. In Matthew 25, when describing the final judgement and the separating of the sheep from the goats, He says in verse 41, “Then He will say to those on His left,

‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat....’ Their lives are revealed as only selfish in the purifying fire! Again, Mark 9:43 Jesus says, “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.” Hell as a purifying fire never goes out, Jesus says. Why? Because it is God’s purity! But it is only a problem for those who are impure, or those who don’t have Jesus. If you have Jesus, the fire is a great place to be!

**PP#10:** 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 (NIV)

10 ... But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15, “10 ... But each one should build with care. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, [that’s godliness] wood, hay or straw, [that’s ungodliness] 13 their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. 14 If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. 15 If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.” Paul is talking here about if Christians sin in their life, what they built in ungodliness will be lost, but they themselves will be saved because they still claim Jesus.

God’s people don’t fear God’s fire! We have it burning within us already! But we’ll come back to that on Pentecost. Just know that when you claim Jesus, you have His purity living within you. And that will sustain us through the end times.

**PP#11:** Revelation 21:22-27 (NIV)

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Well, let’s go finish the end times narrative. Revelation 21: Jesus then re-creates heaven and earth. And John sees a New Jerusalem coming down to the earth. Heaven is on earth, and resurrected, perfected people are living directly with God. Verse 22, and listen here for how God’s holy fire is there, “I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the

earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.” The people will live directly with the burning, holy presence of the living God.

**PP#12:** *Image fitting with Revelation 22:4-5*

Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible, verse 4, the Lamb’s servants “will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” Remember how God created the sun to shine in the sky? How God’s lamp shone in the Tabernacle and Temple? Well now, God Himself is the burning light of heaven through eternity.

At the end of this incredible vision, John—the one who sees all this vision—then hears Jesus, in verse 16, say, “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”

**PP#13:** Final Fire

1. Are you heavenly minded?

Our God is an all-consuming fire. He is a strange fire. And He reveals the end times about heaven to light a fire under us! We see God’s purifying fire working to burn away evil and recreate all things as God intended. We are told that so that we will now, today, while there is still time, ask God to purify us from all our ungodliness. We read the account of the end times and we ask ourselves, “Will we be able to stand before God?” The only way we can is if we stand with Jesus. Jesus cleanses us from sin and gives to us His holiness. So, first crucial question, are you ready? Are you heavenly minded? Do you have Jesus? The end times are coming soon. Do not delay! Turn to Him. Confess your sin. Invite Him into your heart to purify you from the inside out. Make Him your personal Lord and Savior! If you need help doing that, or if you want someone to pray with you, come up to the front pew at the end of the service, and members of the prayer team will pray with you. Today is the day to be heavenly minded and turn to Jesus!

**PP#14:** Final Fire

1. Are you heavenly minded?
2. Are you any earthly good?

If you have Jesus, then you are bound for heaven. Hallelujah! You will pass through the refiner’s fire and be made new. Your future is secure! You are counted with the multitude of white robes who come with Jesus! But then I ask you a second crucial question, “Are you so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good?” Do you rest in your security and merely pass your time on this side of heaven pursuing innocent interests and busying yourselves with harmless pleasures? Hear again the story of the Final Fire! Judgement is coming. All will be tested. And God desires that none be lost and all be saved. Does your neighbor claim Jesus? Does your friend know His love? Will your family member survive the fire? Will they be with you on the other side?

We are given the Revelation—we are allowed to see just enough of the Final Fire—so that we will stay busy doing earthly good. That urgency compels us to put away our pass times, to get up out of our comforts, and to make that connection, build that relationship, share from our experience how Jesus made a difference to us.

**PP#15:** *Image of Jesus as the Bright, Morning Star, subtitled, “Behold, I am coming soon!”*

Every morning, every sunrise, reminds you that the end times draws close. It could be today! So today is the day to be heavenly minded and to do some earthly good. Jesus, “the Root and Offspring of David, ... the bright, Morning Star” says (the very last thing He says in the Bible is), “Behold I am coming soon!”

As the last verse of the Bible responds, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.” (Rev. 22:20b-21)

**[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG:** *Stronger* -Sanctify

**OFFERING:** -Pastor David

-Give of your monies to God’s work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the “square” on the bulletin.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS** -Pastor David

Today, 2-5: Photo Scavenger Hunt!

Next Sunday’s message: Confirmation Sunday

**Outdoor worship! Bring a chair!**

**MEMORY VERSE** -Pastor David

“I, Jesus, ... am the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” -Revelation 22:16

**BENEDICTION** -Pastor David

At the end of Revelation, Jesus declares, “16 ‘I, Jesus, have sent my angel to bear witness to all of you about these things for the churches. I’m the root and descendant of David, the bright morning star. 17 The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ Let the one who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let the one who is thirsty come! Let the one who wishes receive life-giving water as a gift.’

“20 The one who bears witness to these things says, ‘Yes, I’m coming soon.’

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

“21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.”

Amen.

**ACOLYTE:** God’s light leads us out into the world.