

# TICKLED EARS OR BURNING HEARTS

(No. 1216 – 2/21/22 – Sermon Online Zoom)

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Two distinctly different groups will be manifested in the Church in the last days— (1) those who reject sound doctrine and want their itching ears tickled with messages that appeal to their carnal lusts; and (2) true disciples whose hearts burn from the revelation of God’s Word:
1. **2 Tim. 4:1-4:** <sup>1</sup>*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup>Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when **men will not put up with sound doctrine**. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will **gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear**. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*
  2. **Luke 24:25-32:** <sup>25</sup>*He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?” <sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself. <sup>28</sup>As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if He were going farther. <sup>29</sup>But they urged Him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They asked each other, “**Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?**”*
- B. Just before Jesus began to warn about false prophets and deception in Mat. 7:15-23, He first spoke of two roads—a broad (popular) road with many on it, and a narrow road with only a few people (**Mat. 7:13-14**):

<sup>13</sup>*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and **broad** is the road that leads to destruction, and **many** enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and **narrow** the road that leads to life, and only a **few** find it.*

- C. We need to examine our lives very carefully to determine which road we are truly on and which group we are in—the tickled ears group, or the burning hearts group...

## II. TICKLED EARS

- A. Jesus and the apostles had already given numerous warnings about false teachers, false prophets, and false doctrines bringing apostasy and great deception into the Church
- B. Paul predicted there would be many who choose deception because they have no love for the truth (**2 Thess. 2:9-12**):

<sup>9</sup>*The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of **counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders**, <sup>10</sup>and in every sort of **evil that deceives** those who are perishing. They perish because **they refused to love the truth** and so be saved. <sup>11</sup>For this reason **God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie** <sup>12</sup>and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have **delighted in wickedness**.*

- C. Note the following specifics from Paul's warning about such people in 2 Timothy 4:
  - 1. They will not put up with sound doctrine ["will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food—catchy opinions that tickle their fancy" – MSG]
  - 2. They only want to satisfy their own lusts and desires
  - 3. They deliberately gather around them ["heap to themselves" – KJV] a *great number* of false/hireling teachers who will say what their itching ears want to hear
    - a) NOTE: Jesus said there would be MANY false prophets/teachers in the last days (**Mat. 24:4-5, 10-12**):  
<sup>4</sup>*Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup>For **many** will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive **many**... <sup>10</sup>At that time **many** will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, <sup>11</sup>and **many** false prophets will appear and*

*deceive **many** people. <sup>12</sup>Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of **most** will grow cold.*”

- b) Most of us believe we are in the last days, so there must be many false teachers in the Church now... can we recognize them?
- 4. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths

#### D. Rebellion invites deception

- 1. **Isa. 30:9-11:** <sup>9</sup>*These are **rebellious people**, deceitful children, children **unwilling to listen** to the LORD’s instruction. <sup>10</sup>They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! **Tell us pleasant** [“smooth” – KJV; “flattering” – Heb.] **things, prophecy illusions.** <sup>11</sup>Leave this way, get off this path, and **stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!**”*
- 2. **Jer. 5:30-31:** <sup>30</sup>*A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: <sup>31</sup>The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and **My people love it this way.** But what will you do in the end?*

### III. BURNING HEARTS

- A. After the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had their eyes opened and realized they had been talking to the risen Christ, they asked each other, “**Were not our hearts burning within us** while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”
- B. Note the following specifics of their experience that are profoundly significant:
  - 1. Their eyes were opened
  - 2. They recognized Him
  - 3. Their ears were open—they were listening while He was talking with them
  - 4. Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures (Moses, the Prophets) concerning *Himself!*
  - 5. Jesus opened the Scriptures to them (i.e., gave them revelation = “unveiling”)
  - 6. Their hearts were burning [lit. “set on fire”]

- C. There are numerous references to fire and burning in the Scriptures... consider the following:
1. God placed cherubim and a **flaming sword** flashing back and forth in the Garden of Eden to guard the way to the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24)
  2. Moses' encounter with God at the **burning bush** (Ex. 3:1-4)
  3. Israel's exodus from Egypt and meeting with God at Mt. Sinai
    - a) **Pillar of fire** to give Israel light at night (Ex. 13:21-22)
    - b) **Mt. Sinai** was covered with smoke and **blazed with fire** because the Lord descended on it in fire (Ex. 19:19); the glory of the Lord on the mountain looked like a **consuming fire** to the Israelites (Ex. 24:15-17), and God revealed Himself as a **consuming fire** and a jealous God (Deut. 4:11-12, 24)
    - c) God promised to go ahead of the Israelites as a **devouring fire** to destroy all of the enemy nations in the Promised Land (Deut. 9:3)
  4. Fire was prominent throughout the Tabernacle of Moses
    - a) Altar of burnt offering (**Lev. 6:12-13**): <sup>12</sup>*The **fire on the altar** must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it.* <sup>13</sup>*The **fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.***
    - b) Altar of incense (**Ex. 30:1, 7-8**): <sup>1</sup>*You shall make an altar to **burn incense** on; you shall make it of acacia wood...* <sup>7</sup>*Aaron shall **burn** on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall **burn incense** on it.* <sup>8</sup>*And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall **burn incense** on it, a **perpetual incense** before the LORD throughout your generations.* [NOTE: NO FIRE = NO PRAYER! see Jas. 5:16 "fervent prayer"]
    - c) Lampstand (**Lev. 24:1-4**): <sup>1</sup>*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:* <sup>2</sup>*"Command the children of Israel that they bring to you **pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually.*** <sup>3</sup>*Outside*

*the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually; it shall be a statute forever in your generations. <sup>4</sup>He shall be in charge of the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD **continually**.* [NOTE: The central focus of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Mat. 25) was the oil, but the purpose for the oil was to *burn* in their lamps: burning producing light! Even with oil, NO FIRE = NO LIGHT!]

- d) Over the entire Tabernacle at night (**Ex. 40:38**): *For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and **fire was over it by night**, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.*
5. Elijah's **God answered with fire** (1 Kings 18:24-38) and he was taken into heaven in a **chariot of fire** (2 Kings 2:11)
6. God's throne is surrounded by fire (**Dan. 7:9-10**): <sup>9</sup>*As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. **His throne was flaming with fire**, and its wheels were all ablaze. <sup>10</sup>**A river of fire** was flowing, coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.*
7. God promised to be a **wall of fire** around Jerusalem and its glory within (Zech. 2:5)

#### D. God's Word is a fire

1. **Jer. 5:14**: *Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts: "Because you speak this word, behold, **I will make My words in your mouth fire**, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.*
2. **Jer. 20:8-9**: <sup>8</sup>*For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. <sup>9</sup>Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But **His word was in my heart like a burning fire** shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, And I could not.*

3. **Ps. 39:1-3:** <sup>1</sup>*I said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth as long as the wicked are in my presence.”* <sup>2</sup>*But when I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased.* <sup>3</sup>***My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned;*** then I spoke with my tongue.
  4. **Jer. 23:28-29:** <sup>28</sup>*“The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the LORD.* <sup>29</sup>***“Is not My word like a fire?”*** says the LORD, *“and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”*
  5. When Isaiah saw the exalted Lord seated on His throne and the whole temple filled with **smoke**, he also saw **seraphim** [Heb. “burning ones”] who took a **burning coal** from the altar and touched his lips to cleanse him (Isa. 6:1-5)
- E. God wants His servants and ministers to be flames of fire
1. **Ps. 104:4** (NKJV): *Who makes His angels spirits, **His ministers a flame of fire.***
  2. **Heb. 1:7:** *He makes His angels winds, **His servants flames of fire.***
  3. **John 5:35:** *John [the Baptist] was **a lamp that burned** and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.*
  4. God wants us to be HOT—He says He will vomit it us out of His mouth if we are lukewarm (**Rev. 3:15-16** – NKJV): <sup>15</sup>*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.* <sup>16</sup>*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*
  5. Fire speaks of **zeal** [Gk. “heat, ardor”]
    - a) Phineas was as zealous as God (Num. 25:3-11)
    - b) Zeal for His Father’s house consumed Jesus when He cleansed the temple with a whip (John 2:14-17)
    - c) **Rom. 12:11:** ***Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.***
  6. Fire speaks of love (**Songs 8:6-7**); <sup>6</sup>*Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for **love** is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. **It***

***burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. <sup>7</sup>Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.***

F. God's provision

1. Baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire
  - a) **Mat. 3:11:** *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*
  - b) **Acts 2:1-4:** *<sup>1</sup>When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Then there **appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire**, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*
  - c) **1 Thess. 5:19-20:** *<sup>19</sup>Do not put out [“quench” – KJV; “extinguish” – Gk.] **the Spirit's fire**; <sup>20</sup>do not treat prophecies with contempt. [NOTE: Is this not what many churches have done—they have shut down prophecy and any manifestation of the gifts, and they have shut out the Holy Spirit!]*
  - d) The fire of God's love is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5)
2. God has given us His word [see previous section *III.D God's Word is a fire*]

#### IV. SUMMARY

- A. Do we just want our ears tickled, or do we want a real relationship with Jesus Christ that causes our hearts to burn with love and passion for God and others?
- B. Things we need in order to stay on fire for God
  1. Be a sacrifice on the altar—surrender to God (Rom. 12:1-2)
  2. Be filled with the Holy Spirit and fire—pray in the Spirit daily

3. Love sound doctrine—read, study, memorize, meditate on God’s word (7 Foundations book!)
  4. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you and open up the Scriptures to you by revelation
  5. Welcome correction, rebuke and encouragement from Scripture
  6. If you’ve gotten cold or lukewarm, be encouraged—He will never quench or snuff out a smoldering wick (Mat. 12:20)
  7. Even Timothy needed to be exhorted by Paul to stir up his spiritual gift (**2 Tim. 1:6**): *For this reason I remind you to **fan into flame*** [Gk. “to rekindle”; lit. “make the fire alive”] *the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*
- C. Let’s be flames of fire for the Lord, our hearts burning from the revelation of God’s word and love! Amen.

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*Did not our hearts burn within us, while He  
talked with us by the way, and while He  
opened to us the Scriptures?*

*—Luke 24:32—*