

THE FIRE OF GOD

John the Baptist was *“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make His paths straight.”* Matthew 3:3

John said: *“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I’m not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”* Matthew 3:11-12

“For our God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:29

When the Lord made His Covenant with Abraham He revealed Himself as a burning torch (Genesis 15:17-18).

God revealed Himself to Moses through the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2-14).

The children of Israel were led through the wilderness by the presence of God manifested by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

When King David built an altar to the Lord and offered sacrifices, calling on the Lord, God answered him from Heaven by sending fire on the altar (I Chronicles 21:26).

“When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from Heaven and consumed the burnt offering on the sacrifices: and the Glory of the Lord filled the temple.” 2 Chronicles 7:1

The Prophet Elijah challenged the false prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel. They would each build an altar and lay on it wood and a sacrifice, *“And the god who answers by fire, He is God.”* I Kings 18:24

The hundreds of false prophets called on Baal, dancing, crying aloud, cutting themselves with knives until the blood gushed out of them, for hours. *“But there was no voice: no one answered, not one paid attention.”* 1 Kings 18:29

“And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the Prophet came near and said: ‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your Word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God and that you have turned their hearts back to you again.’ Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said: ‘The Lord He is God! The Lord He is God!’” 1 Kings 18:36-39

When Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord enthroned in Heaven: *“High and lifted up, ...Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory! And the posts of the door were shaken... So I said: ‘Woe is me for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Behold this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is purged.’ Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying: ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I! Send me’.”* Isaiah 6:1-8

Do you have a vision of the holiness of God? Do you have an understanding of the depravity of man? Do you repent of your own sinfulness? Have you experience the fire of God purging your sin? Have you heard the call of the Lord: *“Whom shall I send and who will go for us?”* Have you answered: *“Here am I! Send me.”*?

When the Lord Jesus commanded His followers: *“That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations...”* He promised power from on high. Luke 24:47-49

When the Lord commissioned His followers to be His Witness *“to the ends of the earth”* He promised: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”* Acts 1:8

The Church was born in the fires of Pentecost. *“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house. Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”* Acts 2:1-3

When the Sanhedrin threatened the disciples severely: *“that from now on they speak to no man in this Name.”* Peter and John answered: *“whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard.”* Acts 4:17-20

The disciples united in prayer: *“Now, look on their threats, and grant Your servants that with all boldness they may speak your Word...’ and when they had prayed the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.”* Acts 4:29-31

Saul, the persecutor of the church, encountered the Lord Jesus in a blinding flash of light which shone around him from heaven, he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: *“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”* Acts 9:3-5

Saul the persecutor became Paul the Apostle and missionary of Christ. Later, the Apostle Paul would warn: *“Do not put out the Holy Spirit’s fire”* (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

While in exile on the Mediterranean island of Patmos, the Apostle John had a vision of the Lord Jesus standing in the midst of the seven lamp stands, ***“His eyes were a flame of fire: His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace and His voice as the sound of many waters. He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*** And when I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead.” Revelation 1:13-18

Have you experienced the baptism of fire? Have you seen a vision of the Holiness of God? Do you know what it is to be led by the Lord? Have you experienced His anointing? Have you been purged and purified by the fire of God?

Oswald Chambers in *My Utmost For His Highest* wrote: *“The Holy Spirit must anoint for the work, fire me...nothing but the fire of the most Holy Spirit of God can make my offering Holy and unblameable and acceptable.”*

South African Dutch Reformed minister, whose labours were blessed by a Heaven sent Revival, Andrew Murray taught: *“The one thing needful for the church, and the one thing, which above all others, men ought everywhere to seek for with one accord and with their whole heart, is to be filled with the Spirit of God.”*

The great Baptist prince of preachers Charles Spurgeon wrote: *“Oh God, send us the Holy Spirit! Give us both the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal. You are our God. Answer us by fire, we pray to You! Answer us both by wind and fire, and then they will see You to be God indeed.*

The Kingdom comes not, and the work is flagging. Oh, that You would send the wind and the fire! And You will do this when we are all of one accord, all believing, all expecting, all prepared by prayer."

The Reformer of Geneva John Calvin described the Church as *"the fellowship of the flaming heart."* His personal emblem was a heart aflame in the hand of God.

Are you on fire for Christ? In the book of Revelation, the Lord Jesus revealed to the Apostle John His words of rebuke for the church of Laodicea: *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. I will vomit you out of My mouth."* Revelation 3:15-16

Lukewarm Christians make the Lord sick. We need to repent of half-hearted, worldly, superficial, materialistic, lethargic, self-centered, apathetic, cowardly, yellow-bellied, spineless, cheap grace and easy believism. We must repent of being evanjellyfish. We need doctrinal steel in our backbones and Holy Spirit fire in our bellies.

"Is not My Word like a fire?" Says the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks the rocks in pieces?'"
Jeremiah 23:29

Ezekiel saw the fire of God. Daniel described God's eyes like fire. Hosea described God's coming inferno. Joel wrote of God's fiery presence. Obadiah saw the fire of God in the middle of His people. Micah saw the mountains melt like wax before the fire of God. Nahum foresaw the Day of God's fiery Judgment. Zephaniah saw the fire of God's Holy jealousy. Zechariah saw God's burning presence like a blazing wall, with His Glory revealed within. Malachi spoke of God's refining fire to purge, purify and strengthen His people.

After they met with the Lord, the disciples on the road to Emmaus declared: *"Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us."* Luke 24:32

Have you heard the Word of God? Has your heart burned within you?

The Lord God required that in the Tabernacle: *"a fire shall always be burning on the altar: it shall never go out."* Leviticus 6:13. This perpetual flame was to communicate God's purifying, penetrating, powerful presence with His people.

Jesus taught His followers: *"you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and that gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven."* Matthew 5:14-16

Jesus said: ***"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*** John 7:37-39

Three of the greatest natural forces in the world are fire, wind and water. And these three forces reveal something of the power of the Creator. On the Day of Pentecost, the fire of God, the wind of the Holy Spirit, and the living waters of Jesus Christ moved in great power and the Church was born.

As the missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, wrote: *"The power given is not a gift from the Holy Spirit, He, himself, is the power. Today He is as truly available and as mighty in power as He was on the Day of Pentecost."*

Do you know what it is have the fire of God's Word burn within you? Do you know what it is to have the wind of the Holy Spirit lead and guide you? Do the living waters of Christ flow from your heart?

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:6

Our God is a consuming fire.

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