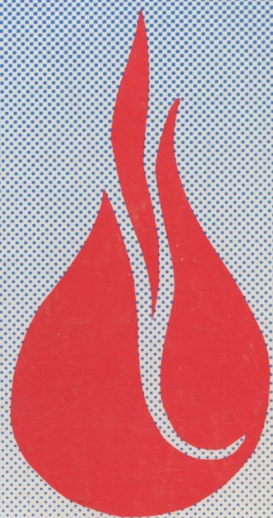


Have You Ever
Heard of...
HEAVENFIRE?



David Alsobrook

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CHAPTER I

The Fire of God

"And I saw another sign in *heaven* ... And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with *fire* ..." (Revelation 15:1-2).

SURPRISE! Heaven is full of fire. Many people do not realize the Bible has a great deal to teach about the existence of fire in heaven. Most Christians are taught that through salvation they will miss fire; however, while it is true that salvation saves from the "lake of fire" the believer's destination is a "city of fire" (Revelation 20:9).

Several years ago I made a study in the Bible on the subject of fire. Quite true there are many references to "hell fire" i.e., a *fire of punishment*. In fact, it was our Saviour who coined the term "hell fire" (Mark 9:43-48). Most clearly we see the fire of punishment in Genesis 19 when the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, as well as Revelation 20:15, **"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."** We observe the plague of hail mingled with fire rained upon Egypt (Exodus 9:24). As Scripture teaches, the fire of punishment is quite true.

Our Lord Jesus will return **"... from heaven *with his mighty angels, in flaming fire* taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord ..."** (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). Definitely, the "fire of judgment" is a valid Bible teaching and is the "much sorer punishment" awaiting those who have done **"despite to the Spirit of grace"** (Hebrews 10:29).

In my study I was amazed to find a very positive teaching in the Word of God on fire. In fact, just as there is "hell fire" there is also "heaven fire." Even as hell and heaven are quite opposite so differs the fire of both places. That is, there is a "fire of blessing"—presence, protection, and purification—as surely as there is a "fire of judgment." "Heaven fire" is to be sought as surely as "hell fire" is to be shunned. Most Christians have been taught only of "hell fire" (fire of pain). Little do they know of a "heaven fire" which radiates God's presence, protection, and purification.

THERE'S FIRE IN HEAVEN TOO

There's fire in heaven according to the following Scriptures: In the floor (Revelation 15:2), surrounding the throne (Hebrews 1:7, Matthew 18:10, and Psalm 29:7), before the throne (Isaiah 6:1-8), and even on the throne (Hebrews 12:29 and Deuteronomy 4:24).

IN THE FLOOR: **"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire ..."** (Revelation 15:2). The sea of glass referred to in Revelation 15:2 appears to be the floor (those who had been victorious over the beast *stood* upon it) and it is mingled with fire.

SURROUNDING THE THRONE: **"And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire"** (Hebrews 1:7). Angels and fire go hand in hand. **"That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father which is in heaven"** (Matthew 18:10). **"The voice of the LORD divideth [Hebrew: "sets into companies"] the flames of fire"** (Psalm 29:7).

These Scriptures make it obvious that the angels stand before the Father, hear His voice, and that He sometimes makes them into flames of fire. When this occurs, there is fire surrounding the throne of God.

BEFORE THE THRONE:

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the

LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it (the throne) stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said, I, 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: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live (burning) coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:1-8).

Notice the seraphims had been flying around about the throne of God in verses 1 and 2. One of them then flew down, evidently close to the throne, most likely in front of the throne, where there was this altar full of burning coals. It was also from this altar that the house was filled with smoke (verse 4). In verse 6, one of the seraphims flew to Isaiah with a burning coal that he had taken from the altar.

One may ask, "How are these coals on the altar ignited?" David tells us the coals are ignited due to the brightness of God! **"Out of the brightness before Him coals of fire flamed forth"** (II Samuel 22:13 *Amplified*).

EVEN ON THE THRONE! "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:24).

The God of Israel revealed Himself in fire when He descended on Mt. Sinai to meet with Moses and give him the Law. **"And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire ..."** (Exodus 19:18).

Concerning Jesus we read: **"His head and his hairs were**

white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ..." (Revelation 1:14-15). **"These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire ..."** (Revelation 2:18; 19:12). Nothing impure in the Asia churches missed His piercing, holy gaze! Malachi prophesied, **"... for he shall be like a refiner's fire ..."** (Malachi 3:2). Perhaps it was He who appeared unto Moses as **"... the angel of the LORD ... in a flame of fire ..."** (Exodus 3:2).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS ASSOCIATED WITH FIRE

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Luke 3:16).

The Holy Spirit was referred to prophetically as **"the spirit of burning"** (Isaiah 4:4).

So we have seen thus far there is indeed an abundance of Scripture teaching that heaven is a place of fire; not a fire of pain or judgment, but an inviting, welcoming warmth of God's presence and even of God Himself.

CHAPTER II

Jesus Came to Bring Fire

"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:49-50). Ferrar Fenton in his translation says, **"I came to throw fire upon the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!"** The Lamsa translation reads, **"I came to set the earth on fire ..."** These are indeed strange words from the mouth of Jesus, especially because He had rebuked two of His disciples when He was not well received at Capernaum, and they offered to call down a "fire of judgment" as Elijah had done. It seems paradoxical that Jesus would rebuke His disciples for desiring to call fire down on one hand while on the other He Himself states that He came to send fire on the earth. There is no contradiction whatsoever because the fire that He came to send was a fire of blessing and not a fire of judgment. He said these words about desiring to send fire during His first coming. Two thousand years ago He came expressly **"to seek and to save that which was lost"** (Luke 19:10). At the first coming He came as our Saviour, not our Judge, but even in that we find a reference of fire prophetically in His first coming: **"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a REFINER'S FIRE, and like fullers' soap"** (Malachi 3:2). When we look in Malachi 3:1, we can tell that the context is clearly speaking to us of the first coming of our Lord to inaugurate the New Covenant.

So you see, both comings of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth are connected with fire. The fire at his first coming was to be a fire of purification, protection, and presence—"Heaven-fire." The fire at His second coming obviously will be the fire of

judgment (see II Thessalonians 1:7-8).

"I am come to send fire on the earth ..." (Luke 12:49), speaking in reference to "heavenfire." He has now been present in His ministry for some time in the world—with all its coldness—and He cries out in exclamation, **"I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?"** An alternate rendering says, **"I came to send fire upon the earth and how I wish it were already burning!"** This was the fire of God's presence which Jesus wished were already burning in the hearts and lives of men. It was a fire of purging that would consume the chaff from men's lives; a fire of protection to canopy over the church even as it had over Israel in days gone by.

Let's notice in Luke 12:49-50 Jesus implies He has a baptism that He must experience before the fire can come upon earth. What was this baptism? It could not have been a baptism with water or the Spirit for He had already been water baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. Indeed this baptism should be associated with another term—"The Cup."

ARE YOU ABLE TO DRINK THIS CUP?

In Matthew 20 when the mother of James and John petitioned our Lord that one son be granted to sit at Christ's right hand and the other son on the left in His kingdom, Jesus replied, **"... Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? ..."** (Matthew 20:21-22). So He is speaking of a baptism of suffering. Please notice that in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed, **"O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"** (Matthew 26:39). This was a cup of suffering and a baptism into death of which the Lord spoke. You will recall that James and John replied to Him that they were able to drink of that cup and be baptized with that baptism (Matthew 20:22). **"And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized**

with." (Matthew 20:23). This prophecy was years and decades later fulfilled as each of the original eleven disciples partook of the cup of suffering for the name of Jesus.

Now going back to Luke 12:49-50, our Lord Jesus is speaking with great yearning of soul, **"I came to throw fire on the earth; and how I wish it were already burning. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"** The word "straitened" means pressed down. Jesus was saying, "How I am pressed down until it is accomplished." It was something He knew He had to undergo for us. He had a baptism He had to endure so we could have a baptism we can enjoy. He had an immersion to undergo into suffering before the fire of heaven could be sent to earth.

It is interesting that Luke is the only Gospel writer who records these words of Jesus: **"I am come to send fire on the earth."** Luke is also the only Gospel that tells us of the two who first experienced this "heavenfire" following our Lord's resurrection.

THE FLAMING HEART

In Luke 24:13-35, we have the touching story of the two disciples who walked on the road to Emmaus. Our Saviour drew near and began to expound unto them in all the Scripture the things concerning Himself. They did not recognize Him, however, until He went into their house and broke bread with them. * **"And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight"** (Luke 24:31). It should be noted there would be several things they could easily have talked about following the disappearance of Christ from their midst, like: "Did you just see Him vanish into thin air?" Or, "Wasn't that the best Bible lesson we've ever heard as we walked on the road with Him?" But notice their first statement in response to His disappearance which should emphasize the importance of what they are about to say. **"And they said to another, *Did not***

* There was an implication He was serving the bread as in the Lord's Supper. (Cf. Luke 24:40 and Luke 22:19.)

our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

"Did not our heart burn within us?" This phrase cannot be construed as figurative language, nor should we think of it in the sense of sentimentality as they did not realize it was Jesus when He was teaching them on the road. However, this Scripture expresses the warmth of God's presence transmitted into their hearts as Christ shared the Word with them. Later Paul exhorted the church at Rome to be **"... aglow and burning with the Spirit..."** (Romans 12:11 *Amplified*).

It should be noted that never before in His earthly ministry, according to Scripture, had anyone spoken of experiencing an inward fire during the course of His teaching. Obviously, Jesus had suffered His baptism and being now raised from the dead gave them a touch of the "heaven fire" He had longed to throw upon the earth. Later, on the Day of Pentecost, we see the fire again.

CHAPTER III

Tongues of Fire

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.... Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" (Acts 2:1-4; 2:6-8).

Notice Acts 2 begins saying, **"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...."** A particular phrase, *"The Full Pentecost"* was quickened to me several years ago. Namely, "The Full Pentecost" (verse 1) consists of:

1. **POWER:** **"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind ..."** (verse 2).
2. **FIRE:** **"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire ..."** (verse 3).
3. **TONGUES:** **"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues ..."** (verse 4).

The *power* dimension is what happens in the realm of our

spirit.

The *fire* dimension is that which occurs in the realm of our soul.

Speaking in *tongues* is what manifests forth in our body.

Actually Acts 2:2-4 accurately describes what happens in our spirit, soul, and body when we are baptized by Jesus into the Holy Spirit.

The first speaks of purging. We have had much emphasis on power and tongues in the Pentecostal/Charismatic dimension, but very little emphasis on the fire aspect of the Baptism. Yet, John the Baptizer who coined the phrase "the baptism with the Holy Spirit" always added "and fire" right along with "He shall baptize you into the Holy Spirit" when speaking of the experience.

Whereas we have emphasized power and tongues, we have deleted the fire from our teaching; thus, there is very little emphasis on the purging of God in the believer's life. Yet, when we look at John the Baptist's original statement we see the purging aspect of the fire. Matthew 3:11-12 is one sentence in many versions and the twelfth verse should be tied onto the eleventh verse in the sense of a personal purging of God in the believer's life.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Matthew 3:12 definitely speaks of the purging of the Lord in our lives as the chaff is consumed with unquenchable fire and the wheat (which typifies the Jesus nature) is stored under His Lordship in our lives. For the purging aspect of fire, consider also: **"...as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff ..."** (Isaiah 5:24) and the seraphim's

declaration: **"... this (the burning coal) hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged"** (Isaiah 6:7).

Indeed there is a purging of the chaff in our soulish nature in the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

THERE APPEARED UNTO THEM

One day I was reading along in Acts 2, and in verse 3 I noticed the phrase **"And there appeared unto them ..."** In other words, had other people been present they may not have noticed the flames of fire atop the believer's heads. This was a new concept to me, as I had always thought the tongues of fire would be visible to the natural eye. This thought was further strengthened by the phrase *"like as of fire."* Luke did not actually state that they were cloven tongues of fire but "cloven tongues *like as of fire.*" The second thing I noticed concerned the devout Jews who were attending the Feast of Pentecost from every nation under heaven. The multitude came together and they marvelled at unlearned people speaking many different languages. Further down in the chapter the following references were made: **"... Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue? ... We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."** But notice, not one time do they say, "Look at the flames of fire on their heads." Surely, you would agree with me that such a supernatural sight as seeing a flame of fire atop an individual's head would definitely be discussed. It is obvious that they could hear the one hundred and twenty speaking in tongues, because speaking in tongues is a supernaturally inspired utterance which proceeds through the natural vocal cords. Thus, anyone can audibly hear it. But the flames of fire were actually present only in the Spirit. They were not literal flames visible to natural sight but it was a fire of a spiritual quality.

We see that God's fire can physically appear or it can be present only in a spiritual dimension. In I Kings 18:38, obviously the fire fell literally and consumed the burnt sacrifice,

the wood, the stones, the dirt, and the water. The eyes of all beheld it. Whereas, in II Kings 6:17, "**horses and chariots of fire**" became visible only after the LORD supernaturally opened the eyes of Elisha's servant. They were no doubt present before they became visible, but only became apparent as his eyes were opened to see supernaturally into the spiritual realm. Surely, this is the kind of fire that was present on the Day of Pentecost. Actual, yes; physical, no. It was literal in the spiritual realm, but not literal in the physical realm.

The fact that it was not literal or that it was not a tangible physical fire does not lessen the reality of its presence because the spiritual realm is real; the natural realm is but a shadow of reality (cf. Hebrews 10:1; I John 2:17; Colossians 2:17).

Sometimes I am asked, "How come people no longer see the Holy Spirit's fire?" "How come we rarely hear of fire being witnessed when Christians receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?" The answer could simply be that the fire is present but not seen. Because it appeared only once in Acts which has several records of the Holy Spirit's outpouring on believers, it need not appear to our sight to be received.

When we examine Matthew 3:11 and Luke 3:16 together in the original language, we see that John was speaking of one singular immersion into the Holy Spirit and fire. In fact, if you will notice, the King James Version italicizes the word "with" before fire in Matthew 3:11. Therefore, we could read it this way, "...he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." So we see he is not talking about two immersions, one into the Holy Spirit and another into fire, but one single experience of being immersed into the Holy Spirit and fire.

This is not to say that believers cannot have further experiences with the fire of God as they progress in their Christian walk after their "full Pentecost." We see in Isaiah's case that he had been a true prophet for some years before his experience with the fire. To establish this, you will notice in Isaiah 1:1, that he began his ministry during the reign of King Uzziah. Yet according to Chapter 6:1, it was in the year that

"King Uzziah died" that he experienced this deeper purging in his life.

It is also true that one may need a rekindling as was true later on in the case of Isaiah's life due to spiritual lethargy or apathy setting in. In II Timothy 1:6, the phrase "stir up the gift of God" in the KJV is "re-ignite the inner fire" in some translations. This would imply that Timothy needed a rekindling of the fire of God within him.

Jesus implied that we can need a rekindling of the fire. In several passages, for example, Matthew 25, He told the parable of the ten virgins and said, "**... then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps**" (verse 7). The fact that they trimmed their lamps reveals their fire was going out. We also see where Jesus exhorted us to be illuminant: "**...as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light**" (Luke 11:36).

In fact, have you noticed that when Jesus tells us to let our light shine so that men will see our good works and glorify our Father that He is speaking of *light which is produced by fire*? I say this because our Twentieth Century minds think of light as it is generally produced by electricity; however, Jesus says, "**Ye are the light of the world ... Neither do men light a candle ... Let your light so shine before men ...**" (Matthew 5:14-16). The more of God's fire is in us the more of God's light we manifest. In the Old Testament we see where God gave the children of Israel fire so they could have light.

THE PILLAR OF FIRE

Exodus 13 speaks of the Israelites beginning their exodus from the land of Egypt. Verses 20-22:

"And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people."

Have You Ever Heard of... HEAVENFIRE?

Now notice verse 21 distinctly says, **"And the LORD went before them . . . by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night."** Notice He gave them a pillar of fire at night so they could have light to see as they walked all night in their departure from the land of Goshen toward the Red Sea. There are two verses in the Psalms that refer to the fact that this fire was given so they could have sufficient light at night. **"In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire"** (Psalm 78:14). **"He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night"** (Psalm 105:39).

This pillar of fire hovered over the tabernacle of God each night for the full forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness. **"For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys"** (Exodus 40:38).

CHAPTER IV

God Answers By Fire

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (I Chronicles 21:26).

In the passage of our text we have a very sad incident in the reign of King David, wherein he has numbered his armies. The sin of numbering the armies is rarely talked about in most churches because most of them do it as well.

Usually when preachers refer to King David's failures they speak exclusively of his murder and adultery; however, towards the end of his life he blundered terribly when he numbered his fighting men. **"And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel"** (I Chronicles 21:7).

David acknowledged he had sinned and repented. Seventy thousand of his stronger soldiers died under judgment (verse 14). David realized the way to appease God was through heart-felt repentance and the offering of sacrifice.

When David built his altar at the threshing floor of Ornan (or "Araunah" in II Samuel 24) the Lord showed his acceptance of David's offered sacrifice resulting in the cessation of the severe plague by answering him from heaven with fire. In other words, fire fell out of the sky upon the altar as a sign of God's acceptance of David's repentance.

We see several places in the Old Testament where God showed His acceptance of an offered sacrifice by sending fire upon it. There is no way in the passages which follow that the fire could be explained as happening through natural means.

"And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the

congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces" (Leviticus 9:23-24).

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD'S house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (II Chronicles 7:1-3).

Notice the similarities at the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon. At the tabernacle of Moses the glory of the Lord appeared and then there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering. When the people saw it they shouted, which means they gave a loud cry, and fell on their faces. This falling upon their faces was completely impromptu, being the natural human reaction to such a divine display of the supernatural glory of God (probably the Shekinah Cloud) and the fire that consumed the sacrifice.

At the dedication of Solomon's temple you will notice that after Solomon had finished his prayer of dedication fire came down and consumed the burnt offering and then the glory of the Lord filled the house. The glory, which speaks of His radiating presence, so permeated the temple of Solomon the priests could not even enter into the house to continue offering sacrifices. Once again, we see the children of Israel unanimously bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped when they saw how the fire and the glory came down.

Today there is a cry in many hearts for a fresh revelation of

His glory. Perhaps the glory of God will be seen when the fire of God once again falls upon the temple. The temple, of course today, is the church (I Corinthians 3:16-17; I Peter 2:4-5). In Isaiah 4:5, a canopy of protection is prophesied to cover the assemblies of Zion in the last days. I believe this canopy of fire will be fulfilled in our lifetime. (In the final chapter of this book you will read of one such incident of a fire canopy over a church that was visible to an entire neighborhood.)

In Judges 6:21, the angel of the Lord accepted Gideon's sacrifice with a fire that rose up out of the rock and consumed the flesh and unleavened cakes. Even as early as Genesis 4, a fire witness that descended involuntarily upon Abel's sacrifice is implied.* You see, both Abel and Cain knew which sacrifice God accepted and which one He rejected. It clearly was a supernatural event; one that could not be faked or manufactured by man. It had to likewise be an outward sign apparent to both sacrificers.

Probably the most interesting account of the fire falling upon a sacrifice is found in I Kings Chapter 18. You will recall the contest on Mt. Carmel between Elijah and the four hundred and fifty Baal prophets. (To conserve space in this book, please read I Kings 18:19-39.) In this passage Elijah made a proposal to the whole nation of Israel. He challenged the Baal prophets to prepare an altar of sacrifice and call on the name of Baal, whereas he would prepare a sacrifice and call on the name of Yahweh and the God that answered by fire would be the God that Israel would serve. The people unanimously agreed with one consent that this was a fair proposal.

As you read, the Baal prophets cried out to their god for several hours, even cutting themselves until the blood gushed out upon them. Elijah mocked them saying that their god must be too busy with other things to give heed to their call.

Finally, when there was no response or answer of any kind to their entreaty Elijah called the people to come near to him and repaired the altar of the Lord that the people had broken down a

* For more study on Cain and Abel refer to Chapter 2 of *The Precious Blood*.

few years previously when going into Baalism. He took twelve stones, representative of the twelve tribes of Israel, and with the stones upon a mound of dirt where the former altar had once stood, he built an altar in the name of Yahweh. On the top of these large twelve stones he laid wood in order and then cut a young bull up and put pieces of the meat over the wood. Then he instructed them to do something the Baal prophets had not done. And that was to pour twelve barrels of water over the entire altar. He had also dug a trench round about the altar and had them fill it the rest of the way with water. After the altar was repaired he drew near to the Lord in prayer and after uttering a very brief prayer consisting of only sixty-three words in the King James Version the fire of God fell.

"Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" (I Kings 18:38-39).

First of all, notice the fire of the Lord fell; that is, it did not come up from the ground or work its way upward, but fell from the sky to the top of the sacrifice and consumed first, the meat sacrifice; second, the wood; third, the large stones; fourth, the mound of dirt; and fifth, it licked up the water in the trench. In His love and compassion for Israel, God demonstrated His power far beyond the requirement to simply send fire only on the burnt sacrifice.

There are several things about the fire of God we can learn from this experience:

1. The fire of God is *all consuming*; there is nothing it cannot purge. Notice, it burnt the water-soaked meat and wood. But something that no one in that day had ever seen before was that it consumed the large stones and burned the mound of dirt just as easily as the meat and wood were consumed.
2. The stones could represent the stony heart of the nation of Israel which God was saying he wanted to replace with a

heart of flesh.

3. The mound of dirt could speak of the filth in their lives that He wanted to purge. This should be comforting to those of us who are struggling in our life with problems of hardness and filth. There is no iniquity in us that God's fire cannot purge. There is no hard place that God's fire cannot consume.
4. The fire of God is *unquenchable*. It licked up the water in the trench as easily as fire consumes petroleum. The people of that day, of course, had never witnessed a fire that water could not extinguish.

Such a supernatural sign resulted in the people falling on their faces, as we have just seen happen on two other occasions, and crying out repeatedly, "**Yahweh, He is Elohim! Yahweh, He is Elohim!**" Thus, Baal was defeated as Israel's national god and Yahweh was reinstated as the true Elohim of Israel. The God who answered by fire is unchanging. The fire is available to any who will "repair the altar of the LORD" in their commitment to God.

CHAPTER V

A Canopy of Fire

In the previous chapter we mentioned that, in our opinion, a canopy of fire is predicted to hover over the church in the last days.

God uses His fire for protection. In Genesis 3:24, after God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden, He placed cherubims at the entrance way, **"... and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."**

In recent years Americans have been thrilled by the "light sabers" in the fictional space movies of our day. Isn't it interesting that light sabers consisting of fiery swords have been a part of God's armory for a long time? The Scripture implies that this flaming sword prevented anyone or anything from entering into the garden of Eden. This flaming sword evidently kept intruders out of the garden.

Isaiah prophesied that a canopy of fire will provide a shield of protection over the end time church.

"And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence" (Isaiah 4:5).

Let's examine this verse line upon line.

"And the LORD will create ..." It will indeed be a supernatural event, and not manufactured by the religious manipulations of man. God Himself will CREATE the fire canopy.

"... upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon

her assemblies. . . " The author of Hebrews states: **"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched (Mt. Sinai) ... But ye are come unto mount Sion (Mt. Zion) ..."** (Hebrews 12:18, 22). Mount Sinai was the mountain Moses received the Law upon (see Exodus 19). Mount Zion was the little hill in the City of David where King David brought the Ark of the Covenant and placed it in the tent he had pitched. From the instruction he received on Mount Sinai Moses later built the Tabernacle in the Wilderness (see Hebrews 8:5). From the revelation he received in worship David laid aside his kingly robes and girded himself with the priestly ephod (see I Chronicles 15, 16; II Samuel 6).

King David's joyful and jubilant praises became the earmark of Zion. That is quite a contrast from the somber mood at Sinai, where due to the awesomeness of God's visible power the people besought the Lord to speak no more directly to them, but only through His servant Moses. Zion (and the Tabernacle of David located there) pictures the New Covenant of Grace. Thus when Isaiah speaks of "every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies" he speaks of each gathering of the Body of Christ in our day.

"...a cloud and smoke by day. . ." As we have already pointed out earlier in this book, the Cloud by Day was given to provide Israel divine leadership through the wilderness. The "day" period of the Church Age speaks of the Early Church in Acts being led supernaturally of God in the first century and a short period thereafter. However, the Bridegroom was not to come during the "day," but rather during the "night" period. **"And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him"** (Matthew 25:6).

It goes without saying that day and night represent light and darkness. When darkness covers the earth and gross darkness covers the people, the Lord will arise upon His church radiating His glory upon her. This will attract multitudes of people to the light of His Word and even some rulers of the earth to the Gospel (see Isaiah 60:1-3; 62:1-2).

" . . . and the shining of a flaming fire by night...." During the "night" period of the Church Age as evil and darkness increase on every side, the Lord will create the radiant shining of a flaming fire over His assemblies. No matter how dark the night, the true church of Jesus Christ will have abundant illumination to clearly see God's way.

"...for upon all the glory shall be a defence...." The Hebrew word for "defence" is "*chuppah*" and means "a canopy (for protection)." The fire will not only illuminate those under its covering, but defend them from those outside. Please do not ask me to explain all of this. I see only glimpses in the Word concerning God's dealings with His people in the future. However, I am positively convinced of a supernatural covering of divine protection "upon all the glory." The "glory" refers to His people in whom He has invested Himself.

Isaiah 4:5 is definitely one of those special promises to God's people in the end times; as well as a picture of future dealings in the millennium (as all of Isaiah 4 teaches).

CHAPTER VI

Experiences With the Fire

Now that I have shared with you much of what the Scripture teaches about the "fire of blessing" I would like to add as supplementary to the Word of God several experiences I have heard from reliable sources, and my own experiences with the fire of God.

CHURCH ON FIRE

Several decades ago in Tucumcari, New Mexico, there was an unusual visitation of God to His people. What began as a week long revival meeting (the average length for such a meeting in those days) stretched into weeks upon weeks of nightly meetings eventually lasting several months. Obviously, I was not present at these meetings as they occurred before my birth, but several men and women of God of high integrity told me about them when I was living in Tucumcari in 1971.

During this period of great visitation hundreds upon hundreds were saved, baptized in the Holy Spirit, healed of various physical ailments, and delivered from all kinds of satanic powers.

Early in this series of protracted meetings an unusual phenomenon began to occur with regularity; that is, people witnessed to both feeling and seeing the fire of God numerous times when the evangelist prayed for Christians to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit or for physical healing. Even clouds of glory and fire appeared over the congregation and were visible to a dozen or more people at a time as their eyes were opened to see into the supernatural realm.

The power of God was so great in these meetings that often

when a person fell under the power of God he would remain under the Spirit's anointing for several days at a time hardly able to speak in English until the anointing lifted. On occasion grown men were so drunken by the wine of the Spirit that they had to be carried to their automobiles and driven home by others. There were many unusual, yet valid, demonstrations of the Spirit in power in this remarkable revival.

Word about these extraordinary happenings began to spread, of course, and traditional Christians, not knowing the things of the Spirit of God, spoke frivolously and sometimes almost contemptuously about "those wildfire holy rollers." The pastor of a large church in the town stood behind his pulpit and remarked that all this talk about the fire that the Pentecostals were experiencing was due only to emotional excesses and nothing more. Neighbors began to shun their long time friends and associates who were involved in this revival fearing that their friends had gone into a wild fanaticism.

One night during the course of a service the pastor looked from the platform and noticed a fireman had come into the back of the auditorium. The pastor slipped down from the platform and walked around to the back inquiring if he could be of some help to the fireman. The fireman replied, "Sir, I am sorry to have barged in on your service; I can see now that it was a false alarm." The pastor asked, "Well, what do you mean?" The fireman responded, "We've had several calls from people in this area that your church was on fire. Obviously, they were false alarms because there is no sign of fire or smoke outside or in here. I'm sorry to have disrupted your service in any way." He then turned and left. The pastor and those who knew of this incident thought some neighbors had desired to make fun of the fire they had heard of the people experiencing during the revival. So this was dismissed simply as being nothing more than a prank agreed to by the area residents.

Several nights later, however, several firemen burst into the back of the auditorium. The pastor looked down from the platform thinking once again erroneous calls had been made.

Once again he stepped down from the platform and walked as unobtrusively as possible to the rear of the auditorium where he was told by the group of bewildered looking firemen, "Pastor, this time the calls could not have been a prank for the top of your church is blazing with fire; however, there is no sign of fire or smoke in this room at all, nor is there even the smell of smoke or the slightest hint that your church building is actually on fire. Yet, with our own eyes we saw the top of your building leaping with flames." Whereupon the pastor dismissed the service and as the people walked out, they plus hundreds of other residents of the town whose streets were jammed with cars for blocks all around the building, saw the top of the church roof lit up with fire against the night sky. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people witnessed this unusual phenomenon, and just like the bush that burned with fire but was not consumed in Exodus 3:2, there was no damage done whatsoever to the roof of that church. (Many photographs were taken by neighbors and reporters but not one photograph developed with the fire being seen on the negative!) The result was so astounding that many who had mocked what they thought to be spurious emotionalism were now convinced of the reality of God's visitation to that church; many who once scoffed thereafter believed.

THE RAIN OF FIRE

While I was living in Tucumcari, New Mexico, I would arise at 4:00 a.m. each day* to pray and seek the Lord in the church my father pastored next door. One morning during early prayer I sensed the Lord definitely speaking to me that I was to return immediately after school that afternoon back to the church auditorium to continue in prayer and supplication. I was to advise my mother I would not be eating supper. After that season of prayer, I went in and told her, before leaving for school that morning, what the Lord had spoken to me.

As soon as I got out of school, I ran with eager anticipation to the church sanctuary, knelt down in prayer in the auditorium,

* Consult *The Prayer Habit* for more teaching on morning prayer.

and began to seek the Lord with all of my heart. To the best of my recollection this was about 4:00 p.m. I prayed for several hours without interruption and suddenly heard what my ears thought was the approaching of a great storm. I heard wind blowing around the church building. I began to hear thunder crashing up about me. Thinking it was only a literal storm and not wishing to be distracted by it I paid no attention. I then began to hear rain falling. I lifted up my eyes and looked at the window panes of the sanctuary noticing there were no rain drops striking the glass panes. I quickly stepped outside my father's study and looked up to see a clear sky! I ran back into the sanctuary and said, "Lord, how come I heard the storm and the rain, yet there was none? Were you trying to speak to me?" Suddenly, my eyes were opened in the spiritual realm and I saw raindrops of fire falling all over the auditorium of the church. Some were hitting me, as rain naturally would, on the top of my head. Each time the raindrops hit me it felt like fire was going all the way through my body to my feet. I ran around and around the auditorium wanting to gather as much in of the fire raindrops as I possibly could. Finally, they filled me so full I could no longer contain the presence of God and simply said, "Lord, this is all I can stand." Instantly the rain stopped but the fire continued to linger within me even as Jeremiah said, "**... as a burning fire shut up in my bones ...**" (Jeremiah 20:9). Many times since then when praying in tongues and spending time with the Lord in prayer the fire has begun to burn within my spirit afresh and anew. Many times I can literally sense the warmth and reality of God's presence in my heart, as I am sure many of the readers of this book can also testify.

FLAMES OF FIRE

During a revival service I was conducting in Tyler, Texas in the Spring of 1973, seven children came forward to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. As I prayed for them, each received a gracious baptism in the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. The eyes of several people in the audience were opened to see supernaturally into

the spiritual realm and they testified later in the service that they had indeed seen the tongues of fire burning upon the heads of these children as they were being filled with the Spirit.

A few nights later in this revival meeting, one of the little girls, about seven years of age, was led by the Lord to run up to a large woman sitting near the back of the auditorium and to lay hands on her. Instantly the woman broke out in great praise and glory to God to such an extent I had to pause in the invitation and inquire what had happened.

The lady told us that she had driven over one hundred miles to be healed of a tremendous pain that surged through her body. She told us that she was hardly able to get into her car to drive to the service, and was only coming due to her desperate situation. Friends had told her how the Lord was healing people in our meetings and she had come expecting a miracle. She said that she was greatly disappointed that during my sermon I mentioned nothing about healing, and when I gave the invitation it was only for those with spiritual needs. She could tell that the service was now drawing to a close and that I had not given any opportunity for the sick to come forward for healing. She said the Lord spoke to her and said, "Daughter, I alone am thy Healer." She then repented of looking to man for her healing. She told the congregation with tears of joy, "Lord, you only are my Healer and however you want to do it is fine with me! Then, I saw this little girl get up from her seat and come running right up the aisle toward me. I knew she was going to lay her hands on me and that I would be healed." And that is exactly what happened!

The Scriptures say God **"makes his ministers a flame of fire."** This is not only true of spirit angels but also true of human messengers anointed by His Spirit.

RED HOT HAND

In my travels I have often heard different ministers of the Gospel testify their hands become hot with fire when praying for the sick. The sick often sense the fire of God going through their bodies driving out sickness.

During Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry people often testified to feeling a great warmth pass from their head to their feet and finding out later they were completely healed of the most dreadful diseases.

Some years ago I was conducting a meeting in a Full Gospel church in Denton, Texas. There was not too much excitement about our meetings and the attendance was very low. One day I began seeking the Lord earnestly for a great move of God's Spirit in the meeting that night. Along about 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon I had an experience. The only way I can describe it was that the Lord put a coal of fire in my hand, because my hand became very hot. As I was praying I sensed the Lord was saying, "Son, this is a healing anointing that I am giving you to use to bring healing to the people tonight." That evening as I got up to preach and looked at the small crowd I thought, "Surely there is no one here that needs healing, or at least, no one here who has a serious physical problem." I went ahead and preached on healing anyway and gave the invitation. No one came forward except a little boy whose right hand was bandaged up. He told me he had broken his thumb on the monkey bars during recess. His teacher had rushed him to the hospital where the doctor set his thumb in a special plastic cast. I asked him, "Do you believe the Lord will heal you tonight?" He replied, "Of course." When I laid my right hand upon his bandaged hand the warmth of God's presence came over my hand again as it had earlier that day, and I knew the boy was healed. I said, "Okay, you are healed—go ahead and remove your bandage." He unraveled that bandage and pulled the plastic cast off of his thumb, wiggling it around for all to see, praising and thanking the Lord with tears of gratitude saying, "It's gone! All of the pain is gone! I can move my thumb! I couldn't even move it today!" This was such an amazing incident that his school teacher came with him the following night and many were inspired to believe God for greater things after witnessing his healing.

FIRE PURGES THE FEAR OF MAN

In the 1950's there was a certain healing evangelist possessed with unusual boldness and a great miracle anointing. He would hit tumors and they would instantly disappear. He would kick crutches and the lame would instantly walk free of pain. He would touch goiters and they would vanish.

Unlike most other miracle ministries, this was not a ministry the evangelist grew into. Rather this was a ministry produced by a singular supernatural experience with God transforming an ordinary preacher into an outstanding evangelist. Since many had known him before entering into this unusual miracle ministry they would inquire, "Brother, what happened in your life through which you came into this unusual anointing of God?" Often the man's eyes would grow moist with tears and he would tell them, "Friends, something wonderful did happen one day, but it is too sacred for me to tell."

Shortly before his death he finally shared with a group of preachers at a ministers' meeting about the divine visitation resulting in the instantaneous changing of his ministry.

He was holding a revival in a town and during the day he was in his hotel room praying. As he was seeking the Lord God spoke to him and said, "Son, I am going to purge all of the fear of man out of your life. [How can you exercise faith when you are bound by fear of man?] Son, go stand at the window." The evangelist rose and stood at the window looking down on a street of crowded people. And the Word of the Lord came to him saying, "Son, all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass." Instantly the people changed into a field of grass and a fire fell from the sky consuming it in an instant of time. As he stood at the window the Word of the Lord came to him again saying, "Who is man that you should be afraid of him and the son of man that shall die?" The preacher cried out in great repentance saying, "Lord, forgive me for honoring man above You, for being afraid of what man thinks and seeking to please man instead of seeking only to please You." The Lord said to him, "Son, I am now going to purge you of all fear of man." For the next three hours this ordinary preacher lay under

the power of God in his hotel room with wave after wave of fire falling upon him consuming the chaff in his life. That night when he stood to preach everyone knew that he was a different man and one of the greatest miracle ministries of the century began.

THE FIRE IS FOR YOU

After reading this book surely your heart cries out for more of God. Our God is a consuming fire and no doubt there are things in your life that need to be consumed by the fire of His presence. There is a fire unquenchable that will consume the chaff in your soulish nature as you respond to God.

John Wesley used to tell his preachers, "Men, get on fire for God and the people will come out just to watch you burn." Surely this is what the church needs in our day—a fresh baptism of fire to the point that we become a city set on a hill that men will see our good works and glorify the Father; that we will radiate the light of God into this darkened earth.

As previously taught in this book, the author believes an outpouring of the fire of God will canopy over His church during the end time. Start praying for that purging to begin in your life today. Remember, "heaven fire" is as much to be sought as "hell fire" is to be shunned. **"IS NOT MY WORD LIKE AS A FIRE?"** (Jeremiah 23:29).

Please help us spread this important message by ordering more copies of this book. They are sent on an offering basis as the Lord provides for the printing and postage.

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