

(The Holy Spirit) 7. THE BAPTISM WITH FIRE

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Matthew 3: 11. "For our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12: 29. Fire is one of the most powerful and striking elements of the material world. It has always been an object of importance and of superstitious regard in the religious ideas and customs of all nations. In ancient Greece and Rome the sacred fire was guarded by consecrated priests and vestal virgins, and was the center of the commonwealth and the home. When the fire went out, all executive and national affairs were suspended, and it had to be rekindled, either from the lightnings of the skies, from the concentrated rays of the sun, or by the process of friction and the rubbing together of two pieces of wood.

The foreign ambassador had to walk by the holy fire before he could be received in the Council of State. The Slavonic and Teutonic bride had to bow before the holy fire as she entered her new home. The Red Indian sachem walked thrice around the camp-fire before he would give his counsel or confer with his public visitor. The twelve Grecian tribes brought their twelve firebrands to Theseus, and were thus consolidated into the State, and their sacred fires were combined in the Oracle of Delphi. The Persian fire-worshippers looked upon the sun and the flame as sacred things, and it was an unpardonable profanity to spit in the fire or commit any impropriety in the presence of these holy elements. Fire was recognized as identical with life, and the Parsees of India today worship it with holy veneration.

God had always recognized it in His Word, not as an object of superstitious regard, but as the symbol of His own transcendent glory, and the power of His presence and His Holy Spirit.

As the discoveries of science and the progress of human knowledge increase, we learn to trace the deeper analogies and more significant lessons in this sacred symbolism. Fire is the most valuable physical force with which we are acquainted. In yonder sun it is the center of power in our whole planetary system. Stored up in our vast coal-mines, it is the power that drives the engines of commerce and the wheels of industry throughout the world. We see it in the tremendous forces of modern artillery, the torpedo, the bomb, the dynamite, the nitro-glycerine, and the death-dealing cannon. It is the prime factor in all the implements of modern warfare.

In the still higher forces of electricity, with their countless and ever-increasing adaptations, it is revolutionizing all the methods of modern business, and directing the whole course of trade and labor. Science is beginning to believe that the ultimate force of all nature is just electricity, and that the power that moves the planets in their orbits and the stars in their courses is but a form of electric fire. The truth is, that when they get to the end of their ultimatum they will find that God Himself is there, the personal source of all these forces, and by His own will directing this tremendous battery by which the universe is

kept in motion. For "power belongeth unto God." and He is the "Consuming Fire" from whose bosom all other forces emanate.

The Holy Ghost Himself has taught us to recognize in this tremendous force His own appropriate symbol, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." There is something very striking in the analogy between the story of fire and the dispensational unfolding of the Holy Ghost. There was a time in the history of the natural world when yonder celestial fires were the objects of mystery, uncertainty, and almost dread. The lightnings of the skies were known to be real forces, but men knew not when they would strike, and dared not attempt to use or control them. But in these last days science has scaled the heavens, has caught the lightnings, and has brought the tremendous forces of electricity under the direction of such laws that the simplest child can use them at pleasure. They have become the instruments of our everyday life, ringing our front doorbells, driving our streetcars, lighting our chambers and our streets, moving our machinery, carrying on our business, and even conveying our messages on the phonographic and telegraphic wires over the world.

So, in like manner, there was a time when the Holy Ghost\

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