

Strange Fire

The dedication of the tabernacle was a glorious day for the children of Israel. Much care was given in its construction, God having said to Moses, *"See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount"* Hebrews 8:5 and Exodus 25:40. Every offering was prepared for sacrifice explicitly according to that which God had showed to Moses. On this great day of dedication, it would be seen whether God had in fact spoken to Moses. When the congregation gathered early that day, Moses had said to them, *"This is the thing which the LORD commanded that ye should do: and the glory of the LORD shall appear unto you."* If Moses and Aaron did everything according to the pattern he had seen on the mountain with God, the glory of God would supernaturally appear. Every burnt offering in the past had been offered with fire provided by man. This day was different. They carried no fire into the tabernacle, and they placed no fire under the offering. After they had prepared the offerings for sacrifice, and laid them upon the altar, the scripture says, they *"...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

This would indeed have been a wonderful day if it had ended with the shouts of worship and praise to God. Sadly, the two eldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, who were destined to service in the tabernacle, sought to receive glory for themselves. Their immediate duty was to keep the fire burning which God had kindled. They were to put wood on the fire every morning and see to it that the fire of God would not go out forever. *"The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out"* Leviticus 6:13

Disregarding all that Moses had instructed them, Nadab and Abihu *"took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not"* Leviticus 10:1. In others words, they did not have the fire of God, so they kindled their own fire. Anytime a minister without the fire of God pretends before the people to have the fire, they are offering what God calls "strange fire."

"...And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." Leviticus 10:1-2

These two young men could have had the fire of God, but they did that *"which he commanded them not."* It was not their place to offer sacrifice to God on that day. They simply wanted the glory for themselves. The fire of God, which God kindled at the dedication of the tabernacle, was to be kept burning

forever. If the fire went out, the ministers would have nothing but "strange fire" to offer. In fact, the fire did go out at Shiloh when the two evil sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were the priests appointed to keep the fire burning. The scripture says they *"were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD"* I Samuel 2:12. Hophni and Phinehas were also given charge of the Ark of the Covenant. As God judged the nation because of the sins of Eli and his sons, Israel was defeated in battle, the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines, and Hophni and Phinehas were slain. When Eli heard the ark was taken, he fell backwards, broke his neck, and died. That same day the wife of Phinehas died in childbirth, and with her last breath, she named the child Icha-bod, saying, *"the glory is departed from Israel."*

God once again kindled the fire on the altar when Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem. II Chronicles 7:1-3. Certainly, the fire of God on the altar in Jerusalem was short lived, because Solomon the king later turned from the true God of Israel to follow after the gods Ashtoreth, and Milcom. He also built high places to worship Chemosh, and Molech I Kings 11:5-7. *"And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods"* I Kings 11:8. God's judgment against Solomon was to *"rend the kingdom"* from him and give it to a servant of Solomon's named Jeroboam I Kings 11:11. This He did during the reign of Solomon's son, Rheoboam I Kings 12:20.

God had promised to bless Jeroboam as king of Israel if he would serve Him. Instead, Jeroboam immediately turned the people away from Jehovah to worship the golden calves at Bethel. When Ahab became king, he built altars to Baal throughout the land, and in the days of Elijah, the people did not know who God was. The day came, after a 3 ½ year drought which was decreed by the prophet Elijah, when the people were ready to listen. Elijah challenged the people, *"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him"* I Kings 18:21. The people had no answer. Elijah again challenged them, saying *"the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."* Elijah understood that if he repaired the altar which was fallen down, and offered the acceptable sacrifice at the time of the evening sacrifice, God would answer by fire. He always had, and He always will. When the fire of God fell from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice, the people shouted *"The LORD, He is God."*

After Christ died and shed His precious blood to *"put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"* Hebrews 9:26, God answered by fire on the Day of Pentecost. *"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"* Acts 2:3-4. This time, however, the fire was not on the altar in the Temple, but upon the blood-washed men and women who gathered that day. As

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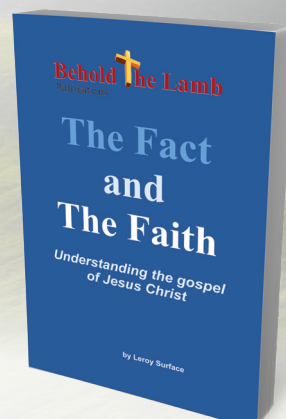
long as the fire of God was kept burning, the *"world was turned upside down"* by the gospel they preached and the mighty works which God did. Within that first generation, however, as the eye-witness apostle were taken out, false teachers with *"strange fire"* entered in and the move of God was over. Within three hundred years, the church entered into 1200 years of darkness, which ended with the reformation of the 16th century.

Approximately 350 years after the reformation, God sent the "latter day" outpouring of the Holy Ghost. On January 1, 1991 in the city of Topeka Kansas in a bible school led by Charles Parham, God poured out His Spirit, and the fire of God was once again was on the altar. In 1906, a "second wave" of the outpouring came to the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, led by William Seymour. For the first sixty years of the 20th century the Pentecostal movement was like living in the book of Acts. Consider the Wales revival led by Evan Roberts in 1904, and the Hebrides Revival in 1949, led by Duncan Campbell. These were marked by such a powerful conviction for sin that entire communities were brought to repentance even before hearing the preacher. They were like the 3000 Jews on the Day of Pentecost, crying *"What shall we do?"* Acts 2:37.

Other revivals were marked by supernatural miracles and healings. Isaiah had prophesied *"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"* Isaiah 35:6. For five decades Raymond T Ritchie preached the gospel and saw thousands of miraculous healings. After his revival in Houston Texas in 1923 he had a parade 13 blocks long of those who were healed. It took a large truck to carry the crutches of the crippled that were healed. Smith Wigglesworth from England reportedly saw fourteen people raised from the dead. In 1944, God anointed a 9-year-old boy called "Little David Walker" to preach the gospel and do miracles. I personally saw him at age 14 in the Houston Music Hall as God used him to heal the deaf, blind, and the lame. With great authority he cast out unclean spirits. Almost immediately after World War II, God called and anointed many to heal the sick and do miracles. Among them was Oral Roberts, William Branham T.L. Osborne, Jack Coe, and others too numerous to mention. I saw huge goiters disappear from the necks of women with a touch from Oral Roberts. William Branham had creative miracles, which included the creation of eyeballs in a baby born blind to blind parents. T.L. Osborne preached to hundreds of thousands in third world nations, and saw some of the most incredible miracles ever witnessed. Tommy Hicks went to Argentina in 1954, and saw the nation opened to him after the dictator Juan Peron received a healing miracle. All these 20th century revivals were possible because the fire of God was on the altar. Sadly, sometime in the decade of the sixties, the fire went out, and many resorted to the *"strange fire"* of Nadab and Abihu.

When the fire went out, the great revival of miracles ceased, and many charlatans arose in the 60's to deceive the people with gimmicks. Some of the "greats" which once had the fire

turned to other methods to continue in their ministry. This can certainly be *"strange fire."* In 1968, two of the greatest ministers of miracles I knew suddenly received a revelation of prosperity. They continued to do big things for the rest of their lives, but the "fire of God" was gone. They were reduced to preaching "prosperity pacts" and "seed faith" to receive the money to stay relevant. I personally witnessed an even greater sign of *"strange fire"* in the late sixties and early seventies when preachers who once had the fire of God began teaching people "how to speak in tongues." Within another decade, they were teaching the people how to prophecy, and began to fill the churches with false prophets. Teaching "how to do" anything the Holy Ghost is sent to do is *"strange fire."* One American ministry claims to see more people baptized with the Holy Ghost than any ministry in history. They give a formula of exactly what to do, and tell the seekers, *"If you start it, God will finish it."* NO! If you "start it," it is strange fire. Anything that originates with man must be *"strange fire."* I've seen the strange fire in the fad revivals for several decades. Uncontrollable laughing, barking like dogs, squealing like eagles, and claiming these to be the manifestations of the Holy Ghost is certainly *"strange fire."* It is obvious to even the casual observer that something has gone terribly wrong in the church today. Thousands of congregations start their services with a sinner's prayer, *"because we are all sinners, who must sin every day,"* unaware that if they die in their sins they will be eternally lost. There must be those, like Elijah, who will *"repair the altar that is fallen down,"* and offer the acceptable sacrifice. Our offering is not a bullock, it is our own body, a *"living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service"* Romans 12:1. If we offer this sacrifice, God will once again *"answer by fire."*



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