

Sunday, October 5, 2025 - The Covenant of Fire That Is Given – Pastor John Henry Raskin

- **Introduction**
 - Fire in mythology (Prometheus) vs. Fire in Scripture
 - In the Bible, fire is a gift from God, not stolen or withheld
- **Fire as God's Covenant Promise**
 - **Genesis 8:20-21**: Noah's burnt offering and God's promise never to destroy all living creatures again (Noahic Covenant)
 - Fire on the altar marks the first mention of fire in the Bible
- **Fire as God's Presence**
 - **Genesis 15:17-18**: God appears as a smoking oven and burning torch to Abraham (Abrahamic Covenant)
 - **Exodus 3:1-8**: God speaks to Moses from the burning bush (Mosaic Covenant)
 - Fire symbolizes God's holy, purposeful, and personal presence
- **Fire as Guidance**
 - **Exodus 13:21-22**: Pillar of fire leads Israel by night through the wilderness
 - Fire is visible, accessible, protective guidance from God
- **Fire as Protection**
 - **Zechariah 2:5**: God promises to be a wall of fire around Jerusalem and the glory within
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- **Fire as Purification**
 - **Malachi 3:2**: God is like a refiner's fire, purifying His people
 - The refining process removes impurities so we reflect God's image
- **Fire in the New Covenant**
 - Jesus brings the fire of transformation and the Holy Spirit
 - **Luke 12:49-50**: Jesus came to bring fire to the earth
 - **Matthew**: John the Baptist says Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire
- **The Fire of the Holy Spirit**
 - The Holy Spirit is the fire that burns in believers' hearts
 - Fire purifies, empowers, guides, protects, and transforms
- **Practical Impact of God's Fire**
 - Drives preaching, teaching, evangelism, and worship
 - Sustains believers through trials and enables holy living
 - Separates true worshipers from those seeking entertainment
 - Energizes, removes depression, inspires repentance and holiness
- **Final Encouragement**
 - God's fire is a gift to the church—must be stoked fervently
 - Once kindled, it is unquenchable and spreads to all it touches
 - **Hebrews 12:29**: "For our God is a consuming fire."

Let's pray for God's fire to burn brightly in our lives and in our church!

THE COVENANT OF FIRE THAT IS GIVEN

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week we spoke about the river of living water that flows from God's eternal temple, Jesus Christ and that it also flows from us who believe in Jesus to the unbelieving world.

This week we're going to speak about the Fire of God so I guess you could call this an elemental series.

When I was a boy, probably around six years old, I was given a book of mythology of different cultures.

I had just learned to read and since these stories were illustrated and also really interesting, reading these myths became my favorite pastime.

One of the illustrations of a Greek myth that I remember was of a giant chained to a mountain being attacked by birds of prey. This was an illustration of the punishment of a Greek god named Prometheus.

This story revealed that the reason that Prometheus was being punished in such a spectacular way was that he had stolen from Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, the element of fire and had given it to human beings.

Zeus, who was the chief deity of the Greek pantheon (according to myth) was known as both father and King of the gods and humans.

Zeus punished Prometheus because his theft of fire, which was considered a divine power, gave humanity a dangerous independence from the gods that could diminish their worship.

Fire, in this story, symbolizes knowledge, power, and progress—taken by force, against divine will.

The story of Prometheus, even though it is a myth, gives us a good understanding of the difference between the multiple gods, idols if you will, of other cultures and the God of Israel, who loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son to atone for our sins, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

In the Scriptures, fire is not stolen from Heaven. It is given as a gift.

Fire is to us and for us, a symbol of God's promise, presence, purification, guidance, and power.

The story of Prometheus reflects a worldview where divine power is hoarded, and human enlightenment comes through defiance.

The scriptures reveal that the Lord is not like Zeus, a tyrant withholding power, but that He is a loving Father who gives fire to illuminate, and purify, not to destroy.

Fire is closely related to the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testaments in the Bible. Let's explore that a bit....

First let's look at fire's role in God's first Covenant with people...

A covenant is a binding promise, a solemn agreement between two parties.

The first covenant that is mentioned in the Bible between God and man after Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden is between God and Noah and his descendants.

This refers covenant extends to all mankind because Noah and His sons and their wives were the only remnant of humanity left after the Flood.

This scripture occurs right after the waters receded and Noah left the Ark on dry land...

Genesis 8:20-21

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

**21 The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart:
“Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.
And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.**

Interestingly this covenant and the building of an altar with fire upon it to give sacrifice to God is the very first mention of fire in the Bible.

This covenant is God’s Promise to never destroy all living creatures again as He had done in the Flood.

This is known as the Noahic Covenant.

Each Covenant that God made with mankind was an attempt to reconcile people to Himself from the separation caused by our rebellion in the Garden of Eden.

The second mention of fire in the Bible also initiates a covenant. This time it is God Himself who is the Fire.

In this case, the covenant is between God and Abraham.

The scripture we are about to read happens right after the Lord tells Abraham while he was still called Abram, that he and his wife Sarai, who were childless, would bear a child.

As we know, the child to come would be Isaac from whom the 12 tribes of Israel would be born.

Genesis 15:5-8

5 Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. 7 Then He said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.”

8 And he said, “Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?”

Before answering, the Lord asks Abram to prepare a sacrifice and tells him that in the future his descendants will become slaves in Egypt, and that they will be delivered from their bondage by God.

Abram then falls asleep, and God answers his question by appearing in the form of fire.

Genesis 15:17-18

17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. 18 On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:

“To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.

This is the land that we know as “The Promised Land”.

The smoking oven and the burning torch that pass through the sacrifice are divine symbols of His Covenant with Abraham and his future generations.

They are also God Himself, the divine Presence.

This is the second covenant that is mentioned in the Bible between God and man after Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden.

We know this as the Abrahamic Covenant.

The promise that led to the next covenant that God made with man is the one that God made with Moses.

Again, in this case, the fire was God Himself.

Exodus 3:1-8

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, “I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn.”

4 So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, “Moses, Moses!”

And he said, “Here I am.”

5 Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” 6

Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

7 And the Lord said: “I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

8 So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

Now in this scripture, speaking from and as the fire, God shows Moses His compassion for the descendants of Abraham and makes a solemn promise to deliver them from their bondage and deliver them to the Promised Land.

Notice that this is the completion of the promise made to Abraham. God later reveals His Name to Moses from the flames I AM that I AM. Here we see God Himself as fire that is holy, purposeful, and personal.

Now let's look at the Fire of God as Guidance...

After Moses and the people left Egypt, by the power and authority of God's deliverance through the Red Sea, we see this scripture describing how God led His people through the wilderness...

Exodus 13:21-22

21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. 22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Here, we see God leading His people through the wilderness with fire. This fire is His presence as guidance... not hidden, visible, accessible, and protective.

God seals the Covenant with Moses and all the people of Israel when He appears on Mount Sinai in a cloud of Fire to give Moses the Tablets of the Ten Commandments.

I should tell you that Mount Sinai is also known as Mount Horeb, where Moses first encountered God in the bush as fire.

After the people of Israel settled in the Promised Land, they fell into hopeless idolatry. Again, the Lord came as fire to call them back to Himself.

The prophet Elijah called down the fire of God to prove to the people that the idolatrous worshippers of Baal and their priests were false prophets and that only the God of Israel was the true God.

As for fire as protection, the prophet Zechariah was told this by the Angel who was measuring the new Jerusalem to be built after the captivity in Babylon.

The Lord tells the prophet that there will be no need for walls in the new Jerusalem...

Zechariah 2:5

For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'

If you remember last week, we talked about Ezekiel's vision of the temple and how it was not a physical temple that was going to be built in Jerusalem, but it was an analogy for the current church age.

Now we see in Zechariah's vision the same thing...

As we are now the temple of the living God in Christ, God Himself is our protective fire from the interference of the enemy, and He is the Glory in our midst. The fire is His Spirit.

Now let's look at the Fire of God as Purification...

This is the prophet Malachi's vision of the Lord coming to judge Israel...

Malachi 3:2

2 "But who can endure the day of His coming?

And who can stand when He appears?

For He is like a refiner's fire

And like launderers' soap.

What is a refiner's fire? How does this scripture apply to you and me?

The word refiner today is not a common word. However, you have heard of refineries.

A refinery takes raw or impure materials and processes them through various chemical and physical changes to create valuable high-quality products.

A refiner in biblical times was a craftsman who took a piece of metal that was formless and impure and would work with it.

A refiner would put gold or silver in a furnace and heat it up to an intense heat until all the dross and impurities came to the surface so that he could skim them off.

He would do this again, and again up to seven times until the metal was clean and pure.

He would know that the metal was pure when he could see the reflection of his face in it like in a mirror.

Malachi's prophecy is a beautiful picture of the refining that God wants to do in our lives. He wants to purify us with the fire of His Spirit until we reflect His image.

God wants our attitudes and our weaknesses, our hidden sins, any disillusionment that is holding us back, any fear or condemnation, He wants it all to go through the furnace of His presence so that all the dross that's in our hearts may come to the surface.

He wants us to go through His Fire for one reason and one reason alone and that's so the reflection of Christ may be seen in everything we are and everything we do.

Jesus's offer of salvation is the last and ultimate Covenant between God and men and also comes with fire.

Three times in The Book of Revelation Jesus is described as having eyes of flame and fire.

John the Baptist said of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew,

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

And Jesus said before He went to the Cross...

Luke 12:49-50 NIV

49 “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!

The fire Jesus wanted to kindle is the fire of change and transformation, the fire of God’s active presence in the world. The fire of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke these words knowing that the Holy Spirit could not be given to those who would believe in Him until He took the Cross, died and rose again.

We who believe in Him as Lord now possess that fire of which He spoke. The Holy Spirit lives and burns in our hearts.

Fire, Jesus said. He came to set the world on fire.

He came to set hearts on fire for the love of God.

The fire of God calls sinners to repentance and inspires God’s people to live a life of holiness.

The fire of God, the Holy Spirit, is a gift that has been given to the church, the Body of Christ.

While salvation is a free gift given to all who would receive Jesus as Lord, the fire of the Holy Spirit must be stoked fervently and passionately...He came to start a fire within each one of us.

A fire that affirms that Jesus is the Christ who died for our sins because we cannot stand before a Holy and a righteous God without a Savior.

A fire that purifies and saves from wrath.

A fire that puts our faith to the test.

A fire that we must not let the world put out.

The fire of God purifies that which is not worthy and destroys imperfections.

The fire of God burns away sinful thoughts, motives, and desires, and leaves behind a renewed mind.

The Fire of God creates an appetite for righteousness and produces love, reverence, and passion for Him.

The Fire of God causes us to love intensely those around us with His love.

This Fire of God is found in the fervor and intensity of our worship.

This Fire falls when God's children yearn to be consumed with a divine adoration for Him.

God's Fire drives the preacher to preach.

God's Fire empowers the teacher to teach.

God's Fire compels the evangelist to evangelize.

God's Fire gives birth to an obsessive enthusiasm for winning the lost for the Kingdom of Heaven.

God's Fire enables the Christian to live a holy life.

God's fire sustains the soul when trials and tests come.

God's fire allows us to burn as a bright light in a dark world.

It challenges, compels, and produces mighty men and women of God.

The Fire of God is like the fire in the belly of a steamship; it provides the thrust for the voyage upstream.

The Fire of God is like the fire in a hot air balloon, uplifting the spirit to higher heights.

The Fire of God is like a campfire, supplying warmth on a cold night.

The Fire of God is like the flame in a lighthouse, giving direction and warning of danger.

The Fire of God is the defining characteristic of the passionate follower of Christ.

The Fire of God is the difference between dead religion and a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Fire of God divides the worshipers from the ones who only want to be entertained.

The fire of God separates those who play at church from those who are the Church.

The Fire of God is the difference between the impotent and the powerful.

The fire of God energizes God's people with His power and His truth.

The fire of God removes depression and replaces it with the joy of the Lord.

The Fire of God rings the death toll for the forces of the kingdom of darkness.

... and like all fire, once it is kindled it is unquenchable and will set aflame everything and everyone that it touches.

Hebrews 12:29

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Let's pray.