

# GRACE GAZETTE

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*Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.*

*Hebrews 12:12-13*

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## A FIRE OF COALS

*As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there,  
and fish laid thereon, and bread.*

*John 21:9*

The scriptures contain much imagery which paints a picture which is worth a thousand words; to borrow a phrase. These images are ordained by the LORD to teach us most vividly, many lessons, but all of them ultimately leading us to magnify the glory of HIS grace revealed in JESUS CHRIST, the REDEEMER of sinners. John concludes his gospel narrative, with this statement, *"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."* (John 21:25)

I am struck with amazement when I ponder his statement, considering the details which are included in the "gospels", written by, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is so much there about the things which HE did, that we can never even scratch the surface of it all with its myriad implications and examples of HIS teaching. So, to consider that this is but a small part of what HE has manifested in the Earth during HIS sojourn here is to humble us in the dust of adoring wonder.

The first time that "coals of fire" are mentioned in the scriptures is found in the instruction of the LORD to Aaron in making a sin offering for the people. *"And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not."* (Lev 16:12-13) It is this "sweet savor" of this OFFERING which comes up unto the LORD in the behalf of HIS people. Aaron, being a man of few and sinful days, must offer for himself as well as the people. Yet our GREAT HIGH PRIEST, who is without beginning and possessing an endless LIFE, did make that OFFERING of a sweet smell unto the LORD in our behalf.

The intense heat of these "coals of fire", pictures the sufferings of our SAVIOR who endured the cross for the joy that was set before HIM. This fire which Aaron used was a CONSUMING FIRE, which burnt completely that which was placed upon it. *"And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar."* (Lev 16:25) The "fat" was considered one of the best parts of the beast that was offered, yet it was ordained to be the most flammable part as well. Thus, we see our LORD ordained as the SIN OFFERING, being the very best, without spot or blemish. *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* (Heb 2:9-10)

We see that these "coals of fire", which denote the sufferings of CHRIST, were kindled by HIM who will judge sin most harshly, neither clearing the guilty nor acquitting the wicked. *"There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it."* (2 Sam 22:9) The same ONE who wrote the Law is HE who determined to send HIS only begotten SON into the world as a SIN BEARER, condemned by that same Law. *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Rom 3:26) *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in*

*the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.*" (Rom 8:3) Let no man think that he shall escape condemnation for his sin, since GOD spared not HIS own SON but made HIM who knew no sin to be sin for us. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1Pet 4:17-18)

Thus, we see the LORD kindling these coals of fire to cleanse the sons of GOD. When Isaiah was given his vision of the LORD, "high and lifted up" "in the year that King Uzziah died", he was struck down in repentance before that SIGHT whose glory overwhelmed him, so much that he cried out, "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." (Isa 6:5) The LORD would not leave him in such a state, thus HE sent a SERAPHIM with a live coal from the altar and laid it upon his lips. John the Baptist testified to his disciples concerning the weakness of his own baptizing contrasted with that of the REDEEMER, saying; "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)

This same "FIRE" which is ordained for the cleansing of the sons of GOD, is also that which shall destroy the wicked even as John went on to testify, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." (Luke 3:17) The LORD HIMSELF, declared the same, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:6) Paul spoke of it as well, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed 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, and from the glory of his power." (2Thes 1:7-9)

We see this "purging" (i.e.; pruning) of the LORD's branches connected with "coals of fire", as Peter warmed himself there in the courtyard of the Judgement Hall. "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." (John 18:18) Satan had desired to sift Peter as wheat even as he did with the LORD's servant, Job, many years before. Yet the LORD prayed for him that his FAITH would not fail. The LORD set this stage to teach Peter that he could not stand in his own power, in spite of his boastings that he would even face death for the LORD. So, we see him warming himself by the same "fire of coals", as those unbelievers. Yet the LORD meant this trial of Peter for a completely different purpose as Peter's "warmth" was soon turned to tears of sorrow and ultimately repentance as he denied knowing the LORD, three times, the last with an oath. How foolish are men when they trust in their own power. Yet the LORD made provision for Peter, and "purged" him, consuming his self-reliance in bitter tears which flowed from Peter's eyes.

Then we are brought to observe a most comforting sight in John's narrative, as we behold the risen CHRIST on the seashore, having prepared a meal for HIS weary friends. They had toiled all night and had caught no fish by their own endeavors. Yet when the LORD instructed them where to cast the net they brought in a multitude of fish. It is interesting to point out that John tells the exact number (153) of fish which were in the net. Those fish in that net were appointed by HIM to be caught and not one of them got away.

In all of this we see the LORD's provision for HIS disciples, for not only did HE teach them where to cast their net, but HE prepared a meal of fish and bread for them on "a fire of coals". No doubt this was a welcome sight to them. For here they were able to fellowship with the LORD, to be fed by a meal which they did not prepare, and to warm themselves by a "fire of coals" which they had not kindled. Is this not indicative of the LORD's constant provision for HIS children? What do we have that HE has not provided for us?

Perhaps the LORD kindled this "fire of coals" specifically for Peter to remind him of that other "fire of coals" which he had recently warmed himself by. Yet this was not unto Peter's condemnation but rather to demonstrate the mercy and kindness of the LORD as HE "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1John 1:9) For it was here by this "fire of coals", that the LORD restored Peter as HE told him to "feed my sheep". We see that brought to fruition not many days hence on the Day of Pentecost. Have you seen this "fire of coals". mam