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207 - The Figure Of Fire

We're aware of the destructive nature of fire in the world around us. It can destroy lives and objects in seconds, or, be harnessed to produce energy and materials that are useful for a variety of applications. But in whatever role it appears fire is always respected. In this lesson we'll discuss the **Figure Of Fire** and how God uses it in the scriptures.

1. Introduction

We recognize fire physically as a rapid release of energy known as combustion. This happens when a fuel is combined with a source of ignition to bring this about. There are few forces in nature that are as feared or as useful to mankind. As we turn to the scriptures we see that fire is used as a figurative element and is employed in a variety of ways. As was true of our study of water, fire appears throughout the scriptures and many times appears within the context of God's authority or represents the Lord in specific ways. In this study we'll take a look at

1. Fire and God's presence
2. Fire and purification and
3. Fire and judgment

As we examine each of these areas I'll make note of additional functions that fire performs within each of them. Let's take a look at these in detail.

2. Fire and God's presence

In the Bible there are instances in which God makes himself known to various individuals and employs a variety of methods to do this. One that stands out and is recognized by many is the use of fire as a symbol of God's presence and power. Some of these events are more obscure to most people since they haven't been the subject of movies or other stories but their presence in the scriptures is significant. When we think of the presence of God we may envision a dramatic spectacle such as the Hebrews saw at Sinai, which we'll talk about in a little while, but there are other events that are more subtle. One of those appears early in the narrative as God renews and emphasizes the promises he's made to Abraham.

Abraham, originally from Ur of the Chaldees, was called upon by God to leave his home and family and go to a land the Lord would show him (**Gen 12.1-3**). A three part promise was made to Abraham, or Abram, as he's known at the beginning of the story. In the future, his offspring would become a great nation that would eventually bless all families of the Earth (**Gen 12.2-3**), he would have a son (**Gen 17.15**) and his seed would inherit the land that God would show him (**Gen 15.18**). These promises are restated several times and can be summarized as:

1. The seed promise - referring to his son and future offspring

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

2. The land promise
3. The blessing of all families of the Earth through him

Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left his home to go the land God would show him. Throughout his life Abraham trusted God and never doubted the promises made but as he grew older he asked God on several occasions when he would have the son the Lord promised. As God spoke to Abraham in a vision, the patriarch expressed concern over his household. Abraham stated, “*what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.*” (Gen 15.2-3). God assured him that Eliezer wouldn’t be his heir then directed him to look to the sky stating that his seed would be as numerous as the stars (Gen 15.5). God then restated his promise that the land he saw would be inherited by his offspring. Abraham then asked, “*whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?*” (Gen 15.8).

God told Abram, “*Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.*” (Genesis 15.9) and arrange the animals in pieces. Some of the animals were divided and laid out but the birds were not. Then about sundown, God caused a deep sleep to come over Abram which is described as a “*horror of great darkness*” (Gen 15.10-12). In this state Abraham heard God restate the promises that had been made earlier followed by the image of a “*smoking furnace, and a burning lamp*” that moved between the pieces (Gen 15.17). God wasn’t just making a promise to the patriarch, he was demonstrating his commitment through a solemn oath. God added details to the statements previously made as well. These included that fact that:

1. His seed would be strangers in a strange land where they would be afflicted
2. In the fourth generation God would bring them back to this land where Abraham was
3. The nation that had afflicted Abraham’s offspring would be judged by God and
4. The land to be given to Abraham’s children extended from the Euphrates river to the river of Egypt

In this episode God used the image of a burning lamp along with the smoking furnace to signify his power and as a seal of the covenant the Lord made with Abraham. The combined images emphasized the solemn nature of the promises that were being made and God’s assurance that they would be fulfilled.

Fire also plays a role in the events surrounding the call of Moses to lead the Hebrews out of bondage. “*Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and*

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” (Exodus 3.1-2). The presence of God was represented by a “*flame of fire*” which didn’t consume the bush. In the message which follows we see the promises of God restated as well other declarations of His power.

God tells Moses. “*I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; For I know of their sorrows...*” (Exodus 3.7). God confirms that the time for Abraham’s seed to be delivered from their bondage had come and explains, “*I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey...*” (Exodus 3.8).

God’s power and presence are represented in this episode by the fact that He’s aware of the plight of the Hebrews. “*Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.*” (Exodus 3.9). God then issues a command to Moses which consolidates elements of His promises, power and His word, accompanied by the manifestation of the burning bush. God states, “*Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*” (Exodus 3.10). The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham was set in motion as the Lord called Moses to act as the physical agent by which He would perform His work in Egypt. These representations also reveal that God’s presence, power, knowledge and intent act on behalf of the spiritual welfare of His people. The fire serves to characterize God as a powerful being who deserves reverence.

God’s appearance in the burning bush is intended to impress upon Moses that his power is sufficient to accomplish His will and he encourages him to be bold in the task ahead. God states, “*Certainly I will be with thee.*” (Exodus 3.12). The absolute nature of God’s power is declared as He pronounces that deliverance will be accomplished and states, “*When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, Ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*” (Exodus 3.12).

As the Hebrews left Egypt God gave the people a visible reminder that he was with them that included fire. “*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.*” (Exodus 13.21-22). This column of cloud and fire not only signified the presence of God but provided protection as well. This is demonstrated as the children of Israel fled from the Egyptians and were able to cross the Red Sea on dry land. “*And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them: And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by*

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.” (Exodus 14.19-20). This impassable boundary exemplified God’s power and provision for his people and incorporated fire that protected and gave guidance.

At Sinai God’s presence is represented by fire in a powerful display as he issues a law to Moses. This law embodied the authority of the Lord and created a framework by which the Hebrews were to live. In preparation for the Lord’s appearance, Moses directed the people to wash their clothes and setup boundaries as God was to appear to them on the third day (**Exodus 19.10-11**). Anyone who touched the mountain would die so barriers were setup to prevent this (**Exodus 19.12-13**).

The description of God’s appearance at Sinai is one of great power and glory. *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a great furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.” (Exodus 19.16-18).*

God’s descent on the mountain was accompanied by thunders, lightnings and fire in the sight of the people who were gathered in his presence. This set the stage and impressed on the people the majesty of the Lord and his power. The Law that was then given to Moses would govern and guide them as they moved forward to establish the nation. God promised Abraham would one day bless all the families of the Earth. God made a covenant with the people that also underscored their importance in God’s sight. God told Moses to tell the people, *“Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Exodus 19.5).*

The physical manifestation of God wasn’t just a display of power and authority, it was also meant to remind them that His presence would be with them. God called upon the nation to be a special people in the earth in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. By keeping the Law they would be blessed as long as they remembered and kept His word. The combination of these elements reinforced for them, and for those who study the scriptures, the nature of God including His goodness, mercy and power as demonstrated in these events for the benefit of the Hebrews and later all nations. The fiery appearance of God would live in their memories and would be passed on to their children for generations.

This event marks a transition in the narrative from the Patriarchal dispensation to the

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

Mosaic. Although the text focuses on the children of Israel, and they were given a written law, God continued to act in other ways as well. During this period we see the Lord acting through agents such as angels, the prophets and later in more figurative ways such as visions and dreams that pointed to the future. We can see that prophetic language, dreams and visions sent by God had similar characteristics that identified God as the originator. In visions recorded by the prophets we find imagery that parallels the events at Sinai, the call of Moses and the vision that Abraham was given. In the writing of the prophets these visions embody the word of God and the representations serve as to identify God by acting as his autograph on each of them. Examples of this can be found throughout the writings of the prophets.

Ezekiel's writings contain similar elements that describe God and incorporate images of fire denoting the power and majesty of the Lord. Describing the figurative appearance of God, Ezekiel gives a rendering of the power and glory of the Lord as he records his vision of God on His throne. ***"And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake."*** (Ezekiel 1.26-28).

God's presence, power and glory are represented here with the image of fire and brightness. The images link this vision with God by means of the comparisons to the accomplishment of God's promises such as the ***"bow"*** reminiscent of the token of God's promise to never destroy the earth with water again. God's power and authority is manifested to Ezekiel in the representation of a throne implying God's role as a king or ruler (**Ezekiel 1.26**). In Ezekiel's vision we can note that not only does fire appear as a symbol of God's majesty and power but its accompanied by similar elements.

1. We see the appearance of fire (**Ezek 1.27**)
2. This is accompanied by the appearance of sapphire and amber (**Ezek 1.26-27**) and
3. The appearance of a rainbow and its brightness (**Ezek 1.28**)

Fire appears in Ezekiel's vision creating an image of the Lord's power. The brightness of the fire represents the glory of the Lord as Ezekiel stated (**Ezek 1.28**). We can compare similarities in Ezekiel's vision and description of God's presence with what both Moses and Abraham saw which points to a common source. In Ezekiel's writing the terms ***"appearance"*** and ***"likeness"*** and the phrase ***"as it were"*** tells us that this was a symbolic vision not a literal

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

manifestation given to the prophet.

While this appears to the prophet in a vision, this image of power and majesty is more than a decorative element. God states the reason for this vision, telling Ezekiel, “*Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me, even unto this very day...And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.*” (Ezekiel 2.3,7). As was noted in the occurrences of this representation to Abraham and Moses, the overall context involves the word of God revealed to the prophet, which he was to deliver to the people. Part of the nation had been taken into captivity at this time and the remainder in Judah continued to sin against the Lord.

Through Ezekiel, God called upon the people to consider their ways and repent. The mercy of God is shown later in the book when God states, “*Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*” (Ezekiel 18.23). God’s authority over His people had been set aside as the nation served idols and corrupted themselves. God, in His continued care for them, delivered this message, through the writing of Ezekiel, that the Israelites should repent and live.

Similar to the vision of Ezekiel is John’s vision, recorded in the book of Revelation, describing both God and Christ in similar terms. “*After this I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And Immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And out of the Throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.*” (Revelation 4.1-3,5). Notice the similarities in John’s writing, the vision of Ezekiel and events at mount Sinai.

The context of Revelation establishes the spiritual significance of these images. These things were revealed by the Holy Spirit (Revelation 1.10). The book was written to show things that were to “*shortly come to pass*” (Revelation 1.1). The seven churches of Asia are addressed, exhorted, edified and rebuked, in some cases, by Christ (Revelation 2-3). Finally, John writes of the things that must shortly come to pass (Revelation 4-21) and closes the book with a warning not to alter the commands of God, or the vision, that was recorded (Revelation 22). Images of the lamps of fire, the throne and the content of what is stated reveals that the book represents the will of God, delivered through the Spirit, and is for all Christians who may overcome any adversity through their faith in Christ. The similarity in how these elements are presented once more points to a common source which is God.

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

3. Fire and purification

Purification by fire in the scriptures is perhaps more subtle and is closely intertwined with the presence of God, judgment and sanctification. There are two ways in which purification is accomplished with fire. One of these is the destruction of corruption, both symbolically and physically. To destroy impurity in something purifies what is left. Another way in which fire is used figuratively in the scriptures has to do with the idea of tempering, or hardening, in much the same way as metals would be hardened for use.

Leviticus, the priests' instruction manual, provides directions for offering sacrifices to God. Burnt offerings (**Leviticus 1-2**), peace offerings (**Leviticus 3**), offerings for sins of ignorance (**Leviticus 4**) and trespass offerings (**Leviticus 5-6**) involved burning the sacrificial animal and usually taking the ashes away from the camp to a designated clean place to dispose of them (**Leviticus 6.11**). Previous discussions of the sacrifices show that these were representations of Christ and the removal of the ashes had to be performed exactly as God directed. Offering the animals in this way demonstrated the faithfulness of the Hebrews to the Law insuring the continued favor of the Lord and His blessings on their nation. There are other sacrifices that were burned as well. A discussion of the sacrifices would be a lengthy study in itself so these are mentioned as examples. An exception to the removal of ashes and their disposal outside the camp is that of the red heifer whose ashes were used for purification (**Numbers 19.1-9, Hebrews 9.13**).

In the New Testament we have examples of fire used in a figurative sense referring to trial and the effect it has on the life of the faithful. Peter deals with this in his first epistle. *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* (**1 Peter 4.12-13**). Satan seeks to destroy those who follow God (**1 Peter 5.8**) and trials that come upon those living a godly life present challenges which, if overcome, makes the believer stronger. Peter compares this to a refining process when he states, *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ...”* (**1 Peter 1.7**). The image in this passage brings out the idea that impurities in one’s life are purged just as fire destroys impurities in metal such as gold. This in turn helps strengthen our resolve to be faithful to God and prepared for a positive outcome in judgment.

4. Fire and judgment

God’s judgment against evil is represented in the scriptures in both physical and figurative images. One of the most well known stories in the Bible is that of the destruction of

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham negotiated with God to spare the cities if ten righteous souls could be found. Lot, Abraham's nephew, had settled in Sodom, selecting the area because it was "***well watered***" and would support his herds and flocks (**Gen 13.10**). When these few righteous souls couldn't be found God rendered his judgment against the city. Angels sent by God took Lot, his wife and two daughters out of the city with instructions to flee to the mountains (**Gen 19.17**). Lot asked for permission to go to the nearby city of Zoar fearing that he couldn't make it in time (**Gen 19.20-22**). Once the family reached the safety of Zoar God rained fire and brimstone on the area (**Gen 19.23-25**).

The destructive force and finality of God's action left a permanent reminder of the severity of His judgment. Prior to the destruction, the area was described as "***well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD...***" (**Genesis 13.10**). The scriptures note that the destruction included "***those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.***" (**Genesis 19.25**). The city of Sodom is believed to have been in the vicinity of the Dead Sea and today is a desert area that remains barren. The New Testament reinforces the need to respect God and His commands. Paul states, "***For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.***" (**2 Corinthians 5.10-11**). Paul, in his letter to the Romans, adds to this warning, stating, "***Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.***" (**Romans 11.22**).

Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, were consecrated as priests but failed in their duties in what is another of the Bible's better known stories. God instructed Moses to gather spices for making incense (**Exodus 25.6**) and detailed instructions on how the incense was to be burned, where and by whom. God specifically stated, "***Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.***" (**Exodus 30.9**). The Tabernacle was set up and the tribes brought their offerings for the it during twelve days of dedication (**Numbers 7**). Aaron and his sons were consecrated as priests at this time (**Exodus 40.1-16, Numbers 3.2-3**) and were to remain in the Tabernacle for seven days ministering before the Lord (**Exodus 29.35**). Nadab and Abihu ignored the instructions given to them by Moses and violated the sanctity of their duties. "***And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, 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. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.***" (**Leviticus 10.2-3, Numbers 3.4**).

God's judgment was immediate and destructive. Nadab and Abihu had no reason to

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

change the nature of their duties. God warned them about doing this and for their negligence they lost their lives. This emphasizes that God's instructions are precise and must be followed exactly as they've been given. God explains the sudden and complete destruction of the two which Moses relayed to Aaron, stating, "***This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.***" (Leviticus 10.3). God also told Moses and Aaron they weren't to mourn for Nadab and Abihu but were to continue with their consecration and allow the people to mourn (Leviticus 10.6-7). When God's reasons were explained to Aaron, the scriptures tell us that he "***held his peace***" (Leviticus 10.3).

There are multiple problems with the actions of Nadab and Abihu. They altered God's commands changing the conditions of the service they rendered. Although the change may have seemed inconsequential from a human perspective, God didn't take it that way. The Lord of the universe has the right to instruct and expect his commands to be followed. The alteration the brothers made was disrespectful to the Lord and could possibly influence the entire congregation had something not been done. This was also the outset of the formal worship in a structure designed and detailed by God. No human had the right to deviate from anything no matter how small it seemed. Some of the harshest consequences have come upon humans when they thought they had the right to change what God has spoken. Nadab and Abihu found out the hard way what it meant to sin and incur the wrath of God. Fire was the element that displayed God's power and displeasure with the actions of the newly appointed priests. His judgment was destructive, immediate and without doubt as to its origin.

The judgment of God is demonstrated again with fire coming from heaven in the challenge between the prophet Elijah and four-hundred fifty prophets of Baal. The king of Israel, Ahab, is described as being more evil than any of the kings preceding him (1 Kings 16.30). To add to his own evil, Ahab married a foreigner, Jezebel, who introduced Baal worship to Israel (1 Kings 16.31). Jezebel's evil was compounded by the fact that she sought out the prophets of God and killed them (1 Kings 18.13). The influence of this evil was such that prophets of Baal defied the power of God. Eventually Elijah challenged them to meet him at Mount Carmel to offer sacrifices to their respective gods. Elijah stated, "***And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.***" (1 Kings 18.24). Sure of success, the prophets of Baal, along with four hundred prophets that kept sacred groves, gathered at the mountain to show whose god was the only deity.

Sacrifices were prepared, altars built and wood laid out in readiness for the true god to demonstrate their power by fire. The prophets of Baal went first and spent the greater part of the day calling on their god. This included shouting, cutting themselves and leaping on their altar at one point among other things (1 Kings 18.26-29). As the day wore on, Elijah taunted the idolatrous priests, suggesting that their god was asleep, on a journey or simply couldn't hear

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

them (**1 Kings 18.27**). As the time of the evening sacrifice drew near it was obvious “*there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*” (**1 Kings 18.29**).

Elijah then repaired the altar of the Lord, called the people to him, prepared the sacrifice and directed them to pour four barrels of water over the altar. and sacrifice. This was repeated three times until the water soaked the wood, the sacrifice and filled a trench Elijah made around the altar (**1 Kings 18.32-35**). Elijah then called on the Lord, saying, “*LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.*” (**1 Kings 18.36-37**). “*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.*” (**1 Kings 18.38-39**).

The manifestation of God’s power was immediate, completely consuming the sacrifice, proving that there was no God but Him. The judgment of the Lord was unmistakable in this event and the prophets of Baal were killed (**1 Kings 18.40**) according to God’s decree in the Law that idolatry was forbidden (**Exodus 20.4, Leviticus 19.4, 26.1, 26.30**). This event wasn’t a simple competition between rival belief systems. God called on the Hebrews to be a special people among the nations, honoring Him in preparation for the time when the Messiah would come into the world (**Exodus 19.5-6**).

God’s judgment may be linked to His word through the element of fire. The word of God contains His commands, power, authority and ultimately His right to execute sanctions. God placed His words in Jeremiah the prophet’s mouth, indicating the divine origin of the message (**Jeremiah 1.9-10**). God told Jeremiah, “*Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood.*” (**Jeremiah 5.14**). The figurative aspect of this expression describes the nature of God’s judgment against the nation of Judah and others to whom Jeremiah spoke. God is described as a consuming fire (**Deuteronomy 4.24, Hebrews 12.29**) due to the nature of His commands and authority manifested in the verdict He renders against those who practice sin.

God had been set aside, His law forgotten, and His image as a true God corrupted by false prophets. In His rebuke of these, God tells Jeremiah, “*I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? Yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.*”

TLCBiblical.com Video Lessons

207 - The Figure Of Fire

What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord, Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets...” (Jeremiah 23.25-30).

The Lord, through His word, renders judgment, and is a consuming fire. The writer of Hebrews urges Christians to respect the Lord when he states, “**Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.**” (Hebrews 12.28-29). God’s word has been delivered (Jude 3) and contains those things which will make one acceptable to God (2 Peter 1.3). It is by the word of God that the world will be judged. Peter states, “**But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**” (2 Peter 3.7).

Christ will be the judge sent to render the verdict against the world at the time chosen by God (Matthew 24.36). Paul states, “**And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angles, 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...” (2 Thessalonians 1.7-9).** In this, God’s ultimate power and authority over all things will be realized through the judgment carried out by His son Jesus Christ and will be accompanied by fire.

5. Summary

The appearance of fire in the scriptures, shows that God utilizes elements with which we’re familiar to demonstrate His power, authority and provisions for mankind. Fire, shows that the judgment of God against those that don’t obey will be powerful and final in its destructiveness. God, however, has left us the means, through His word, to escape these consequences, have a spiritually fulfilling life here on earth and live eternally with Him.

6. Next

In the next lesson we’ll explore how the order and arrangement of the physical universe mirrors spiritual truths. Join me in the next video for a discussion of **God & The Elements**.