

## **Worship Worthy of God**

the Scripture- Leviticus 10:1-3 Nadab and Abihu

### **The Death of Nadab and Abihu**

**10** Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized<sup>[a]</sup> fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. **2** And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. **3** Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.

1. They had just finished their consecration; it was their first day on the job and it was their duty to offer incense to the LORD. They offered incense with fire that had not been appointed by the Lord and the fire of God's wrath broke out upon them killing them instantly where they stood in the sanctuary and before the multitudes of those gathered to observe the establishment of the priesthood. This was the "initial establishment" of the priesthood. It was a holy and solemn moment. A tragedy of epic proportions unfolded before the eyes of all including the proud father watching his sons perform service to the Lord. Aaron, a called and holy man before God watched God pour out his wrath upon his two sons at a moment where it shouldn't have happened... at a moment that should have been joyous. Aaron was understandably and exceedingly troubled. Moses said Aaron "this is what the Lord spoke, I will be sanctified in them that draw near me, and before all the people I will be glorified.

Fire first came down as a mercy to consume the sacrifices upon the altar but now fire came down out of wrath in judgment to consume the sacrificers Nadab & Abihu.

### **Who were these two men?**

these were not ordinary children.

1. they were the eldest sons of Aaron.
2. they were struck down in their prime.
3. they were brand new and freshly consecrated.
4. they were two men who had been honored by God before and were respected by all people. (exodus 24)

When God called Moses and Aaron to come up to him in exodus 24 he specifically named Nadab and Abihu calling them by name before calling "the 70 elders." The 70 elders were not called by name. God honored Nadab and Abihu in front of all of Israel. This was who God consumed with fire judging without mercy.

### **What was their sin?**

1. Their sin was that they offered strange fire that God had not commanded them to offer.

### **Where was it that God commanded no other fire could be offered or that only one kind of fire was allowed?**

1. Nowhere. God never said only one kind of fire was allowed. and yet in their first moments of fully consecrated service they were consumed with fire.

This same God that judged with fire is the same God we worship now.

2. In exodus 30:9 they were told they were not allowed to offer strange incense but on this occasion they did not offer strange incense.

3. in Leviticus 6:3 we're told that God ordered the fire on the altar to burn constantly never being allowed to extinguish. The fire indeed had not been allowed to burn out.

4. It would seem to students of the text that God had intended that they make good use of this fire on the altar only. It would seem that God expected them to understand. God himself had sent the fire upon the altar and tasked them with keeping it constantly burning.

5. The conclusion is that even though God never explicitly detailed that no other fire was to be used that they were expected to understand that if it wasn't Gods own fire then it was " strange fire." This was their sin, that they offered a strange fire back to the Lord after God himself had given his own fire.

6. Fire came from God and killed them suddenly. There was no opportunity for repentance or time to consult with God over their error. God took their lives that very moment.

7. this would seem harsh to anybody including Aaron who was vexed as we mentioned earlier. But then in this moment of vexation Moses offered words to Aaron. Moses did

not offer a random consolation instructing Aaron to be content with Gods decision but rather Moses returned with the word of God. "This is what the Lord has said "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified and before all the people I will be glorified" and Aaron held his peace."

This Quotation from God is not found anywhere else prior, but we have record of God having said it because Moses quotes him here.

**\* So, what does it mean for God to be sanctified?**

1. it is the same word as "hallowed" and in "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done....

2. It means that God is saying " I will have my name appear to be holy. I will make known to my people and to all the world, that I am a Holy God.

" I will be sanctified, I will be known by all to be a holy God."

3. And in his judgment on Nadab and Abihu he made it clear to all generations present then and not yet born that he was and is a Holy God.

**\* What can we learn about how God sanctifies himself from what he has given us here in scripture?**

1. We learn that God Sanctifies himself in two ways.

- One is by the holiness of his people and their conduct towards him. holding up Gods glory before all the people.

1 peter 3:15 "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."

- Second as saints we sanctify God in our hearts when we fear a holy God showing him proper reverence and love. When we sanctify him in the actions of our lives and not just lip service, we hold forth the glory of God's holiness to the world. When we do this God is sanctified.

2. But if we fail to do this God can and does sanctify himself by bringing judgment on those who do not sanctify his name in ways of holiness.

Ezekiel 28:22 " and thus says the Lord God, "Behold I am against you of Sidon, and "I will manifest my glory in your midst, and they shall know that I am the lord when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her."

Ezekiel 38:16 " You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land, in the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you O God, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

Ezekiel 38:23 " So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. then they will know that I am the Lord."

Ezekiel 42:13 The north chambers and the south chambers opposite the yard are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the Lord shall eat the most holy offerings. there they shall put the most holy offerings, the grain offering. The sin offering, and the guilt offering for the place is holy. When the priests enter the holy place, they shall not go out of it into the outer court without laying there the garments before they go near to that which is for the people.

1. These are instructions for the priests, but it reflects the careful approach all are supposed to take who deal in Gods worship.
2. God may as well be saying that those who draw near to me must take special care in doing so. that those who sanctify His name must demean themselves while they hold his name up in worship.
3. to not do this means God will manifest himself in judgment thus sanctifying his name and having the glory of his holiness one way or another.
4. You must understand that God will always be glorified both in our right worship of him or in our perverted worship of him. We will be used either as holy people holding up his glory or he will be glorified executing judgement on those that don't.
5. Never forget that the same God we serve this very day is the same God who snuffed the lives of Nadab and Abihu and his standards of being glorified in his holiness have not changed.

**- Aaron learned that even though he and his sons were very dear to God that Gods own name was dearer to him than anything else.**

1. Back in verse 3 of Leviticus 10 we are told that Aaron "held his peace" Jeremiah Burroughs says that his children were dear to him, but that it was fitting that God should glorified whatever becomes of his children, and therefore, Aaron held his peace."

1. The words translated as "held his peace" indicates much more than just silence. It indicates that Aarons heart became peaceful and that the anguish he felt no longer continued to trouble his spirit. The storm that raged in his heart was quieted and he was no longer tossed about emotionally by its waves.

2. The very word of God stilled his heart and graciously preserved him from further vexation.

3. Burroughs had this to say, "It is as if the Lord had said to his heart, " Arron, your heart is in a mighty strong motion; but consider that I must be sanctified in those who draw near me, so let all those motions of your heart be stopped and be quiet. ``

**- Thus, the meaning and scope of Leviticus 10:1-3 is this**

1. In worshipping God it is necessary that we draw close to him.

2. When we draw close to God, we should take special precaution that we sanctify his name

3. If we do not sanctify God's name when we draw close to him, God will still most certainly sanctify his own name upon us.

**- When it comes to the worship of God there must never be anything offered to him but what he has commanded.**

1. In regular daily affairs we are allowed to exercise our Christian liberty in any way we choose as long as it does not violate God's moral character or violate a standard, he has given us in scripture.

2. However, when it comes to the things of worship, everything that we do regarding performing worship must be founded on a command in God's word. God has made his mind clear to us on the matter of worship, everything we do in terms of his worship must be rooted in his own will manifested to us and not an ounce of our own liberty.

**-Matthew 15:9 "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."**

Isaiah 29:13 " And the Lord said, "Because this people draw near me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men."

**- We all have much cause to be humbled by these teachings.**

1. Note the emphasis on counterfeit worship. Men pay lip service, but their hearts are not obedient. They have a natural fear of God but not a genuine reverent fear of God.

2. This is also known as false humility. To even draw near to God with an irreverent fear is a great sin. False humility is fueled by self-deception. Do you understand that to draw near to God while lying about him with our very thoughts is a grievous form of idolatry. You are essentially attempting to worship a version of God that does not exist while drawing near to the God who actually does exist. This is so very dangerous to those that do this because God is still going to sanctify his name.

**- If we say at this point that all these things, I've said show God to be too harsh and that he does not care about the little things is worship let me just say this...**

1. God has made his mind clear that he does not ignore the little things in his execution of judgment on Nadab and Abihu.

2. In 2nd Samuel an ox stumbled, and the ark was in danger of tipping. Uzzah reached out his hand to stabilize it. The anger of the Lord burned against him and Uzzah dropped dead where he stood. Nothing could be smaller or more insignificant in human eyes than a secure touch, but God clearly cares even about the small things. As RC Sproul says in his book " The holiness of God' Uzzah made the mistake of assuming his hands were less polluted than the dirt beneath his feet.

3. When we draw near to God it must be authorized.

If people hear a message of gloom in this then you fail to realize the mercy being shown to all of us. God sustains our very lives as we speak and teaches us by his work when he is not obligated to.

**- Our own honors and dignities do not secure us from God's judgment.**

1. It does not matter what our position in the Church is, neither does it matter who our family is. It doesn't matter how long we have been performing our duties or how much respect we command from people, if we offend God in even the slightest of unauthorized worship, he is justified in lashing out in righteous judgment. Thank God for his mercies and long suffering in this matter.

2. If people here today get the impression that today's sermon is a gloomy and wrathful message then you fail to realize the mercies being bestowed to us and revealed by these verses.

3. God did not show Nadab and Abihu mercy, but he did give justice. You and I today by being taught by the word are receiving mercy instead of justice. God's goodness breaks out upon us revealing things we have not seen in scripture but are no less responsible for understanding. God is not obligated to do this, but we are blessed and for no reason of our own.

4. But upon somber reflection we must understand that where the dignities of church officers do not protect them from Gods hand those same dignities do make them more culpable, but this is not a sermon for them primarily.

**-All who enter public spaces concerned with the worship of God need to have the proper fear of God when entering those places**

1. Remember that God has given us special revelation about these matters in the gift of scripture. We are responsible for understanding these things even if we have never read of or explored them. Ignorance is not acceptable innocence.

2. Many object to this but the bible has shown this point to be infallibly true. If God expects of us to reason in a specific manner, then to not reason accordingly does not shield us from his hand. Once we understand this, we should see this as an extension of his mercy and cry out for the assistance of the holy spirit in revealing these things to us.

3. We must take God's expectations of us seriously. Jeremiah Burroughs notes this " and God expects this from you, that if upon examination of scripture one thing appears more likely to be his mind and will than another, you are bound to go that way which is more likely."

4. This is the only way to truly discover what God has authorized in worship. This kind of education is for humble hearts alone. The proud are not capable of seeing these truths through so small a window.

**- Another point I must stress is that those who are guilty before God often meet with judgments that were never explicitly threatened in God's word.**

1. Nadab and Abihu suffered a judgment that they did not know was potentially awaiting them. God did not reveal to them the nature of what awaited them if they sinned against him in worship.

2. This is important for all of us to understand. God's judgments are often unheard of and unexpected.

3. Nebuchadnezzar had his mind taken from him where he ate grass for seven years.

4. Judas came under such condemnation and conviction in spirit that he committed suicide.

5. Sodom and Gomorrah never expected fire to rain from the sky.

6. Abuse of the Lord's supper 1 Cor. 11:27-32 Paul tells us that some of the Corinthians have gotten sick and even died because of their abuse of the Lord's supper. This was most unexpected.

7. Countless times in scripture we see where God sends plagues unexpectedly or even the judgment of tyrannical governments, and famine, all of which appear suddenly and unexpectedly.

8. God has shown us examples of his judgements in scripture many, many times over but students of these things make careful note that the number of judgements revealed does not indicate the number of judgements he has to offer. What we know is terrible and what we don't know if judgement is even more terrible. God himself has made this clear with his warnings of hell for those outside of Christ.

9. This means we should take very seriously and tremble at what God has revealed about the nature of worship and our own sin. Our god is a God of Justice, power, wisdom and holiness and he will sanctify his name despite us. He has not only expressed his ability to do this here but also his ability to do this eternally without end. We must consider these things when we draw near to God.

**-Even though most of us only have experience with a God who is long suffering and slow to anger this is not guaranteed to be the case always with us**

1. God owes us nothing but justice. The mercy we have received for the duration of our own lives is an act of God's own grace and nothing to do with ourselves. We are not entitled to God's long suffering and merciful actions.

2. God judges very quickly when he chooses to do so.

3. Nadab and Abihu as well as Uzzah are prime examples of the swiftness with which God moves at times.

**-Some churches historically have elevated the duties of worship as holy and ignored the holiness of their personal lives**

1. The holiness of the duties of worship being performed never free us from abusing God while performing them carelessly both physically and spiritually.

2. Nadab and Abihu only had one mistake and when the hand of God fell on them the holiness of the duties were no protection.

3. We are never to mingle anything evil or incompetent with holy things.

**- The Lord in his holy places is much more serious.**

1. Psalm 68:35-" The Lord is much more terrible out of his holy places." We should never casually draw near to God without spiritually trembling with a holy reverent fear of the one who's presence we are drawing near to.

**-Judgements of God will always be suitable to the sins being judged.**

1. Nadab and Abihu sinned with fire, and they were judged with fire.

2. Pharaoh drowned infants and God covered him with the sea.

3. Adonibezek in the book of judges was very cruel in his cutting off the toes and thumbs of his enemies, God repaid him by having the same done to him.

4. I mention these because the sins of profaning God in worship is an affront to the very giver and sustainer of our lives. Sins in worship can lead to illness and death as God sees fit.

**- We must take very special care in learning the difference between the fire God has provided and the strange fire that men love to introduce in worship**

**- The 3 primary duties of worship are as commanded by God in the scripture are the hearing of the word, receiving the sacraments, and prayer. What would strange fire look like today?**

1. Strange fire would include passions and anger being offered up to God in worship. The prophets and apostles never mingled their own frustrations and anger while speaking the words of God and as it's recipients we are never to receive it with tainted emotions. This is not sanctifying to the name of God and will always corrupt the occasion. We are to prepare our heart and before we read the word or hear the sermon God has prepared for us. This is most pragmatically done with a moment of prayer and reflection about our own hearts before partaking.

2. The same thing applies to communion. We must take special care not to approach the table of elements while our hearts burn in a manner unfitting of drawing near to God. The same is also true of prayer.

3. Jeremiah Burroughs was quoted as saying " the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.