

NADAB AND ABIHU

BIBLE TEXT : Leviticus 10:1-20; Numbers 3:1-4

LESSON 85 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:9).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Leviticus 10:1-20 (KJV)

¹ 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.

² And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

³ Then Moses said unto Aaron, 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. And Aaron held his peace.

⁴ And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.

⁵ So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.

⁶ And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled.

⁷ And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD *is* upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.

⁸ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,

⁹ Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Joy of the Israelites

There was great rejoicing in the camp of Israel the day the Tabernacle was dedicated and the priests were sanctified for holy service. How happy the people were to follow God's instructions for the sacrifices! And when fire suddenly fell upon the altar and burned the offering, their joy overflowed. They knew the fire was from God, and they rejoiced that He was with them. They were so happy that they fell on their faces to worship the Lord.

Aaron and his sons enjoyed even greater blessings than the rest of the people. They were set apart for service in the Holy Place. They were dressed in the gorgeous robes which only priests could wear, and everyone could see that they were holy men. More than that, God had called by name Aaron and his two elder sons, Nadab and Abihu, to go up into the mount with Moses and Aaron at the time God revealed Himself to the 70 elders (**Exodus 24:9-11 (KJV)**) ⁹ Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: ¹⁰ And they saw the God of Israel: and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness. ¹¹ And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink).

Just imagine what a wonderful privilege they had to be so close to God! It should have made them so happy and so humble that they would tried very hard to please the Lord in everything they did. Think of the glory that would have attended their later life if they had served God faithfully!

Willful Disobedience

But instead of obeying God, right in the midst of the joy and glory of the dedication, Nadab and Abihu disobediently offered strange fire in their censers. They had no excuse. God had kindled holy fire upon the altar, and had provided all they needed for their worship. He had carefully told them every thing to do, and had warned them never to use any other fire in the Tabernacle. Yet the very same day that He told them, they disobeyed. They thought their own way was just as good. Do you know what happened to them?

Struck Dead

Fire from God struck Nadab and Abihu and killed them instantly, just like lightning. One moment they were alive — and the next moment they were dead. God had promised that their children should be priests after them; but because of their disobedience they died before they had any children to succeed them.

God expects people to obey every commandment; and when they do not, His judgment comes upon them. He is merciful and does not always strike the sinner dead instantly (although that does happen sometimes), but judgment is just as sure. "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Many people do not believe that, and think they will go to Heaven even if they sin. Adam did not believe it, either, when he disobeyed God in the Garden. God had told him if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would surely die. However, Satan told Eve that she would not die but would be wise like God. So

thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations:

¹⁰ And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

¹¹ And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

¹² And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it *is* most holy:

¹³ And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it *is* thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the LORD made by fire: for so I am commanded.

¹⁴ And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for *they be* thy due, and thy sons' due, *which* are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel.

¹⁵ The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave *it for* a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the LORD hath commanded.

¹⁶ And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron *which were left alive*, saying,

¹⁷ Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it *is* most holy, and *God* hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to

Adam and Eve believed the devil rather than God. And how much they suffered! They died spiritually, and God would not walk with them in the cool of the day in the beautiful Garden any more. He commanded them to leave the Garden and go out into the strange world and work hard to make a living. They suffered sickness and pain which would never have come to them if they had obeyed God.

Judgment Sure

God waits a long time for people who do not know how to serve Him, and He gives them many chances to repent. But His mercy does not endure so long when people willfully sin against His commandments. Nadab and Abihu had been so close to God that they knew His will and should have feared to disobey Him. They deserved the judgment God let strike them suddenly. They never had a chance to ask forgiveness.

God's Word Plain

Let us consider how important it is to obey the will of God. We have the Bible, His Holy Word, and in it we find the way to eternal life. God gave much attention to make His instructions plain. He said, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). We often find small children understanding how to be saved before their parents do. Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). People have to forget their own ideas and obey Jesus if they want to be saved.

In the Bible we have the biographies of great men — their good deeds and their bad. deeds, Histories of nations are also written on those sacred pages. Jesus said they were all given to us as examples. So we must read the Bible and study it carefully to know what lessons to learn from those examples.

If men in such high office sinned, as Nadab and Abihu did, and were destroyed for their sins, we can see that God will destroy any man who sins. Wearing priests' robes and serving in the church will not make him ready to meet Jesus. If he commits sin he will die and be punished. Jesus said "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Another time He said, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Why pretend to be Christians if we do not obey all the commandments of God? We shall never get to Heaven unless we live according to every word that Jesus has given us.

False Worship Hated

Some people think that because they are sincere in their religion it does not matter what they believe. Is that what the Bible tells us? Nadab and Abihu were burning incense in their censers according to the command of God — they were going through a form of worship but they used the wrong fire.

God hates false worship. He told the Children of Israel many times to beware of the people who worshiped idols; and to see to it that they did not follow the worship of the heathen.

One time when Israel had sinned God did not let any rain fall on the earth for three and a half years. At the end of that time Elijah challenged the priests of Baal to prove which was the true God. In their frenzy to get an answer from their gods, the Baalites cut themselves until the blood came. But nothing happened. They were sincere in their religion, but their earnestness brought no results.

Jesus has told us that we must worship the Father in "spirit and in truth." Again He said: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). They were

make atonement for them before the LORD?

¹⁸ Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy *place*: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy *place*, as I commanded.

¹⁹ And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and *if* I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?

²⁰ And when Moses heard *that*, he was content.

Numbers 3:1-4 (KJV)

¹ These also *are* the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day *that* the LORD spake with Moses in mount Sinai.

² And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron; Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

³ These *are* the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.

⁴ And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who were Nadab and Abihu?
- 2 Where have we heard of them before?
- 3 How was the fire kindled for the tabernacle worship?
- 4 What was God's commandment concerning the fire?
- 5 How long after God gave the commandment did Nadab and Abihu disobey?
- 6 What happened to them for their disobedience?

religious people, but they had sin in their hearts; and Jesus told them they were wicked men. Their own religion, no matter how pious they were, was not according to Jesus' teachings.

Oh, if people could realize that it is going to take clean, holy living, and a truly sanctified heart that makes them one with Jesus, to get them ready for Heaven! A form of worship with a sinful heart will not prepare anyone to meet Jesus.

Strange Fire

Some religious sects have much enthusiasm and fanatical "fire," but that is "strange fire." Such people do not live as the Bible teaches. Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:16). So no matter how emotional a person may be, or how much so-called religious enthusiasm he shows. if he is not living the pure, sweet life that Jesus taught, he is not a Christian..

No Mourning for Sin

Of course Aaron loved his sons. He also loved them as the chosen of God. But when God destroyed them for their sins, Aaron realized that God's judgment was just, and he did not open his mouth in sympathy. If Aaron had mourned it would have looked as though he were complaining about God's decision to remove the wicked priests. The service of God was more important to him than his personal feelings. He and his other two sons went right ahead with their worship.

We are sad when someone backslides from God, and we pray hard that God will have mercy and save such a person again. But if he refuses to seek God, we cannot let his disobedience hinder us in our serving the Lord. And if someone is cut off because he has hardened his heart too long against the Savior, we must leave that with God and try that much more to win others for the Kingdom.

The Prophet Samuel was once sent by God to anoint Saul to be king over Israel. The new king was a humble boy who grew up to be a fine young man; and Samuel loved him. When Saul grew older he became proud and disobeyed God. God was so displeased that He removed Saul from being king Samuel felt very bad about it. He remembered how much Saul had loved the Lord when he was young, and it was hard to think of him as a wicked man. God said to Samuel one day: "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" (I Samuel 16:1). But God is merciful and will not reject anyone who wants to be saved.

God Glorified

God will be glorified. The priests had the opportunity of exalting His holiness by obeying Him in the sacrifices. But Nadab and Abihu dishonored Him instead. God then showed the people His holiness by destroying the sinners. All the people mourned that their priests had fallen, and realized they would have to be more careful lest they, too, sin and feel the wrath of God.

God cannot look upon sin with favor, and when it is committed in His House it is especially black. How dare anyone pretend to be a Christian, and go through the forms of worship, and still disobey God and bring shame upon the Gospel! May we realize how important It is to keep the commandments of God and walk to please Him.