

LESSON 2



THE OFFERING OF STRANGE FIRE

Scripture Text: Leviticus 10:1-10

Following soon after the sacred experience of God's acceptance of the tabernacle was another event of far different character. It reveals the fickle quality of human nature and the necessity of drawing constantly upon the strength of God. Here is a hint of why the meeting place of God with man was named for His mercy—the mercy seat. God's mercy seems to be the quality most often called for in His dealings with us in our daily lives.

MEMORY VERSE: *And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.*

Leviticus 10:10

The Sin and Punishment

Leviticus 10:1-3 Nadab and Abihu . . . offered strange fire before the Lord . . . God's will was that **burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord** should be used to burn the incense, as is recorded in Leviticus 16:12-13. The children of Israel stayed out of trouble as long as they were busy building the tabernacle. As soon as they became idle, they once again got into trouble with God. Fire from the altar is a type of the Spirit of God or life of God (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:3-4). As the fire enveloped the offering and lifted it toward God, so the Spirit and life of God must envelop our lives and work if they are to be acceptable to God. **Strange fire** was fire from some other source. Using I was irreverence and disobedience to God's command. Strange fire is a type of the natural, carnal mind. This mind operates in one's own earthly, fleshly strength. It renders our lives or work unacceptable to God (Romans 8:6-8).

Abihu and Nadab had the high privilege of seeing God, not His face but His close relationship and manifestations on Mount Sinai. Yet they cast it all aside and followed their own ways. Punishment from God was immediate, severe, and final. **There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them.** Nadab and Abihu were struck dead immediately. Was this a trivial matter? The incense was burned. What difference did it make where the fire came from? That was not the point. The point was that they disobeyed, set God aside, and counted His will of no worth.

The men had brought in fire foreign to God. God brought in fire foreign to the men. It was a tragedy caused by sin. There came a sudden end to the opportunity of these two men to get right with God. This fact should cause us to consider with most serious concern our position before God. There is a great danger in carelessness or a light regard toward the will of God. Too many feel it of little concern how many times they backslide. There is a point in sin beyond which it is impossible to repent. The light we have and previous blessings determine that point (Hebrews 6:4-6). God grant that none of us pass it.

Undoubtedly, Aaron was shocked by the sudden death of his sons. Moses explained by quoting a previous statement of the Lord: **I will be sanctified**—made holy or revered as holy, **in them that come nigh me . . .** Aaron understood. He **held his peace**—kept still. His sons had not sanctified the Lord. They had treated His will as of no importance.

Absolute Separation

Leviticus 10:4-7 Moses commissioned two of his and Aaron's cousins to care for the bodies. They were carried **out of the camp**. God did not want the others to grieve over these men in whom He had shown His displeasure. Moses even forbade Aaron and the brothers of the two men to show usual signs of grief—uncovering of the head and rending of the clothes. As priests of God, they represented God before the people. To have appeared to set themselves against Him in public mourning for His action would have brought the wrath of God upon them. **The anointing oil of the Lord** set them apart. They were to remain in the tabernacle. All the common people might **bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled**, for it was a great and sorrowful lesson to all. With this lesson learned, the priests obeyed carefully. Every person is dead to something—dead **IN** sin or dead **TO** sin. In which position are you?

No Mixture

Leviticus 10:8-10 The Lord now gave a new command: **Do not drink wine nor strong drink . . . when ye go into the tabernacle . . .** This suggests that the sin of Nadab and Abihu may have been due to their being under the influence of drink at the time. We can relate to this in our society. There must be a **difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean**. This is a changeless quality of God's nature—the will for absolute separation between the kingdoms of good and of evil, of God and of Satan. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Through the Old and New Testaments, God's will was for complete separation of good from the bad. Read Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:9-11. We see mixtures of holy and unholy today. An unbeliever is called a Doctor of Divinity. Sinners are called members of the church. Worldly practices are carried on in the name of Christianity. Unsaved ones are given offices in the church. This is not pleasing to God. God only uses sanctified vessels. He does not use elements foreign to His program. What is the result to an individual, to a church, to a community, ad to a nation when mixing of this kind is practiced? It is good to insist on separation of holy from unholy, even though it will repel some people. It does no good to attract more people by allowing some mixture. Punishment now may not be immediate, but it is sure.

JUST A THOUGHT

Work is the best thing ever invented for killing time.

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