

Leviticus 10 - Thursday, October 15th, 2009

- Leviticus chapter 10 is sort of intense, and for the most part, could be largely misunderstood as it relates to the nature of Who God is.

10:1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.
- Nadab and Abihu begin their service by offering their own profane fire before the Lord, and it wasn't what was commanded by the Lord.
- We're told that because of this, the Lord sent a consuming fire that devoured them, and they die on the spot in the presence of the Lord.
- What has happened to these two brothers? These were Aaron's sons, and Moses' nephews. They were "nobles of the sons of Israel!"

As one commentator wrote: "Nadab and Abihu had a legacy of great spiritual experiences. Not only had they seen all the miracles God and done in bringing the nation out of Egypt, not only had they heard the voice of God and seen the fire, lightning, smoke, and felt the thunder and the earthquake with the rest of the nation at Mount Sinai, but they had also gone up with Moses, Aaron, and the seventy elders for a special meeting with God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:1-2), where they saw the God of Israel . . . so they saw God, and they ate and drank (Exodus 24:9-11). Even a legacy of great spiritual experiences can't keep you right with God - only an abiding relationship grounded in the truth of God's word can."

- At first glance, one might be prone to think that what Nadab and Abihu did most certainly wouldn't rise to the level of being put to death.
- However, upon further study, one can learn of the reasons that God had to do what He did, at the time and in the way in which He did it.

1. There is evidence in the text which suggests that they attempted to enter the Holy of Holies which as priests they were forbidden to do.
2. They were usurping both the High Priest's and more importantly, God's authority by coming into God's presence by their own merit.
3. They made that which was most holy, unholy by irreverently profaning blaspheming, and dishonoring the Lord in bringing their offering.
4. The fire in their censers wasn't the fire on the brazen altar that had come down from the Lord; it was manmade from another source.
5. There is every indication in the text that they wanted to draw the people's attention to themselves by receiving all the glory and honor.
6. They were flagrantly disobedient to the Lord's commands in what they did because they were drunk and their judgment was impaired.
7. They did the wrong thing, at the wrong time, from the wrong source, in the wrong place, and with the wrong motives. It was just wrong!

"These young men were self-willed and perhaps also excited by strong drink, and therefore daringly violated the Lord's commands in His own immediate presence. They followed their own wills as to time, place, and manner of offering the incense, no doubt considering these to be small matters, but indeed nothing is small in the service of God. He will be worshipped in His own way, and not in ours. There is more sin than they suppose in altering the ordinances as some do in our day. Moreover, there is one fire in the church, namely the Holy Spirit, and one incense, namely the merit of Jesus, and it is a daring impiety to seek other excitement, or offer any other righteousness to God."
Charles Spurgeon

- This account of what happened to Nadab and Abihu teaches us invaluable lessons in how we approach a Holy God as unholy people.

1. They took liberties going out on their own, breaking away from their father, and disobeying God's Word through Moses.

Am I doing this on my own authority, or has God authorized me?

2. They acted in jealousy when they saw the people so blessed by God, and it motivated their pride and selfish ambition.

Am I selfishly ambitious and motivated by a jealous pride, or am I selfless and humble?

3. They sought to put together their own fire, and have their own censers to draw the attention away from God and to them.

Am I putting together my own program to draw people to myself, or do I point them to Him?

4. They offer this fire before the Lord, contrary to the command from the Lord, while serving in the tabernacle of the Lord.

Am I demanding my way doing it this way, or is God commanding me to do it His way?

5. They started up their own fire instead of holy fire kindled by God with the intent of impressing the undiscerning.

Am I starting something by what I do or say, so as to impress people to see it my way?

6. They went "before the Lord" past the veil into the Holy of Holies as if they were High Priests not just priests.

Am I exalting myself more "High"ly than I ought, or do I see God's ways as "High"er?

7. They offered what they judged to be right, but their fire was unauthorized, so God's fire came down and judged them.

Am I judging the situation in a right way, or will God have to judge me in His way?

"The devouring flame flashed right across the mercy seat and slew them. Think of that, and remember that they were minister's sons and ministers themselves. Even our God is a consuming fire. They died while offering a vain will-worship, and it is to be feared that thousands will perish in like manner. Let us be careful and prayerful, and walk jealously before the jealous God; seeking even to worship Him as His own Word directs."
Charles Spurgeon

3 And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So Aaron held his peace.

- It must have been unspeakably difficult for Aaron to not express outward grief over the death of his two sons, but we're told that he did.

- Again, this can be misunderstood at first glance. God appears to be very harsh by killing them and telling Aaron not to weep over them.

- It's important to understand that any outward show of grieving for his two sons would have in effect, questioned the fairness of the Lord.
- In other words, if Aaron, as their High Priest, had run from this, or outwardly mourned over this, he would have dishonored the Lord.

"Aaron held his peace. His heart must have been rent with paroxysms of grief, as he beheld the bodies of his beloved sons on the floor of the Tabernacle, stretched out in death. He repressed the cry, choked back the sob, staunched the flowing tear, and continued to perform the holy duties with which he was charged. He was no stoic, and tears are not wrong for our dead; but his relationship to God was so overmastering as to still the expressions of nature. He saw the wrong from God's standpoint. — It was of great importance that the Divine regulations and enactments should be maintained, and that the ministering priests should always prefer God's work and service above their own ideas. Aaron was able to appreciate that position, and saw the sin of which his children were guilty. They had forgotten the voice which said, Sanctify thou Me. Obedience is the foundation of reverence, honor, and service; and if it were relaxed with the priests, how for the people! How careful they should be who bear the vessels of the Lord! With what fear and trembling must they work, who work with God!"

F.B. Meyer Devotionals on Leviticus (http://preceptaustin.org/leviticus_sermon_illustrations_2.htm)

4 Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, "Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp."5 So they went near and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had said.

- It's interesting to note that Moses doesn't have Aaron or one of his remaining sons carry the dead bodies outside of the Tabernacle.
- To do so would have made them unclean because they would have come into contact with a dead body after having been consecrated.

6 And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD has kindled.7 You shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses.

- Now its Moses that is telling Aaron and his two remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, not to mourn over Nadab and Abihu's death.
- Suffice it to say, this is very serious, particularly for Aaron, because the implication is that God was wrong in what He did to them.
- One has suggested that Aaron was thinking back to the golden calf incident and wondering why God didn't kill him like he did his sons.

Their commentary said it this way; "Aaron must also have thought, 'I did worse than this at the golden calf incident; why did God take them?' But Aaron did that *before* his consecration as a priest; after consecration, he and his sons had a greater accountability (**for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you**)."

8 Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying:9 "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,10 that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean,11 and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses."

- This is the only place in all the Bible where we have recorded that the Lord spoke directly to Aaron. Here-to-fore He speaks to Moses.
- This is where Bible commentators suggest that Nadab and Abihu were drunk, because the Lord tells Aaron they will die if they do this.
- The reason for not being intoxicated while serving the Lord in the Tabernacle was they wouldn't distinguish between holy and unholy.

"Probably because Nadab and Abihu had been drinking, all priests were for the future forbidden to drink wine at times of service. It is a foul sin when the Christian minister seeks to stimulate his eloquence by wine; it is offering strange fire before the Lord and will surely be visited upon him."

Charles Spurgeon

12 And Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons who were left:"Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings made by fire to the LORD, and eat it without leaven beside the altar; for it is most holy.13 You shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your due and your sons' due, of the sacrifices made by fire to the LORD; for so I have been commanded.14 The breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering you shall eat in a clean place, you, your sons, and your daughters with you; for they are your due and your sons' due, which are given from the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel.15 The thigh of the heave offering and the breast of the wave offering they shall bring with the offerings of fat made by fire, to offer as a wave offering before the LORD. And it shall be yours and your sons' with you, by a statute forever, as the LORD has commanded."

- This is huge; Moses has Aaron and his two remaining sons continue to partake of their own priestly portion in this their priestly service.
- In other words, God is not through with Aaron after what his two sons did. There is a call on and a plan for Aaron and his sons life.

16 Then Moses made careful inquiry about the goat of the sin offering, and there it was -- burned up. And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying,17 "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in a holy place, since it is most holy, and God has given it to you to bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?18 See! Its blood was not brought inside the holy place; indeed you should have eaten it in a holy place, as I commanded." 19 And Aaron said to Moses, "Look, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, and such things have befallen me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?"20 So when Moses heard that, he was content.

- It gets a little bit heated, no pun intended, with regards to the sin offering that was burned up. Eleazar and Ithamar did not partake of it.
- Moses gets angry with them and asks them why they didn't eat from it as they were commanded to, then Aaron tells Moses the reason.
- Aaron was fasting because he was mourning his son's death, which was allowable because it was not done outwardly but privately.
- It seems that Aaron's sons may have been following their father's example and refused to eat from the sin offering out of respect.