

The Fire of God

Leviticus 9:23 – 10:11

10/ 26/ 08

Intro

The book of Leviticus follows the theme of Exodus seamlessly. God promised Israel that they would be given the Promised Land, that it would be blessed, and that His presence would go with them. God's presence would be visibly seen at the tabernacle, which Israel built according to the instructions which God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai. It's important to understand that the tabernacle was a shadow of the throne of the God and the work of Jesus Christ who gives us the opportunity to have a relationship to God through the blood of His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

The book of Leviticus begins with instruction for how they should worship God through the offerings that they were to bring to the Lord throughout their generations. Each of these offerings picture the example of Jesus Christ as well as the call to each of us to offer to God our hearts and our lives to God as well.

When we get to chapter nine, they are just beginning to actually begin the offerings which they learned about throughout the first chapters. But immediately they run into trouble because the sons of Aaron do not bring the offering as God instructed them. There are so many lessons for us in these verses because we can see that God reveals here the importance of our heart and our motive in our relationship to God.

I. Don't Bring Strange Fire to God

A. Don't light your own fire

- 10:1 – Nadab and Abihu saw the excitement of the crowd when they saw the fire from God come down and consume the sacrifice on the altar, so they took some censers for the burning of incense and offered it before the Lord.
- Man has a way of spoiling what God does...
- God made the heavens and the earth and said it was good, and then man went against God and brought corruption into the beauty of God's creation. The rest of the bible is about God redeeming His creation from corruption.

Romans 8:21, that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

- Here in Leviticus 10, God has instructed Israel in how to worship and honor God through the offerings and Nadab and Abihu try to offer something to God that's completely wrong.
- This is what was wrong with what they offered; they were instructed to

take fire only from the bronze altar, which was where the offering for sin was given.

Leviticus 16:12-13, He shall take a firepan full of coals of fire from upon the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground sweet incense, and bring it inside the veil. He shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the testimony, otherwise he will die.

- Strange fire is anything that is not kindled by the Spirit of God.

Isaiah 50:11, Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow. (KJV)

Illus – We worship God by bringing a sacrifice of praise. There is a reason we don't stand here and sing songs by the Rolling Stones to God, it is strange fire. I always thought it was strange music, but it most certainly is strange fire.

B. Honor God as holy

- Vs 3, Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke saying, "Before all the people I will be honored."
- Nadab and Abihu knew what they were doing was against God's instruction. They blatantly disregarded what God said and did what they wanted to do.
- Moses was saying that they didn't honor God as holy; they became disrespectful of God and thus dishonoring Him.

App – We have to be careful that we do not become disrespectful of God by becoming too casual with God ourselves.

App – We want to teach our children and especially our teenagers that while we love them with unending love, they must also learn to be respectful.

Illus – When I was a waiter we were instructed that we could never serve people while chewing gum because it was disrespectful. Imagine if I were to teach God's Word while chewing gum.

- Yet whenever we disregard God's Word in our lives, we are not honoring Him as holy.

Leviticus 20:26, "Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine."

- The King James says, "I will be sanctified in their hearts." That is to say,

God will be set apart in our hearts. He will be high and lifted up within us.

- God made an example of Nadab and Abihu and I guess you could say that God fired them. I don't believe God sent them to hell necessarily, but the message of honoring God He wanted understood from the very beginning.

Illus – God said that Moses at one point did not sanctify Him in his heart when Moses became angry with the people when they grumbled about not having water. God said speak to the rock (and that rock was Christ), but Moses struck it and misrepresented God's heart so Moses could not enter the Promised Land.

Illus – By the way, we are in Christ Jesus and the fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice on the bronze altar is that which fell on Jesus Christ because of our sin and therefore we are saved in Him from God's wrath.

Otherwise, we would be in trouble every time we stood before God and had a spat with our family about being late to church.

C. Don't take the glory that belongs to God

- The people were in awe about what God was doing when the fire came and consumed the sacrifice. They shouted and fell on their faces!!
- Nadab and Abihu did something to draw attention to themselves. They had positions of importance after all and started to yield to the desire for attention.

Illus – There is something in all of us that likes attention. If someone says, "Wow, your hair looks great," it's easy to say, "No it doesn't," just to hear it again.

- 1 One of the distinctives of our church is that we hold to what we called *the centrality of Christ*, that means that we want Christ to be the center of the church and we should not draw attention to ourselves so as to draw attention away from the Lord.
- 2 This is part of sanctifying God in our hearts; that we give Him the glory which belongs to Him to not draw attention or glory to ourselves.

Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images."

Psalm 115:1, Not to us, O Lord, not to us, But to Your name give glory because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

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II. Bring God the Fire of the Heart

- 1 This study wouldn't be complete until we understood what God desires for us to bring when we worship.
- 2 In other words, if Nadab and Abihu brought strange fire, what then is the fire which God desires?

A. Fire of the heart comes from God

- 1 It was the fire from God that consumed the sacrifice on the bronze altar and then it was to stay lit at all times.
- 2 They were then to take from that fire to offer to God the incense which represents the prayers of the saints.
- 3 The point is that the fire of God was to be used in their worship.
- 4 In the same way, we are to offer to God the fire that He brought into our lives when we received Christ into our hearts as Lord and Savior and then were filled with the Spirit of the living God.
- 5 Vs 8-9; perhaps we see some insight into this when we read that the Lord spoke to Aaron and told him that neither him nor his sons were to drink wine or strong drink when they come into the tent of meeting.
- 6 It's interesting because this is the only place we see God speaking directly to Aaron. It's almost as if God is taking Aaron aside and explaining what happened and helping him to understand that it must never happen again.
- 7 Many commentators believe then that the sons were very likely intoxicated when this event happened.

App – Paul gives further insight to us about this when he drew a comparison between the influence of being drunk with wine and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18-19, And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Illus - We have a phrase that captured this point very powerfully, we say someone is “under the influence” when they've had too much to drink.

That becomes a great insight, what are in under the influence of in your life? God wants you to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit rather than any other thing.

B. It's a question of motive

1 In other words, it's a question of what is in your heart.

6) Proverbs 16:1-2, The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives.

1 God is very much interested in why and how we worship when we come near to God.

2 Let the fire of your life be kindled by the Holy Spirit; that is the fire that God truly desires.

3 Paul gave us further insight in this when he wrote to the church at Corinth...

9) 2 Corinthians 5:13-14, For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us...

4 The love of Christ compelled him, Paul says. That is the only godly motive that there is.

5 We need to take a look at the motive behind many of things we do and make sure that we are compelled by our love for the Lord and that is all.

9) Illus – I know a pastor who is quite good at golf; he says that he has made golf his prayer time. I pray, too, when I golf, but I have to admit my motive needs work.

1 The bible says we can lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, but that is only when the love of Christ compels what we do.