

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

3-31-21

Leviticus 10

The Sin & Death of Nadab and Abihu - Verses 1-5

¹ Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. ² So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: "Among those who approach me I will be proved holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.'" Aaron remained silent. ⁴ Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." ⁵ So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered.

10:1 What was the "unauthorized fire" that Nadab and Abihu offered before the Lord? The nature of Nadab and Abihu's wrongdoing is debated, but it clearly involved the burning of incense. The "unauthorized fire" could mean "foreign" (as in Psalm 44:20; 81:9), and thus "unauthorized" (see Exodus 30:9) or even "pagan." Apparently, Nadab and Abihu used fire from a source not approved by God (Numbers 3:4; 26:61), possibly even a pagan source. It has also been suggested that the two priests gave an offering at an unprescribed time. Whatever explanation is correct, the point is that Nadab and Abihu abused their office as priests in a flagrant act of disrespect to God, who had just reviewed with them precisely how they were to conduct worship. As leaders, they had special responsibility to obey God. In their position, they could easily lead many people astray. If God has commissioned you to lead or teach others, never take that role for granted or abuse it. Stay faithful to God and follow his instructions.

10:2 Aaron's sons were careless about following the laws for sacrifices. In response, God destroyed them with a blast of fire. Performing the sacrifices was an act of obedience. Doing them correctly showed respect for God. It is easy for us to grow careless about obeying God, to live our way instead of God's. But if one way were just as good as another, God would not have commanded us to live his way. He always has good reasons for his commands, and we always place ourselves in danger when we consciously or carelessly disobey them.

The Sin & Death of Nadab and Abihu - Verses 6-7

⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the Israelites, may mourn for those the LORD has destroyed by fire. ⁷ Do not leave the entrance to the tent of meeting or you will die, because the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said.

10:6-7 The prohibition against the customary signs of mourning was usually reserved for the High-Priest. Here, Moses applies it to Eleazar and Ithamar also. Aaron and his other 2 sons are not to mourn at all for the 2 brothers that were killed by God. This would show that they believed the punishment of God was just. The congregation would be allowed to grieve, but Aaron, Ithamar, and Eleazar could not show any signs of mourning, or the wrath of God would fall not, only on them, but on the entire congregation. I believe the bewailing the congregation did was also a kind of trembling at the wrath of God in action.

Proper Conduct for Priests - Verses 8-11

⁸ Then the LORD said to Aaron, ⁹ "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the tent of meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, ¹⁰ so that you can distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, ¹¹ and so you can teach the Israelites all the decrees the LORD has given them through Moses."

10:8-11 The priests were not to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages before going into the tabernacle. If their senses were dulled by alcohol, they might repeat Nadab and Abihu's sin and bring something unholy into the worship ceremony. In addition, drinking would disqualify them to teach the people God's requirements of self-discipline. Drunkenness was associated with pagan practices and the Jewish priests were supposed to be distinctively different.

10:10-11 This passage (along with 19:1-2) shows the focus of Leviticus. The Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus 20 were God's fundamental laws. Leviticus explained and supplemented those laws with many other guidelines and principles that helped the Israelites put them into practice. The purpose of God's laws was to teach people how to distinguish right from wrong, the sacred from the common, the clean from the unclean. The nation who lived by God's laws would obviously be set apart, dedicated to his service.

Proper Conduct for Priests - Verses 12-15

¹² Moses said to Aaron and his remaining sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, "Take the grain offering left over from the food offerings prepared without yeast and presented to the LORD and eat it beside the altar, for it is most holy. ¹³ Eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is your share and your sons' share of the food offerings presented to the LORD; for so I have been commanded. ¹⁴ But you and your sons and your daughters may eat the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. Eat them in a ceremonially clean place; they have been given to you and your children as your share of the Israelites' fellowship offerings. ¹⁵ The thigh that was presented and the breast that was waved must be brought with the fat portions of the food offerings, to be waved before the LORD as a wave offering. This will be the perpetual share for you and your children, as the LORD has commanded."

10:12 Moses continues the service that had been interrupted by the death of Aaron's 2 sons. Notice, Moses reminds them not to sin in the eating of the meat offering, lest they too might

die. In other words, he says do it exactly the way you were instructed and do not add to or take away from the instructions.

Eleazar and Ithamar Sacrifice the Offering for Sin - Verses 16-20

¹⁶ When Moses inquired about the goat of the sin offering and found that it had been burned up, he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and asked, ¹⁷ "Why didn't you eat the sin offering in the sanctuary area? It is most holy; it was given to you to take away the guilt of the community by making atonement for them before the LORD. ¹⁸ Since its blood was not taken into the Holy Place, you should have eaten the goat in the sanctuary area, as I commanded." ¹⁹ Aaron replied to Moses, "Today they sacrificed their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD, but such things as this have happened to me. Would the LORD have been pleased if I had eaten the sin offering today?" ²⁰ When Moses heard this, he was satisfied.

10:16-20 The Priest who offered the sin offering was supposed to eat a portion of the animal and then burn the rest (6:24-30). Moses was angry because Eleazar and Ithamar burned the sin offering, but did not eat any of it. Aaron explained to Moses that his two sons did not feel it appropriate to eat the sacrifice after their two brothers, Nadab and Abihu, had just been killed for sacrificing wrongly. Moses then understood that Eleazar and Ithamar were not trying to disobey God. They were simply afraid and upset over what had just happened to their brothers.