

Leviticus 10:1-3: Regarding God as Holy

Attention

- 1) There were many evil people who lived in Bible times who got away with murder, so to speak.
 - a. Men who remained impenitently wicked, flaunting disobedience of God, yet seeming to go unpunished.
 - b. Some of these men were judged at the end of their lives, and all, we trust, will be judged on the Last Day.
- 2) But not every wicked person who disobeyed the LORD got away with it, if only for a little while. **10:1-3**
 - a. Leviticus 8-10 tells the story of the consecration of the priests and the beginning of the Tabernacle service.
 - b. What was a great day for Israel, and a tremendous honor for Aaron and his sons, became a day of sadness.

I. Observations from the Text

A. Factors in Their Sin

I. TIMING

- a) Incense was to be offered twice a day at the morning and evening sacrifices. (Ex. 30:7-8)
- b) The sequence of the text indicates this was not the time designated by the Lord for offering incense.

II. FIRE

- a) It may be Nadab and Abihu did not use the fire required by the Lord for offering incense. (cf. 16:12)
- b) This law, however, is recorded after the event and pertained to worship on the Day of Atonement.
- c) *Strange fire* may indicate the wrong source, or it may mean the entire offering was *strange* to God.

III. IRREVERENCE

- a) Everyone was on their faces before God, everyone, that is, except Nadab and Abihu. **9:23-24**
- b) Whether or not their conduct was deliberately irreverent, God considered their actions to be so.

IV. INTOXICATION (?)

- a) We don't know for certain whether they were intoxicated, but context suggests the possibility. **8-11**
- b) None of the references to their sin, however, charge them with drunkenness. **1** (Nu. 3:4; 26:61)

B. Who were Nadab and Abihu?

- i. These men had every spiritual advantage imaginable.
 - a) HERITAGE: They were sons of Aaron and nephews of Moses.
 - b) SERVICE: They were priests anointed and consecrated by God. **8:6, 13, 24, 30**
 - c) EXPERIENCE: They had "seen God" and been in His presence on Mt. Sinai. **Ex. 24:9-11**
- ii. But none of these advantages kept them from sinning and paying the ultimate penalty. **1Co. 10:1-13**

C. Their Punishment

- i. The fire of God killed both men instantly; their coats, apparently, were not burned, but they died. (10:5)
 - a) God did not owe either man a second chance to repent; He acted swiftly and justly.
 - b) God's punishment likely indicates He knew they would not repent. (cf. Eze. 18:23; 2Pe. 3:9)
- ii. God didn't punish every disobedient person this way, but He taught an important lesson. (cf. Ac. 5:1-11)

D. What was Their Sin?

- i. Regardless of specific questions about their sin, Nadab and Abihu did what God had not commanded. **1**
 - a) This is what the Holy Spirit emphasizes in relating their story. **Nu. 3:4; 26:61**
 - b) Their offering was *strange* (NASB) or *profane* (NKJV) because it was *unauthorized* (ESV, NIV).
- ii. Consequently, their worship was irreverent, regardless of their intent. **3**
 - a) They worshipped as seemed best to them instead of worshipping as God had said.
 - b) Such man-made or man-altered worship does not honor God; it honors the man who arranges it.

II. We Must Respect God's Authority and His Holiness

A. What God Has Not Commanded, He Has Not Authorized

- i. Nowhere had God specifically forbidden what Nadab and Abihu attempted to do.
 - a) God did not say *not* to take fire with which to burn incense from an unspecified source.
 - b) God did not say *not* to burn incense at midday or only to burn it in the morning and evening.
- ii. Nevertheless, such lessons were to be inferred from the specific instructions God gave to the people.
 - a) When God gives exact instructions, His specificity rules out all other options man may conceive.
 - b) By telling the priests *when* to burn incense, the LORD necessarily implied *when not* to burn it.

- iii. Everything we do is to be governed by the word and will of God. **Jn. 8:31-32**
 - a) Only by abiding within the will of Christ can we be said to act in His name. **Co. 3:17**
 - b) Only by abiding within the word of God can we be said to be speaking as His utterances. **1Pe. 4:11**
- iv. God has not chosen to spell out every detail of how we live our lives or conduct our worship of Him.
 - A) SOME THINGS GOD HAS GENERICALLY AUTHORIZED, ALLOWING FREEDOM OF DECISION IN SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS.
 - It is not necessary for God to give us specific commands about every detail of execution.
 - B) BUT OTHER THINGS GOD HAS SPECIFICALLY COMMANDED, DISALLOWING ALL OTHER OPTIONS.
 - God gave Noah permission to use tools but gave him no discretion in materials and dimensions.
- v. The question isn't, "*Where does God say not to?*" It is, "*By what authority can you do these things?*"
 - a) By what authority could Nadab and Abihu burn incense at this hour and in this way? Not by God's.
 - b) By what authority can men today:
 - Prescribe a "sinner's prayer" to invite Jesus into the heart of a penitent believer? (Ac. 2:36-41)
 - Call preachers *Pastor* or *Reverend*? (Mt. 23:8-11)
 - Use musical instruments in worshipping God? (Co. 3:16; Eph. 5:18-20)
 - Eat the Lord's Supper once a quarter, twice a year, or on a day other than the first day? (Ac. 20:7)

B. What God Has Not Authorized, Does Not Honor Him

- i. We cannot be certain God will accept what He has not authorized in His word. (2Ti. 3:16-17)
 - a) We can be certain that such presumption does not honor God, who desires obedience. (Zec. 7:1-7)
 - b) Even wicked Balaam knew this principle; we must not go beyond what God says. **Nu. 22:16-18**
- ii. When we presume to do what God has not authorized, we neither sanctify nor glorify Jehovah. **3**

Action

- 1) God isn't seeking creative people to invent ways of worship; He's seeking obedient people to accept His way.
- 2) Are you one of those people who will be content with what God has said and obey His will, not your own?
