

LEVITICUS 10:1-20

Chapter 10 Outline

- v. 1-7 Nadab and Abihu
- v. 8-11 Priestly Conduct
- v. 12-15 Offerings
- v. 16-20 Aaron and His Other Two Sons

SCRIPTURE

Nadab and Abihu

10:1-2 “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer ¹ and put fire in it, put incense on it ², and offered profane fire ³ before the LORD ⁴, which He had not commanded ⁵ them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”

Seems too harsh, no?

1. “his censer”

- “They each took *his own censer*, and not THE sacred utensil of the sanctuary.” ~ Ellicott
- **Censer:** Hebrew *maḥtâ* (makh-taw)
 - Used for removal of embers, tinder, or ashes; a pan for live coals. ~ Strong's
 - “This is the first time that the word used in the original is translated *censer*. It means any vessel or pan that will hold embers or tinder (see Exodus 25:38, 37:23, 38:3).” ~ Pulpit Commentary
- Possibly not the correct and consecrated utensil that is supposed to be used.
 - Also, who is to wield the incense?

2. “put incense on it”

- “According to the Law, *the high priest alone* burnt incense in a censer. [Leviticus 16:12-13](#); [Numbers 17:11](#).) The ordinary priests only burnt it on the golden altar in the holy place ([Exodus 30:7-8](#)), or on the brazen altar as a part of the memorial. (See [Leviticus 2:2-3](#); [2:16](#), etc.” ~ Ellicott
- Aaron was the high priest, not his sons. They had no business offering the incense in this way.

3. “profane fire”

- They filled their vessels with common fire instead of taking it from the holy fire of the altar, which was always to be used in burning incense. (See [Leviticus 9:24](#); [16:12](#).)
- “And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire off the altar” ([Revelation 8:5](#)).
- **Profane:** Hebrew *zûr* (zoor): from another place, a stranger, foreigner, loathsome, adulterous.
- Same word used in Ex. 30:9. “You shall not offer strange incense on it...” (referring to the altar of incense.)
- Specific fire and specific incense were to be used.

4. “before the LORD”

- Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary state that the phrase “before the Lord” makes it seem as though they entered into the Holy of Holies to do this.
- **Before:** Hebrew *pānîm* (paw-neem): face
- It should be literally translated as they “*offered profane fire before the [face of the] LORD*”.
- Incense was only to be offered on the altar of incense, and only the High Priest was to do so (Ex. 30:1-10).

5. “He had not commanded”

- God had commanded specific things and it seems that Nadab and Abihu did not abide by what God had commanded in four specific ways:
 1. Did not use the consecrated censer.
 2. Usurped the High Priest’s job.
 3. Did not use God’s fire from the altar.
 4. Possibly went into the Holy of Holies and committed these offenses in the face of God.

In light of these things, no it does not seem too harsh!

10:3 *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.*

- “Worship must faithfully reflect God’s glory, for that is its purpose. The worship of God is not a realm for human innovation or experimentation.” ~ J.I. Packer
- “We are to be a mirror reflection of the Lord before the world. The only time a mirror attracts attention to itself is when it is dirty.” ~ Chuck Smith

10:4-7 *Then Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, “Come near, carry your [kinsmen] from before the sanctuary ¹out of the camp.” So they went near and carried them by their tunics out of the camp, as Moses had said. 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 ². But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD has kindled. 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.*

1. **“Sanctuary”**: Hebrew *qōdēš* (koh-desh): holy (262x), holiness (32x), hallowed things (52x), most (44x), sanctuary (68x).

- Same word is used in Ezek. 41:23 to refer to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This makes the theory that they were in the holiest place plausible.
- “before the sanctuary” can also be translated “the face of the most holy”.

2. Moses' order to not mourn.

- “On this occasion more especially Aaron and his two surviving sons are forbidden to give way to these manifestations of grief, since it might be considered as a reflection upon the justice of the punishment.” ~ Ellicott
- Moses is trying to protect Aaron and his other nephews from making the situation worse. Remember, priest = people.
- “They were to bear visible testimony to the righteousness of the punishment of Nadab and Abihu. The people, on the other hand, as not formally standing so near to Yahweh, were permitted to ‘bewail’ as an acknowledgment that the nation had a share in the sin of its priests.” ~ Barnes’

Priestly Conduct

10:8-11 *Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: “**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, that you may **distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean**, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.”*

- Another possibility of Nadab and Abihu’s sin is that they were drunk when offering the incense and that is why they made so many bad choices.
- Ellicott states, “...the opinion obtained as early at least as the time of Christ that there is a connection between the specific sin and the general law, that the two sons of Aaron drank wine to excess when they offered strange fire, and that the present prohibition is based upon that circumstance.”
- This makes sense as they made poor decisions, as many do, when under the influence. ***You lose your ability to distinguish between holy and unholy, clean and unclean.***
 - **Proverbs 20:1:** *"Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise".*
 - **Proverbs 31:4-5:** *"...It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted."*
- This being a statute forever (as with not eating blood or fat) means it is for all times, all places, and all people – including Christians.
- This is why it is repeated in the New Testament.
 - **1 Timothy 2:2-3** *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, **sober-minded**, of **good behavior**, hospitable, able to teach; **not given to wine**, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;”*
 - **Ephesians 5:18** *"And **be not drunk** with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit".*
 - **Titus 1:7** *“For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, **not given to wine**, not violent, not greedy for money...”*
 - **Titus 2:3** *“the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, **not given to much wine**, teachers of good things—”*

Offerings

10:12-15 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. 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. 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. 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.”

Aaron and His Other Two Sons

10:16-18 Then Moses made careful inquiry about the **goat** of the **sin offering**, and there it was—burnt up. And he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying, “Why have you not eaten the sin offering ¹ 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? See! Its blood was not brought inside the holy place ²; indeed you should have eaten it in a holy place, as I commanded.”

- Instead of eating the offering, they had burnt it outside the camp.
- “**goat**” – Either a ruler of the people or a common person can bring a goat for the sin offering.
- Moses accuses two things:
 1. The offering priest (either Eleazar or Ithamar) did not eat his portion of the sin offering.
 2. The blood was not brought inside the holy place (to make atonement for the person).
- Sin Offering Reminders
 - Blood is to be sprinkled 7x, put on the horns of the altar of incense, poured at the base of the altar of sacrifice. (Lev. 4:22-31)
 - The offering priest is to eat the sin offerings that come from a ruler or common person. (Lev. 6:24-30)

10:19-20 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?” So when Moses heard that, he was content.

- Aaron is saying:
 - My sons and I have offered the sacrifices for the day.
 - I did not think it was appropriate to consume the sin offering on a day like today. The Lord would not have approved, given my current state of mind.
 - “Aaron, taking the reproof to himself, makes an apology in his own and their behalf, the amount of which is, that he and his sons had performed the substance of their duty, offering the people’s sin-offering and burnt-offering in all respects according to the divine direction; only as to eating their share of the sin-offering, the death of his sons, happening at that juncture, had so overwhelmed him with grief, that he judged himself unfit for feasting at God’s table.” ~ Benson

- They burnt the fat on the outside altar, but they did not sprinkle the blood in the holy place or eat their portion because Aaron felt he was too unworthy that day to do so.
- Moses is content with this explanation and in fact, it even inspires a future law.
 - “Aaron submits that, unfitted as they thus were by mourning and the sense of their own sinfulness, if they had partaken of this solemn meal it would not have been acceptable to the Lord. In consequence of this declaration, the rule obtained during the second Temple, that when an ordinary priest heard of the death of a relative whilst on duty in the sanctuary, he had to cease from service, though he could not leave the precincts of the Temple otherwise he defiled the sacrifice; whilst the high priest, who could continue his sacred ministrations, was not allowed to partake of the sacrificial meal.” ~ Ellicott

TAKEAWAYS

- You can be born into a religious or ministry family, but you must own the faith yourself.
- No one should be given a ministry role simply because they are related to someone in leadership. Think about:
 - Adam > Cain
 - Noah > Ham
 - Aaron > Nadab & Abihu
 - David > Absalom
- People should have a clear anointing and calling on their life, not just the right last name.
- We need to make sure we are always of sound mind, and never under the influence of anything that would cause us to make incorrect decisions or lose our sense of right and wrong.
- God is holy and must be worshipped in an appropriate and reverent manner. He tells us what is correct, and we align to Him, not the other way around.
- It is about God, not about us.

DISCUSSION:

1. Have you ever felt the Lord was being unfair in a situation? How did you come to terms with it?
2. What lessons can we learn from Nadab and Abihu about what NOT to do?
3. Why is it so important for Christians to be sober and keep their wits about them?
4. Think about the Packer quote: “The worship of God is not a realm for human innovation or experimentation.” What does he mean by that, and considering it, how can we justify the worship we practice in our modern-day churches?