

## Offering True Worship to a Holy God

**Text:** Leviticus 10.1–11

**Theme:** We must offering worship according to what God has commanded

### Introduction — The passage I'd like to consider this morning is the one Joel read

- Leviticus 10.1–11, page 104 in your pew Bibles
- read just the first two verses again

### Considering biblical worship

- have wanted Revelation 4 & 5 to be our anchor points here
- in whole book of Revelation, I believe these two chapters to be key
- the church in this sin-filled, wicked, God-hating world must endure to the end
- but how? So much against it, both from without as well as from within
- and then, when you begin to read ch. 6 & 7 and see what's still yet to come...
- what can such a small minority do?
- how are we to “hang in there” and patiently endure?
- by seeing God as He is, seeing Jesus Christ as He is, knowing the Spirit as He is
- and then rightfully worshiping our great Three-in-One God
- but as we will see this morning, in this text before us...
- we must offer worship to God according to what He has commanded

### Leviticus 10 is one of those difficult passages of Scripture

- not because it's hard to understand the language; it's actually quite straightforward
- but precisely because of its razor-sharp clarity, our minds are troubled
- yet I am convinced that if we grasp what happened here, we'll avoid such errors
- we will offer worship to God according to what He has commanded

*So, let's examine...*

#### I. WHAT WENT WRONG

- to make sure we don't misconstrue anything here, we'll need context
- so let's take this into consideration as we see Nadab & Abihu

#### 1. Context

- Leviticus 8 & 9 gives us information vital to knowing what went wrong in Leviticus 10
- if we were to read both these chapters, here is what we'd see
- specific & exceedingly particular instructions given regarding sacrifices
- the setting apart of those who offer such sacrifices: the priests
- Aaron, Moses' older brother, is to be consecrated as holy unto the Lord
- Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, four sons, also set apart as priests unto the Lord
- these are the very first priests of Israel
- throughout two chapters, see a repeated phrase
- must not miss this, cannot afford to ignore it, pass it off as unimportant
- if you want to understand Leviticus 10 & its seemingly harsh events, must see this
- in fact, if we wish to worship God rightly, according to what He's commanded, we must
- phrase is this: **“as the Lord commanded”**
- over 17x we read these words or similar to them
- what we receive from this is that God has prescribed how we are to worship Him
- with exceptionally clear instructions, He stipulates how He wants us to approach Him

## 2. Nadab & Abihu

- they both would have heard all these commands from Moses
- Moses heard them directly from God Himself
- so, what went wrong in 10.1–2?
- Nadab & Abihu simply did not do as the Lord commanded
- it's really that simple
- v. 1: offered unauthorized fire
- other translations read “strange fire” or “profane fire”
- the word profane comes from word which literally means: “outside the temple”
- whatever fire they offered, it should never have been done or brought in to temple
- and that is all we're told: not how they lit it, carried it, where they got it
- simply that it was not that which God commanded

## 3. Fire came out from before the Lord

- again, it is absolutely necessary to back up in context to see what has just happened
- first, look at Leviticus 9.6
- **“And Moses said, “This is the thing that the Lord commanded you to do, that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.”**
- when they had taken care of all these matters, we read in vv. 23–24
- **“And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”**
- glory of the Lord is made known—as consuming fire
- and people filled with the fear of the Lord
- yet, apparently not Nadab & Abihu
- or, if they were, it only lasted a few moments before they passed it off as passing fancy

## 4. But let's go back further still

- Moses about to ascend Mt. Sinai
- God about to speak to Moses, give him all the laws, statutes, ordinances and commands
- and here is what the Lord said in Exodus 19.9
- **And the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever.”**
- the aim was clear: the people needed to believe in God as He is
- in verse 16, after the people set themselves apart, we hear this
- **On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.**
- but God knew this people; they needed a warning as well, Ex. 19.21–22
- **And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to the Lord to look and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near to the Lord consecrate themselves, lest the Lord break out against them.”**
- all this happened, before the events of Leviticus 10
- before Nadab & Abihu sought to worship God in their own way
- they believed it didn't really matter how they worshiped God as long as they worshiped, right?
- so, to a grieving father, Moses reminds his brother of God's words

- **Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’ ” And Aaron held his peace.**

*We see WHAT went wrong, but it forces us to understand...*

## **II. WHY IT WAS WRONG**

- it is one thing to simply look at facts & events
- but God needs us to see more than this; needs us to comprehend the “why” of this
- we must see why it is we are to worship God according to what He has commanded

### **1. Unauthorized fire**

- what was this strange fire the two priestly brothers offered?
- how did they bring it in such a profane manner that God consumed with holy fire?
- why was it so wrong deserving of such an immediate and harsh judgment?
- it’s unclear...I’m sorry, but that is the case
- we’re not told the details other than it was not what God had commanded them to do
- this we do know: Nadab & Abihu knew what they were supposed to do
- they knew how they were to have been prepared & consecrated for this offering
- and then they didn’t do it
- no motive is assigned, no justification sought, nothing other than it was profane before God
- they disobeyed God’s clear commands on how they were to worship
- maybe they thought this was a “grey area”, open to interpretation
- maybe they thought this piece wasn’t that important to the whole offering
- maybe they wanted to worship as they felt in their hearts
- you know, kind of follow your heart kind of sentiment
- maybe they got lazy and negligent in their preparations for their act of worship

### **2. Fire consumed them**

- to our highly sensitive, 21<sup>st</sup>-century ears, this sounds a bit harsh, don’t you think?
- isn’t God being just a tad unreasonable here?
- couldn’t He have simply made them sick for a week?
- perhaps brought leprosy upon them like their father and Aunt Miriam?
- but consumed them with fire? Talk about “over the top with the judgment thing”

### **3. One of our fundamental flaws**

- this type of thinking exposes the skewed thinking of our “modern” mind
- far too many of us have no healthy fear of the Lord guarding from such things
- God gave clear instructions, along with the motive behind them: that they know Me as I AM
- there were really no confusing prescriptions here
- Worship Me in this manner and in this manner only
- consecrate yourselves—be set apart for such holy moments
- remember Leviticus 9.6: **“And Moses said, “...that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.”**
- they had just seen a visible manifestation of the glory of the Lord
- right there, right then, right in front of their very eyes
- our God is a consuming fire!

#### 4. Affront to God's holiness

- no time now but if you'd trace holiness in Leviticus alone...
- you'd see this holiness of God, the holy worship to be offered...
- and the people who are to be set apart as holy, worshiping as instructed...
- this is the theme of the whole book: **"be holy, even as I am holy"**
- and I believe this is our great difficulty when we question strictness of God here
- sin seems trivial when God's holiness seems trite
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- and sin of Nadab & Abihu seems so small, so trivial to us today
- we don't value the holiness of God as we ought
- we seldom come on Lord's Day morning with thoughts like this:
- "God is holy, and even in Christ Jesus, I approach Him with fear, trembling & rejoicing"
- I doubt that many of us, from me to musicians to ushers to you asked this question:
- "Could it be possible for me to offer unauthorized, unholy, profane worship this morning?"

*So, this really begs the question now, doesn't it?*

### III. WHAT WILL WE DO?

- Bible is clear: God cares how we approach Him
- Exodus 19, 32, Leviticus 8–10, 2 Samuel 6, all provide strong evidence of this
- but lest we think wrongly: "It's just the Old Testament; God was like that then."
- "New Testament is different; we don't have to be concerned about fire consuming us."
- "Right? Isn't that correct?"
- Hebrews 12.28–29 reads: **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.**
- same God; same holiness; same fear & reverence required
- God cares deeply how we worship Him
- we'll keep looking at this, Lord willing, next Lord's Day
- for now, consider this

#### 1. 1689 BCF, XXII, #1

- **read this section**
- did you hear that? inventions, innovations, two things we 21<sup>st</sup>-century evangelicals love
- it is one thing to be truth-serving in our creativity; I believe it is needful & God-given
- God gives us leeway in some non-essential matters of worship
- the time we gather, the place in which we meet, whether we use pews or chairs, etc
- but other matters prescribed & prohibited in Scripture must be heeded
- truth-distorting creativity & innovations have no place in true worship of God
- unauthorized, profane, often become satanic instrument to our great harm
- more importantly, to the profaning of God's name, another commandment not to break
- and in case you're wondering if that's a bit harsh, here the Apostle Paul
- **For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.** (2 Cor. 11.2–3)

#### 2. We must know our Bibles

- why do some churches wage worship wars over style of music?
- they divide, split, damage the name of Christ — why?

- because those who oversee worship don't know their own Bibles
- often show a stunning lack of doctrinal discernment and awareness
- reveal their biblical illiteracy that's rampant in our churches today
- all this sets us up with easy temptations to worship as we see fit
- to call people together and meet their felt needs
- to let experience, emotion and feelings drive the why of what we do
- and in doing so, we offering up strange fire unto the Lord

### **3. We need Jesus**

- Nadab & Abihu were priests
- as such, they were meant to lead God's people, teach God's people
- they mediated between man and God
- sadly, they did this all in a horrible manner, without care or fear of God
- and they are us: sinful, weak, frail, wandering & following our own hearts
- how often we reshape God's requirements to suit our sentiments, emotions, and longings
- God's judgment on these two brothers points us to our need of a better priest
- One who is sinless, not sinful like Nadab & Abihu
- One who will never lead us astray
- One who offers a perfect sacrifice pleasing to God
- Jesus died that we might live
- we deserve to be consumed by God's all-glorious holy fire
- but we are not!
- thanks be to the Lord Jesus Christ
- He faced God's wrath so we don't have to
- now, in Him, we can come boldly into God's presence
- boldly, filled with rejoicing and trembling

### **Conclusion – Have you noticed something that past 5–6 Sundays?**

- I wish it would have been longer in the past than that
- but I hope to remember each and every Lord's Day to bring our time together w/ these words
- Let us worship God
- \* Let us worship God
- together, yes, indeed
- but this time should fuel you to worship & remember God the other six days
- so, let us worship God
- now, tomorrow, and always