

## Offering Strange Fire unto the Lord

### Introduction:

1. God speaks to us today through His Son, Heb. 1:1-2, and his Son, Jesus Christ, speaks to us through the New Testament of which He is “*the mediator*,” Heb. 9:15-17.
2. Jesus was born while the Law of Moses was in effect, Gal. 4:4, but He fulfilled that law, Matt. 5:17-18, and in His death that law was thus “nailed to the cross,” Col. 2:14.
3. Clearly, we are not under the law of Moses, and for a child of God to try to serve God today in accordance with that law is to fall from grace! Gal. 5:4.
4. However, there are many important lessons we can learn from the Old Testament, Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11.
  - a. One very important lesson to be learned from the Old Testament is this: We must not take liberties with the word of God, and attempt to serve God by doing that which He has not authorized.
  - b. One Old Testament example which clearly illustrates this principle is set forth in Leviticus, chapter ten, and it involved the two eldest sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu.
5. Title of Lesson: Offering Strange Fire unto the Lord.
6. Text: Leviticus 9:22-10:7.

### Discussion:

#### I. Background Information:

- A. Aaron and His Sons Had been Consecrated as Priests, Lev. 8-9.
  1. Aaron was a brother to Moses, and of the tribe of Levi, Exodus 4:14.
  2. He had four sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Exodus 6:23.
- B. Aaron had just offered unto God “*the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings*,” Lev. 9:22.
  1. Then Aaron and Moses went into the tabernacle, then came out of the tabernacle and “*blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people*,” Lev. 9:23.
    - a. Then “*there came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces*,” Lev. 9:24.
    - b. It was a time of great rejoicing – but rejoicing which was soon to turn to great sorrow!

#### II. Nadab and Abihu offered Strange Fire before the Lord, Lev. 10:1-3.

- A. Their actions:
  1. They each took censers, put fire in them, put incense thereon and offered it to the Lord, Lev. 10:1
  2. The altar of incense was in the holy place of the tabernacle, just in front of the veil, which separated the holy place from the most holy place. Immediately behind that veil was the ark of the covenant, upon which was placed the mercy seat.
  3. They “*offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not*,” Lev. 10:1.
    - a. The NIV and the ESV render it “*unauthorized fire*.”
  4. The right people, the right place, the right censer, the right incense, but the wrong fire!
- B. The Nature of the “*Strange Fire*.”
  1. Or “*Unauthorized Fire*.”
  2. It was taken from the wrong place!
  3. Note:
    - a. The brazen altar stood before the tabernacle of the congregation.
    - b. Fire was to burn continually in the brazen altar, Lev. 6:12-13.
    - c. The fires for the burning of incense were to be lit from the fire of the altar.
- C. Regarding the offering of incense certain warnings had been given.
  1. No “*outsider*” who was “*not a descendant of Aaron*,” was allowed to offer incense, Num. 16:40.
  2. No “*strange*” incense was to be offered, Exodus 30:7-9.
    - a. In fact, God specified the formula and the ingredients for the incense, Ex. 30:34-37!
  3. To my knowledge, there was no specific prohibition against “*strange fire*,” but the Lord had revealed where to obtain the fire, and that should have been sufficient!

#### III. The Consequences of their Actions.

- A. Fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, Lev. 10:2.
  1. Note the contrast between the fire of Lev. 9:24 and the fire of Lev. 10:2!
  2. They learned, the hard way, that our “*God is a consuming fire*!” Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:28-29. Cf. Rom. 11:22.
- B. Their cousins carried their bodies out of the camp, Lev. 10:4.
- C. Their Father and brothers were forbidden to display any outward manifestation of mourning, Lev. 10:6.
  1. And they were forbidden to go out from the door of the tabernacle, Lev. 10:7.

- D. Further Instructions were given – neither drink “*wine nor strong drink*,” Lev. 10:9-10.
  - 1. The reason: “*that ye may put difference between holy and holy, and between unclean and clean*,” v. 10.
  - 2. Some have concluded from the **context** in which these verses appear that Nadab and Abihu may have been drunk when they offered the “*strange fire*,” and thus were mentally unable to make that distinction.
    - a. But the Bible doesn’t say they were drunk; it says they “*offered strange fire*..”

#### IV. Lessons to be Learned from this Old Testament event:

- A. Those who worship God must regard Him as Holy, Lev. 10:3.
  - 1. “*I will be sanctified*,” KJV, or “*I must be regarded as holy*,” NKJV.
    - a. “*Holy*” is from *hagiamos*, and “it signifies separation to God, the conduct befitting those so separated,” (Vine), I Cor. 1:30; 2 Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2.
    - b. By offering that which God had not authorized, Nadab and Abihu were not respecting the holiness of God!
- B. Those who worship God must glorify God.
  - 1. God said “*in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified*,” Lev. 10:3.
  - 2. The Jews were to glorify God then; Christians must glorify God now! I Cor. 10:31; I Peter 4:16.
  - 3. But if we do that which God has not authorized then God is not glorified!
- C. How we worship God makes a difference with God!
  - 1. What Nadab and Abihu did was done as an act of worship, but God was not pleased; in fact, he burned them up!
  - 2. Their sin? They offered “*strange*” or “*unauthorized fire*!”
    - a. They might have said “fire is fire, what difference does it make?” For them, the difference was that of life versus death!
  - 3. We should learn from their actions! Rom. 15:4; I Cor. 10:6; John 4:23-24. Note also Heb. 2:1-3!
  - 4. By way of application, it may be said that people today offer “*strange fire*” before the Lord when they:
    - a. Change the kind of music which God has ordained, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16.
      - (1) Mechanical instruments of worship were permitted under the law of Moses, Ps. 150, but vocal music (singing) is set forth in the New Testament.
      - b. Make any unauthorized changes in the organization, worship, and work of the church.
  - 5. Sadly, the religious world is filled with those who (figuratively speaking) offer “*strange fire*” to the Lord.
    - a. What about those who change “mode” of baptism?
    - b. What about those who substitute the Catechism for the Bible, the Pope for Jesus Christ, Allah for God, human religions instead of the religion of Jesus Christ? Etc., etc.
  - 6. It seems that many have such a low view of God that they believe they can approach God in any way that pleases them!
- D. Service to God must come before service to family!
  - 1. Aaron was not permitted to openly grieve for his sons; they had been consecrated to the Lord and were forbidden to even leave the tabernacle during the time of their consecration, Lev. 10:6-7.
    - a. Others (their cousins) were to carry the bodies of Nadab and Abihu from the sanctuary, Lev. 10:4.
  - 2. The lesson for us: when a conflict arises between our commitment to the Lord and our commitment to our family, the Lord must come first. Matt. 10:34-37; Luke 14:26-27.
- E. God is Holy, Lev. 10:3; we must be holy, I Peter 1:15-16; Lev. 11:44-45.
  - 1. If we are to be holy we must:
    - a. Leave sin behind, 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1.
    - b. Offer the kind of worship God has authorized, John 4:23-24.
    - c. Put God first in our lives, Matt. 6:33.

#### Conclusion:

- 1. Yes, there are many valuable lessons to be learned from a study of the lives of people who lived and died while the Old Testament was still in force. We learn:
    - a. God was always pleased with those who did His will.
    - b. God was always displeased with those who refused to do His will.
    - c. God blessed those who put Him first.
    - d. God punished those who refused to obey Him.
  - 2. We are living under the New Covenant, but the nature of God has not changed, Jas. 1:17.
  - 3. There is no better time than right now to start serving God! 2 Cor. 6:2
- Bobby Witherington, July 10, 2016.