

Leviticus Chapter 10

1. Triumph and tragedy often times go hand in hand in the Bible and in life.
 2. On the very first day of Aaron's high priestly ministry, the glory of God appears, and his two oldest sons die for violating God's law.
 3. Jesus was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon Him in the form of a dove – which was followed by His temptation in the wilderness.
 4. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, with the crowds singing Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest – followed just a few days later by His crucifixion.
 5. God deals with us both on the mountain top and in the valleys – they are both part of life.
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V: 1 This chapter is simply a continuation of the scene from Ch. 9 – the sacrifices are being offered for the first time – Moses and Aaron have blessed the people and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people.

- Fire comes out from before the Lord, consumes the sacrifice upon the altar, the people see this and shout for joy, and at the same time fall upon their faces.
- As everyone is on their face, prostrate, humbled before the Lord – Nadab and Abihu both get up or move forward, each taking “his” censer in their hand:
- Censer: a vessel shaped like a saucepan or a decorative pot, suspended on little chains; for holding incense while it is being burned. Basically a container in which incense is burned.

Nadab = Generous / spontaneous.

Abihu = “He is my father”

Two key components to this description of events:

1. Strange fire:
2. Which He commanded them not:

Strange: (H-2114) zuwr, zoor; to turn aside, strange, profane; to commit adultery:

- From a practical standpoint it would seem to have been fire from another source besides the altar. (**Leviticus 16:12**)

Leviticus 16:12 “And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil.”

- The altar represents the cross of Jesus; there is no other way to approach God apart from that – any other way leads to death.

John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”

Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

“... which He commanded them not.”

- They broke away from the commandment of God, and sought to worship God as they saw fit.

Psalms 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

- When we turn away from God’s word, we walk in darkness.

Psalms 119:165 “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”

- When we turn away from the Law of the Lord, we do so to embrace turmoil, confusion, and stumbling.
- A key phrase up to this point in Leviticus has been “as the Lord commanded” – and up to this point we’ve seen the fulfillment or obedience to the Lord’s commandments.

Exodus 30:7-10 ⁷“And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. ⁸“And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. ⁹Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon...”

- Nadab and Abihu weren’t called to burn incense, Aaron was.
- (“his censor”) The incense was to be burned upon the altar of incense before the Lord, not in their own instruments or censors. The altar of incense was holy; it had been anointed with the Holy anointing oil.
- Later in Leviticus Ch. 16 Aaron would be required to bring a censor with coals from the altar and incense – all of which had been made holy by the anointing of oil – but the censors of Nadab & Abihu were not, they used the wrong instruments.
- Normally the incense was burned on the altar of incense; but one day a year, the day of atonement the high priest would take the censor and enter the Holy of Holies – but this was not that day, they were not the high priest, and it wasn’t the right censor.

- Thus far we see:
 1. Wrong fire.
 2. Wrong person / calling.
 3. Wrong way.
 4. Wrong time.
 5. Shortly we'll see that it was the wrong heart.
- All of the detail in this book thus far leads us to the conclusion that God wants to be worshipped in a very specific way.

The same is true in the NT as well:

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.”

Psalm 29:2 “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

V: 2 Fire came out from the Lord.

Describing the presence of God:

Genesis 15:17 “And it came to pass that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.”

- God's presence has also been described as being in a pillar of fire, or descending as fire upon Mt. Sinai – these descriptions are consistent with the NT description of God.

Hebrews 12:29 “For our God is a consuming fire.”

Fire: (H-784) 'esh, aysh; burning, fiery, fire, flaming, hot.

The first time it's translated as “fire”:

Genesis 19:24 “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven.”

- Later, the golden calf was destroyed in fire.

Exodus 32:20 “And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.”

- Then much later, false idols were to be dealt with in the same way:

Deuteronomy 7:5 “But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.”

- It's tempting to rationalize this a little, or perhaps to write this off to an OT dispensation of things.

Acts 5:1-5 “¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ²and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostle's feet. ³But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. ⁵And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.”

V: 3 “... *I will be sanctified...*”

- Sanctified (H-6942) qadash, kaw-dash'; clean, consecrate, dedicate, defile, hallow, (be, keep) holy, pure.

“By those who come before Me, I must be regarded as holy...”

*“... and before all the people **I** will be glorified.”*

1 Corinthians 1:29 “That no flesh should glory in His presence.”

- This may be another indication of the sin that God dealt with; instead of glorifying God, they stood up and diverted attention from God to themselves – taking glory away from God. “Hey look, I'm important, I'm a priest”

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.”

- Another way of putting this might be that “the closer a man is to God, the more attention he must pay to holiness, and to the glory of God.”

Hebrews 10:22 “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

James 4:8 “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.”

Jesus tells us:

Luke 12:48 “... for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:...”

“And Aaron held his peace.”

- Aaron didn't say a word, he didn't argue, he didn't wail in grief – he held his peace.
- He didn't compound it or make it worse – he didn't add to the sin.
- He may have known exactly why God did what He did.

Psalm 89:7 “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

V: 4-7

- Mishael / Michael = “who is like God”
- Elzaphan = “my God has protected” / “God has treasured”
- Eleazar = “comfort” / “God helps”
- Ithamar = Island or coast of palms, Eli & sons were descended from Ithamar.

The cousins came and took the dead body's away, taking hold of their priestly garments and buried them outside the camp. (where the dung & skin was burned).

Leviticus 21:10-12 ¹⁰“And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;
¹¹Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; ¹²Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord.”

Matthew 10:37 “He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

- Priests were forbidden to touch dead bodies; this would be a defilement that would keep them from being able to officiate in the priestly duties: thus the cousins do the work of undertaking.
- The cultural aspect of mourning were that normally they would tear their garments, and shave their heads, also they would throw dirt or ashes upon themselves.
- They were not to show grief over the death of their son / brothers because to do so would demonstrate opposition to what God had done.
- They wouldn't be allowed to grieve at the expense of God's reputation.
- It would be dishonoring to God since He is the one who wiped them out.
- I grew up in the Catholic church, praying for my dead relatives, praying that God would bless them and admit them to heaven. Later I learned as a Christian that this was wrong – the moment they passed from this life to stand before God:

Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

- God has already dealt with them, at that point they were in God's hands and to pray for them could possibly be to contradict God; we're taught to pray for the living, not the dead. A Catholic Mass is essentially a service for the dead, and it is contrary to what the Bible teaches us.

“... lest wrath come upon all the people...”

- The actions of the priests would and do have a direct impact upon the people.
- As much as Aaron and his remaining sons cannot mourn the loss of Nadab and Abihu, the congregation picks up the task; they mourn on behalf of Aaron and his remaining sons.
- This no doubt serves as a deterrent, reminding them of the circumstances and resulting penalty.

“And they did according to the word of Moses.”

- They were obedient! They expressed love to God on His terms.
- There is never an excuse for sin, they honored God above their feelings and emotions, they didn't use their grief as an excuse to sin. If anyone might have had one they would seem to have – but they didn't.

1 Samuel 15:22 “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice...”

V: 8-11 The priests are given the admonition not to drink wine or strong drink (liquor) – lest ye die.

- The Lord speaks to Aaron – 1st time / direct as opposed to Moses. Personal word of comfort, personal warning. (1st / only time God spoke to Aaron by himself).
- **Comfort**: God is still speaking to me, He still wants to use me, have fellowship with me.
- **Warning**: Don't go where they went, remember your role and the need to be clear minded, wholly given over to the Lord.
- Because this admonition comes directly after the death of Nadab & Abihu; some commentators speculate that they had been drinking or were even drunk when they approached God, thus the poor judgment with their “strange fire”.
- This admonition is delivered with the strong warning “lest ye die:...”

2 reasons are given:

V: 10 To show the difference between what is holy and un-holy; between what is clean and un-clean.

V: 11 That they may accurately teach the word of God to the children of Israel.

- Alcohol impairs a person's ability to think, it impairs judgment and decision making, and it impairs their ability to operate a chariot safely.

Proverbs 31:4-5 “⁴It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for prince's strong drink: ⁵Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.”

- Essentially it clouds the mind: not only in hearing the voice of God, but in any communication.
- God doesn't want us to serve him under the influence of anything except the Holy Spirit.
- No false stimulation, no false pretext:

2 Corinthians 5:14 “For the love of Christ constraineth us...”

- If it's the love of Christ that constrains or motivates us – then any other constraint or motivation is essentially “strange fire” – an abomination to the Lord.
- This would include using Madison Avenue marketing techniques, having just the right image, using guilt, gimmicks, any other carnal, worldly motivation; anything apart from the love of Christ is strange fire.
- Later, in the NT the admonition to the Bishops & Elders “... not to be given to wine” or “much wine” depending on the office.

V: 12-15 The sacrifices continue: a reminder that the Lord would meet their needs.

Key Phrase: “Thy due...” – “For so I am commanded” – “as the Lord commanded.”

V: 16-18 Moses is looking to make sure that the sin offering and the burnt offerings were sacrificed and consumed as it was supposed to happen.

- The sacrifices were made, but the portions that were to be eaten by the priests were burned with fire as opposed to have been eaten.
- Moses was angry & upset that the ritual was not followed as directed. We can't say that he flew off the handle, but he did seem to jump to a conclusion.

James 1:19 “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

- Aaron explains, defending Eleazar & Ithamar; that they had offered the sacrifices and that had he been involved, and had he consumed it with all the grief of losing two sons, not having really a right heart – it would have been unacceptable to God.
- Even though the portion of meat had been their due, and even though it is repeated a couple of times that it “had been commanded” – it is better to be real in the confession of their short comings than to put on some kind of a pretense of spirituality.

Psalm 51:6 “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts...”

- Aaron is explaining that he would have been hypocritical had he worshipped God this way when his heart was not in it.
- Moses then understood that Aaron had done the right thing.
- So too, our sacrifices, our worship must be done with a right heart – or it’s not acceptable either.

Psalm 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

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1. Nadab & Abihu’s sin was wickedness. They offered strange fire, they drew attention to themselves, their judgment was clouded with alcohol.
 2. Ithamar and Eleazar sinned as well, not being obedient to eat of the sin offering, but theirs was a sin of weakness and inability, possibly even being motivated by the fear of God.
 3. God responds to the sin of Nadab & Abihu, their willful sin with a consuming fire.
 4. God responds to the sin through weakness with forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

Psalm 103:14 “For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.”