

# Nadab & Abihu's Sin

## Introduction; We tend to trivialize certain things.

- A. Quite often we trivialize wrong-doing.
  - 1. We like to say that disobedience and error is not as serious as it really is. "*It is really a big deal,*" we say.
  - 2. We do this in life. We get a speeding ticket and complain that speeding isn't so bad. Everyone does it. And why aren't the police after serious criminals like murderers, rapist and terrorists anyway?
- B. We also tend to treat some sins as unimportant.
  - 1. Certain sins are not so bad. Everybody does them. And no one is really harmed by them. This is the standard for many. **Who is really hurt by a sin?**
  - 2. Many times in scripture we see God punishing sinners. One of the attacks the modernist often makes on scripture is that God is too harsh and mean. He punishes men for things that are trivial and unimportant.
- C. We want to consider one of these instances today.
  - 1. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire in Leviticus 10. God punished them by sending fire to destroy them.
  - 2. Many consider this very harsh and uncalled for. They say their crime did not deserve such a strong punishment.
  - 3. We need to understand the nature of their sin and learn from it the seriousness of sin.
- D. We will consider the sin of Nadab and Abihu today.

## I. Nadab and Abihu's Sin

- A. Nadab and Abihu were the older sons of the High Priest of Israel, Aaron.
  - 1. They were part of the establishment of the Law of Moses. In Leviticus 8 and 9 they are consecrated as priests of Israel. Aaron is over 80 by now so his sons are older and responsible. They know what is going on.
  - 2. *Lev 8:1-3 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, the anointing oil, a bull as the sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; 3 and gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."*
  - 3. This was a very solemn appointment. They had to stay by the tabernacle for 7 days after being appointed lest they die. They have seen God's power in Egypt and on Mount Sinai. They know to obey Him and the consequences of disobedience.
  - 4. *Lev 8:35-36 "Therefore you shall stay at the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, so that you may not die; for so I have been commanded." 36 So Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD had commanded by the hand of Moses.*
  - 5. They participated in the first sacrifices made. They even saw the power and glory of God as He sent fire to consume the first burnt and sin offerings. The fire comes out of the inner part of the tabernacle from the presence of God –the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. God starts the first fire for the sacrifices.
  - 6. *Lev 9:23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, 24 and fire came out from before the*

*LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.*

7. Nadab and Abihu are Aaron's oldest sons. They had come with Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel to worship Jehovah on the Mount. They are not young and ignorant.
8. *Exod 24:1 Now He said to Moses, "Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar.*
9. They seem to be leaders and one of them will probably be the next High priest after Aaron. We emphasize this to show they were aware of what was going on.

B. Yet in Leviticus 10 we see they commit a great and serious sin.

1. **Leviticus 10:1-2**; They offer the incense with *strange fire that the Lord had not authorized* and so God devours them with His fire. This would again come from the holy of holies.
2. This is a serious sin with serious consequences. They offer **profane** fire —‘strange’ in the KJV, ‘**unholy**’ in the NRSV and ‘**unauthorized**’ in the NIV. It is what God had not authorized.
3. **Vs 3**; Aaron seems about to cry out or complain or show his sorrow or anger. Moses stops him by saying God must be glorified by those who come near Him. Evidently there is no question that they did not glorify God. Aaron did not deny this.
5. **Vs 4-7**; Plainly Nadab and Abihu did not do this. So Aaron kept quiet and continued to serve. His sons were older (Aaron is over 80). They are responsible for their actions.
6. This act seems very harsh to many. They ask what difference fire makes? They ask if the men really understood at the beginning of the service where to get holy fire? Men make many excuses for them. And men criticize God for His harshness and severity.

C. Why were they punished so severely?

1. There are several reasons some have suggested as to why God punished them so severely. Probably several sins were involved in their punishment.
2. **Leviticus 10:3**; First, they did not treat God as holy and glorify Him. We do this in several ways. It can be in our attitude and character. Or it can be in our actions and behavior.
3. We glorify God and treat Him as holy when we do **what He says the way He says**. Lets consider some ways in which they may not have done this.
4. **Vs 1**; **First** we see they used strange or **unauthorized fire**. Later in chapter 16 we see that the High priest would take coals from the great altar and offer the incense. This was for the ‘Day of Atonement’. Probably the other priests could offer incense daily. But they would still have to get fire from the great altar.
5. *Lev 16:11-12 "And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself. 12 Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil."*
6. *Num 16:46 So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun."*
7. Part of the problem was their strange fire. They knew better but took fire from another source anyway. They evidently did not see the difference in coals. But God did. Not obeying God did not glorify Him. There are many things that man does not think is important, but God does. We need to learn to trust in what God says and not men.
8. *Deut 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."*

D. Several other things probably played a part in their sin.

1. **Second**; **Leviticus 10:8-11**; Here is a condemnation of drinking while serving God. Many think that because it follows so closely upon the death of Nadab and Abihu that this was part of their sin. They may have been drinking and did not think clearly about what they were doing.

2. *Prov 20:1 Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.*
3. *Prov 31:4-5 It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; 5 Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted.*
4. Certainly scripture has many warnings against drinking and drunkenness. Drinking influences our judgment. Drinking has cost many others their life since the time of Nadab and Abihu.
5. **Third;** Some have also suggested that they may have tried to enter the Holy of Holies. Leviticus 16 may suggest that they did this. This could be a result of drinking, foolishness, not paying attention or carelessness. We must beware of all of these things in serving God.
6. *Lev 16:1-2 Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died; 2 and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.*
7. Fire came from Jehovah. This would have been from the Ark of the covenant. This may have been part of the reason God was so swift with His punishment. As priests who worked directly with Moses and Aaron these two knew what to do and did not do it. They paid the consequences of their actions.

E. Nadab and Abihu sinned and suffered the consequences of their sin.

## II. Lessons from Nadab & Abihu's Sin

- A. **1<sup>st</sup>;** **God does punish.** This is so important to learn.
1. Many today feel that God will not really punish men. They think of Him as a kindly grandfather who loves his grandchildren but will not punish them. Some even teach that God will punish no one in hell. He will take everyone to heaven –Rom 11:22.
  2. *2 Cor 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
  3. *Matt 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:'"*
  4. God will judge and He will punish. We need to realize that and be prepared to stand before Him in the day of judgment –2 Cor 5:1, 11.
- B. **2<sup>nd</sup>;** We must treat God as holy and glorify Him today if we don't want to be punished.
1. Certainly Jehovah is holy. He is special and must be treated as special. He is pure and must be worshiped as such.
  2. On another occasion Moses and Aaron did not treat Jehovah as holy and did not glorify Him. The children of Israel complained a second time about lack of water. Moses and Aaron took credit for the miracle.
  3. *Num 20:10-13 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank, 12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." 13 This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the LORD, and He was hallowed among them.*
  4. Moses and Aaron did not believe God by honoring Him before Israel. Belief is more than simply accepting something as true. Moses and Aaron were angry and took credit for something God did. This was an occasion to glorify God before a sinful people. Yet they took the glory.
  5. *Psa 106:32-33 They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; 33 Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly with his lips.*

6. Psalm 106 recognizes that Moses spoke rashly with his lips. He was angry. He was unable to enter Canaan because of his anger. God is not glorified by uncontrolled anger. We must really be careful to keep our tempers too –consider the song, ‘Angry Words’.
7. *James 1:19-20 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

C. **3<sup>rd</sup>**; We treat the Lord as holy and hallow Him today when we do as He says.

1. Moses hit the rock instead of speaking to it as God instructed. In his anger he did what God had said do on an earlier occasion —Exod 17:6. Aaron was a party to this because he shared Moses’ punishment. He did not try to stop Moses. As Moses’ spokesman he may have said the word, “We give you water,” as Moses struck the rock.
2. *Matt 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*
3. We glorify God today when we do His will and show men that we serve Him. They see that His followers are good and honest and trustworthy and obey their Lord. This glorifies God.
4. *1 Pet 4:11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
5. When we speak of religious matters we speak what God Himself has spoken. We do not give our own thoughts and opinions but speak God’s word and do not add to nor take away from it.
6. When we serve we do so with the ability God has given us. We use our abilities to worship God and help others. This glorifies God. Those who hid their talents under a lampstand do not glorify the Lord.
7. *1 Pet 2:11-12 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*
8. Honorable conduct glorifies God and causes others to glorify Him as well. Our character, attitudes, behavior, actions and worship can glorify God or cause Him to be dishonored. The choice is ours. Consider that David gave the enemies of Jehovah a chance to blaspheme by his sin with Bathsheba –2 Sam 12:14.

D. **4<sup>th</sup>**; We also see very clearly that things must be done God’s way to glorify Him.

1. Nadab and Abihu offered strange or unauthorized fire that God had not commanded. God’s word makes this very plain. If we do not do things God’s way we do not honor, glorify and hallow Him. If we use our own wisdom we glorify ourselves.
2. *1 Cor 11:23-24 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*
3. The church at Corinth had changed the Lord’s supper. They were doing it in a way that Christ had not authorized. It was strange, unauthorized, unholy. Paul reminds them of what he had told them before. They needed to get back to God’s word. They needed to restore the pure worship of the early church.
4. God’s word must be followed today. We must stand for it, teach it to others and glorify God in it.
5. *Jude 1:3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*
6. It is complete and all we need to please God today. It equips us for every good thing that the Lord wants us to do —2 Tim 3:15-17.
7. *2 Pet 1:3 ...as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*

8. *Luke 6:46 "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"*
9. Jesus is Lord of lords. If we honor and glorify Him, we obey Him. This is very simple. We see this in Nadab and Abihu, that we must have book, chapter and verse authority for all we do in service and worship to God.

E. We see several lessons then from Nadab and Abihu's sin.

## **Conclusion; We tend to excuse sin.**

- A. We say wrong-doing is unimportant if no one is hurt.
  1. However wrong-doing does hurt. **It hurts the wrong-doer.** In committing sin we are not honoring and glorifying God.
  2. We must obey Him from the heart to exalt Him and treat Him as special and hallowed.
- B. This is true in all things and also very true in the **Plan of Salvation.**
  1. Men have come up with their own plans of salvation. They have many ways to save a person.
    - a. Some say a person is saved by '**faith-only**'. All one has to do is believe in Jesus as God's son and He is saved. Some will include repentance and some don't.
    - b. Others say a man is saved if God **predestines** him to be saved. Many cannot choose to follow God. He must have been chosen before the world began.
    - c. Others say men must do other things or much belong to certain churches or organizations.
    - d. Some teach the doctrine of **once saved, always saved.** This wasn't true of Nadab and Abihu. God had called them up to the mount earlier. Yet Jehovah destroyed them when they committed such a serious sin.
    - e. What does the Bible say about being Saved.
  2. God's word says we are saved by **faith, repentance and baptism.** We must believe in Jesus as God's divine Son. We must repent of our sins and turn from them.
  3. We turn to Christ and are buried with Him in baptism to have our sins washed away and to become a child of God.
  4. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
  5. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
  6. Baptism is immersion in water and puts us into Christ where all spiritual blessings are. It is the burial of the man of sin and the resurrection of the follower of God —see Romans 6:3-7.
  7. See also Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-48, John 3:3-6, 16, Acts 8:35, 39, 17:30-31, 18:8, 22:16, Gal 3:26, 27, 1 Pet 3:21, etc.
- C. If we can help anyone in their service to God today, please let us.