Nadab and Abihu

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**Foundational Scripture:** Lev. 10:1-2

**Intro**:

* We read of two priests in Leviticus chapter 10. They are Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron (cf. Exo. 6:23). Leviticus is the third book of the Pentateuch (5 books of the law) that emphasizes holiness. What God desires for the people He has brought out of Egypt, is to be holy as He is holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45.) Thus, we observe a variety of examples and situations in the book involving priests and sacrifices being made to God. In Leviticus 10, we aren’t told much about the circumstances revolving around the particular incense the two sons of Aaron are offering.
* Again, one can observe from the text that we aren’t given much details surrounding this incident. However, what is stated is more than enough to learn from the grave mistake of these men. Offering incense was a common practice under the old law (cf. Ex. 30:7-9; Num. 4:16; Deut. 33:10), but the problem in this case was how they did it. God solicited honor, respect and holiness from His people and “strange fire” was not representative of that. Many consider what that phrase actually means but we can only speculate.
* It may be referring to the fact that fire was supposed to come from the lumps of charcoal taken from the altar (cf. Lev. 16:12). Did they take coal from somewhere else? Others suggest it wasn’t the right time of day and therefore it was “strange fire” before God. Whatever the case may be, the point of this story is they had failed to do what God had explicitly commanded. This is a perfect illustration of Lex Talionis where the punishment fits the crime. The priests offered to God “strange fire” and God consumes them by fire. We are not to think that God is being overly harsh and sadistic in His actions at this point. Instead, it would be wise for us to consider the lessons we can learn from this short and terrifying story.
1. **We must obey God’s Commands**
	1. As a parent, losing two children in one single day must be devastating. God losing us to sin is worse. Moses told Aaron the reason his sons died was because they did not treat God in a holy manner (cf. Lev. 10:3).
	2. To fail to do what the Lord has commanded us to do, is one and the same as treating our Lord as unholy. God asks that we keep His commandments and they are not burdensome (cf. 1 Jn. 5:3). We must not allow our personal preferences or emotions get in the way of us doing all that God wants. If we are not sure about whether or not something is right in God’s sight, then it’s probably wise to stick with what we know God delights in.
2. **We are held accountable for our actions**
	1. Being priests did not exempt Nadab and Abihu from judgement. Many people look at such a passage and will often reflect on God’s cruelty, yet they fail to reflect on the priests’ disobedience.
	2. God is holy, and He does not tolerate sin. He set an example by consuming them with fire. Everyone needed to understand how important it was to do exactly as God said, nothing more and nothing else.
	3. Today, while we may not be consumed by fire the moment we commit sin, we must learn from their example and be quick to follow all of God’s commands. God will hold every one of us for what we do and what we do not do (Rom. 14:12; Heb. 4:13). Let’s be diligent to keep His commands and be holy as He is holy.

**Conclusion:** The story of Nadab and Abihu is a powerful one in the midst of a book that emphasizes a powerful message. God will not tolerate sin and He cannot be associated with anyone who willfully disobeys His words and His laws. The fact that God would go so far so as to allow His only Son to die for us should speak to the importance of our relationship to Him and our need to separate ourselves from sin. We will all have to answer for our actions. Will we choose right or wrong?