

Lessons From The Worship Of Nadab and Abihu

Intro. We are to learn from the Old Testament Scriptures; Rom. 15:4 ⁴“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” and 1 Cor. 10:6, 11 ⁶“Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ⁷Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. ⁸Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. ¹¹Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” One of the sad events recorded for us was the worship and subsequent death of Nadab and Abihu; Lev. 10:1-2 ¹“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. ²And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.” Let us consider some lessons from this tragic historical event.

I. WORSHIP IS A SERIOUS, SPECIAL AFFAIR

A. Worship is special.

1. It is different from other activities in life.
2. Lev. 10:3 ³“Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”
 - a. God is to be sanctified or holy.
 - (1) Psa. 95:6 ⁶“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”
 - (2) Psa. 99:5 ⁵“Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for he is holy*.”
 - b. God is to be glorified.

B. Worship is not:

1. Entertainment for us.
2. A time to play.
3. A time to converse and socialize with others.

C. We are to show reverence to God in our worship.

II. NOT ALL WORSHIP OF YAHWEH PLEASES GOD.

A. Everyone realizes cults, Oriental religions, etc., do not please God.

B. We see this from the beginning of time.

1. Cain and Abel
2. Gen. 4:3-5 ³“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. ⁴And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.”
 - a. Abel’s worship was accepted by God; Heb. 11:4 ⁴“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”
 - b. Cain’s worship did not please God and was rejected.
 - c. If Cain did good, his worship would have been accepted.
 - (1) Gen. 4:7 ⁷“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”
 - (2) Cain’s right actions would be rewarded, and failure would be sin.

C. Nadab and Abihu

1. They were right in many things they did, doing what God had commanded them:
 - a. As sons of Aaron, thus they were priests.
 - b. Took their censer.
 - c. They put fire in the censer.
 - d. They put incense on their censer.
 - e. They offer a sacrifice to God.
2. Fire went out from God and devoured them.
 - a. They offered a strange (unauthorized) fire.
 - b. It was a fire God had not commanded.
 - c. The fire God had commanded was colas from off the altar; Lev. 16:12-13 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: ¹³ And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that *is* upon the testimony, that he die not:”
 - d. Their worship did not please God because it was unauthorized worship.

D. Many, if not all, the prophets condemned the Israelites for their religious formalism.**III. OUR WORSHIP MUST BE BASED UPON THE COMMANDS OF GOD.****A. This is the idea of what God told Cain.**

1. Gen. 4:7 ⁷ “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”
2. It is what made the difference between Abel’s and Cain’s offerings.

B. John 4:23-24 ²³ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. ²⁴ God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.”

1. Three elements of true worship.
2. The proper object.
 - a. Nadab and Abihu were directing their worship to God.
 - b. Likewise, our worship must be directed to God; Mat. 4:10 ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”
3. The proper attitude.
 - a. Nadab and Abihu’s attitude was not revealed to us.
 - b. We would assume their attitude was proper since nothing is indicated.
 - c. We must have the proper attitude in our worship to God; a disposition of deep sincerity.
 - (1) Isa. 57:15 ¹⁵ For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”
 - (2) 1 Cor. 14:15 ¹⁵ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”
4. The proper manner.
 - a. It must be done according to truth.
 - b. This was Nadab and Abihu’s problem.
 - (1) They offered “strange fire.”
 - (2) “Strange” is unauthorized.
 - (3) It was fire that God had not commanded.

- c. We must do what God commands in worship.
 - (1) John 17:17 ^{“17} Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”
 - (2) Col. 3:17 ^{“17} And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

Conclusion: Let us never make the mistake Nadab and Abihu made in offering God something He has not commanded.