

What is **Strange Fire?**

by Robert Hatfield

They were the sons of Aaron. No one would suspect that these two would disobey God's specific commands. However, the book of Leviticus makes it plain what Nadab and Abihu did and in what way God punished them:

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. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD (Lev. 10:1-2).

Rather than describing the specific error which was committed, God saw it best for Bible students to know only that Nadab and Abihu offered something *other than* that which God commanded (Lev. 10:1b). This account quickly introduces the reader to the seriousness of sin — Nadab and Abihu died!

Unfortunately, strange fire is not so strange today. Consider these lessons from Nadab and Abihu.

Strange fire is sparked by selfishness. It is called "strange" fire, but the flame seems all too familiar to sinful human beings. In fact, it seems as if Nadab and Abihu simply followed what *they* thought was best when they offered this strange fire. If these two men did not feel as if they were being pleasing to God, then why bother with making this offering in the first place? It seems obvious that these two men felt that their sacrifice would be pleasing to God *because it was pleasing to them!* Jeremiah was aware of the dangers of concentrating on self rather than on God: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 6:16).

Strange fire is strange to God. The flames may be familiar to sinful men and women, but God is the One who deems the fire to be strange; it was that which "he commanded them not" (Lev. 10:1). God always communicates His will with His people in an understandable fashion. There is no way that Nadab and Abihu were ignorant of what God expected. Exodus 30:9 and Leviticus 16:12 are two of several examples which could be cited. The Bible teaches that no darkness exists in God (1 John 1:5). To try to offer to God something other than that which He specifically commands is sin (1 John 3:4), and thus darkness, unable to enter His presence.

"Strange fire" still burns. God has made acceptable worship clear to Christians today, but many people still offer strange worship, that which He has not commanded. We must not fool ourselves into thinking that what is acceptable to us is fine with God.

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13).

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