

Sermon #29 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title:                    **NADAB AND ABIHU**  
**LESSONS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD**

Text:                  Leviticus 10:1-20

Subject:              *The Worship of God*

Date:                  Tuesday Evening — January 8, 2019

Readings:          *Jimmy Bowman and Rex Bartley*  
*1 Chronicles 13:1-14 and 15:1-28*

Introduction:

The 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus will be my text. Open your Bibles to that chapter and just hold them open on your laps, as we see what God the Holy Ghost here teaches us. The title of my message is — **NADAB AND ABIHU** — *or* — **LESSONS IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD.**

**Proposition:** The things recorded in these twenty verses of Inspiration teach us that the only way sinners can come to, worship, and be accepted with God is by faith in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron, God's high priest.

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- They had been ceremonially consecrated as priests unto the Lord (Leviticus 8-9).
- They had seen Moses and Aaron go together into the holy place.
- Nadab and Abihu were among those upon whom Moses and Aaron had pronounced God's blessing.
- They had seen the visible symbol of the glory of the Lord in the fire that consumed the sacrifice.
- Then, the next day, Nadab and Abihu were consumed by the fire of God's wrath in the court of the Lord's house, as they carried out their priestly functions, leading Israel in worship. — That is how Leviticus chapter ten begins.

(Leviticus 10:1-2) “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. (2) And there went out

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fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”

**OBVIOUS LESSONS**

1<sup>st</sup> — What an awesome, astounding way for a day in the house of God to begin! Without question, **there are many very important lessons for us to learn from this chapter.**

1. **Grace does not run in bloodlines.** — Though Aaron was their father, though Moses was their uncle, though Miriam was their aunt, Nadab and Abihu perished under the wrath of God!

(John 1:11-13) “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of

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the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

2. **Grace cannot be obtained by religious rituals.**

— Sacramentalism is, perhaps, the most damning heresy ever perpetrated upon the souls of men in the name of God! **You cannot obtain God’s salvation by the outward ordinances of divine worship!**

- Nadab and Abihu were circumcised in their flesh, but uncircumcised at heart!
- They kept the passover, but did not know Christ our Passover!
- They wore the garments of the priesthood, but never knew God’s High Priest!
- They went through consecration ceremonies, but knew nothing of consecration to God.
- They had blood on their ears, their thumbs, and their toes, but none in their hearts!

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3. **Multitudes tread the courts of God's house, go through the outward services of religious devotion, and engage in the service of religion with great zeal, who yet perish under the wrath of God!** — O, my soul, be warned! A mere form of godliness, be it ever so precisely orthodox may carry you to hell in fine garb and with great pageantry, but it will still carry you to hell! Nadab and Abihu were priests ordained by Moses.

(Matthew 7:13-15) “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: (14) Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

(Matthew 7:21-23) “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of

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heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

**COMMANDED NOT**

2<sup>nd</sup> — We read in verse 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.*” — **In all matters of doctrine and worship, if God doesn’t command it, it is forbidden.** They offered strange fire which the Lord forbade.

These two sons of Aaron, by an act of willful, calculated, deliberate rebellion, rejected the counsel

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of God, and dared to approach him with strange fire, in direct violation of his Word.

1. **They came at the wrong time**, according to their own whim, not on the day of atonement, when God required that the fire be brought into the holy place (Leviticus 16:1-2). — **You don't come to God on your terms or when you decide to come. Sinners come to God when he calls** (Psalms 65:4; 110:3).

(Leviticus 16:1-2) “And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; (2) And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy *place* within the veil before the mercy seat, which *is* upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.”

2. **They came to the wrong place**, the open court (v. 4), not the holy of holies (Leviticus 16:11-13). —

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**The only place of mercy is Christ the Mercyseat! The only place of grace is the throne of grace.**

(Leviticus 16:11-13) “And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which *is* for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which *is* for himself: (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.”

3. **They came without Aaron**, without God’s high priest. — All who vainly imagine that they come to God at their time and by their choice always come without Christ!

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4. **They brought their own fire**, not the fire from off the altar before the Lord, not the fire which came down from heaven (Leviticus 16:12). — **All worshippers bring strange fire to God!**
  
5. **They were consumed in the wrath of God!**

**FAITH IN CHRIST**

3<sup>rd</sup> — Be sure you understand what the Holy Spirit here teaches us. It is a lesson repeated numerous times in the Book of God. — **If we would come to God, we must come to him in the way he has prescribed, ordained, and revealed.** This is exactly what we read in 1 Chronicles 13 and 15.

- We cannot worship God upon an altar of our own making.
- We cannot come to God with the fire of our own kindling.
- We cannot bring the censor of our own incense.

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**Blessed be his name, there is a way of access to God. We can come to the holy Lord God with the assurance of acceptance with him by the blood of Christ!** — But the only way sinners can come to God and be accepted of him is by faith in his dear Son (Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:19-22). Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all who come to God by him. But if you try to climb up to heaven by any other means or by incorporating something of your own making with Christ (Nadab and Abihu, as we shall see, brought the sin-offering God required; but with it they brought their own fire!), God will consume you in his holy wrath for trampling under your feet the blood of his dear Son! — **Remember Uzza!**

- Christ alone is our Sin-offering!
- Christ alone is our High Priest!
- Christ alone is the Sacrifice which by which the fire of God's hot wrath and holy justice is satisfied (Leviticus 9).

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- Christ alone has incense acceptable to God (1 John 2:1-2).

**PEACE IN BELIEVING**

4<sup>th</sup> — **Faith in Christ gives us peace in the midst of heartache and trouble** (v. 3).

(Leviticus 10:3) “Then Moses said unto Aaron, This *is it* that the LORD spake (**At Sinai**), 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.”

“Observe what effect grace had upon the mind of Moses. No doubt the awful event struck terror and dismay in every beholder. But while some trembled Moses adored. **It is sweet in our afflictions to eye the LORD’S appointment, and depend upon it. As long as we are enabled to keep in view divine wisdom, we shall never**

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**despond by human sufferings.** — Observe also the pious frame of Aaron’s mind. No doubt his soul was convulsed with agony. It must have been visible in his very looks. Yet Aaron held his peace.” — *Robert Hawker*

Nadab and Abihu may have been very impressive to men in their religious performances, but what they did in offering their strange fire was to spit in God’s face. — Their religion was nothing short of painted blasphemy, because there was nothing in it that sanctified God’s name, nothing in it that honored God. There was nothing in it that glorified God before the people.

**The only way we can sanctify God in worship, the only way we can honor him, the only way we can glorify him is by faith in Christ.** — Yes, we would honor him in our lives; but we cannot do so. We would sanctify him in our services; but our best services are full of sin. We would glorify our God

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with every thought, every word, every deed, and with every second of our lives. But that we cannot do, except by faith in his Son. Nothing else honors him! Nothing else glorifies him! Nothing else sets him apart as God, but Christ and redemption by his blood.

— **Faith involves confession, repentance, submission, and trust.**

(Jeremiah 9:23-24) “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: (24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.”

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification,

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and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

God’s glory is redemption by Christ. And he is glorified only when we come to him by faith in Christ. **All acts of will-worship are but acts of rebellion against God.** We will either worship God in accordance with his Word or we will perish under his wrath!

(Hebrews 12:25) “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven.”

- **Baptism** (immersion) must be performed in the way he has prescribed. To alter God’s ordinance is to despise his Word and pervert the gospel it

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portrays, proclaiming that righteousness can be had some other way!

- **The Lord's Supper** must be eaten in the way he has prescribed (Bread and Wine). To alter the ordinance is to despise his Word and pervert the gospel pictured in it, declaring that the incarnation and death of Christ as our God-man Substitute was not necessary!

Now look at the last line of verse 3. It is written for a reason. — “**And Aaron held his peace.**” — What an astounding statement! Aaron took one look at his lost, rebel sons and another at his glorified God, seeing that what God had done he had done because his sons had despised God's Son, and he held his peace.

**So it shall be in the last day.** Our God and Savior shall, in that great and terrible day, point to the unbelieving as objects of his just displeasure and say, “*Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire!*” And the

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redeemed of the Lord shall respond, as the smoke of their torments ascends up to heaven, “*Hallelujah!*” Yes, the righteous shall rejoice when, in righteous judgment God washes his feet in the blood of the wicked (Psalm 58:10). The glory of God will be so fully and perfectly manifest that it shall hide all else from our view. His glory will cause us to cry, “*Hallelujah!*” (Revelation 19:3). — The torments of the damned will cause no sorrow among the redeemed. We shall hold our peace, and more. We shall sing the praises of our God in the exercise of his righteous judgments.

**As it shall be in the last day, it should be now.** Let us humbly bow to God our Savior, who performs all things for us (Romans 15:13). He is too wise to err, too strong to fail, and too good to do wrong!

(Romans 15:13) “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may

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abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

**THE FUNERAL**

5<sup>th</sup> — Verses 4-7 give us an account of the funeral of these two rebels. I’ve conducted a good many such funerals. How little is said! Devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation for him (Acts 8:2). But Nadab and Abihu died like Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:6-10) and were burned by the command of God as unbelieving rebels outside the camp. **How striking the difference that is made between them and the just who are translated and never taste death!**

(Revelation 14:13) “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

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But of Nadab and Abihu we read...

(Leviticus 10:4-7) “And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. (5) So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said. (6) And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled. (7) And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD *is* upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.”

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**Moses' command appears strange, even harsh, at first glance.** But there was a special, specific reason for it. Verse 7 explains it. — **Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar were God's priests.** The anointing oil of the Lord was upon them. They were public men. They represented the people before God and God before the people. Therefore, they were not allowed to show any parental or brotherly tenderness at the loss of Nadab and Abihu. Like Ezekiel, in the loss of his wife (Ezekiel 24:16-24), they stood as a sign before all Israel declaring, The ways of the Lord are right. — **There was something more important than their great, terrible pain.**

- The Glory of God.
- The People of God.

**LEAD BY EXAMPLE**

6<sup>th</sup> — Read verses 8-11 and learn that **we must lead by example**, by example putting a difference between that which is holy and that which is profane.

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(Leviticus 10:8-11) “And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, (9) Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations: (10) And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; (11) And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.”

**How often it is that seasons of great heaviness, great sorrow, and great trouble are the times of our learning.** So it was here. The Lord God came to Aaron in his great pain and taught him how to be a better, more useful servant in the house of God. The essence of the lesson was this. — **If we would lead others to know and worship our God, we must be**

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**calm and steady, serving him with clear minds of understanding and judgment.**

- We must not be intoxicated with the wine of Babylon's fornications.
- We must not be drunk with the strong drink of self will.
- Rather, we must be filled with the Spirit, that we may distinguish between the holy and the profane, between the clean and the unclean.

**SWEET ASSURANCE**

7<sup>th</sup> — **In the midst of great heaviness, sorrow, and trouble, the Lord God sent Aaron and his sons a word of sweet assurance** (vv. 12-15).

(Leviticus 10:12-15) “And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for

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it is most holy: (13) And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it is thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the LORD made by fire: for so I am commanded. (14) And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for *they be* thy due, and thy sons' due, *which* are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel. (15) The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave *it for* a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute forever; as the LORD hath commanded.”

Why does Moses here repeat, almost verbally, the instructions given in chapter six? He does so because he who is our God is a God full of compassion.

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I can picture Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, as they stood speechless before God, before his servant Moses, and before the congregation of the Lord. **I think I can almost hear their thoughts.** — The sin and rebellion of Nadab and Abihu was no private thing. Our household has publicly dishonored God. We are now no longer fit to serve the Lord. How can we lead this people in the worship of God? How can we expect anyone to pay any attention to us, when our own family has despised our God and perished in a public display of his wrath?

I am certain it was for just this reason that the Lord sent his prophet to Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Lest they should suppose that they had forfeited their privileges by that awful sin committed by Nadab and Abihu, they were here assured that all their privileges remained as full as ever.

**Sweet consolation this is!** Aaron and his sons, in their saddest hour, were reminded that the mercy,

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love, and grace of the immutable God are immutable! With this sweet assurance of unbroken, unbreakable acceptance the Lord graciously bound up their wounded hearts. He wiped away their bitter tears by assuring them of his unvarying and unchangeable love! He manifested himself in their bitterest hour as their reconciled God. Thus, he poured the oil of his grace into their hearts!

O my brother, my sister, my friend, so troubled and vexed with heartache and trial, do not ever imagine that your trials, be they ever so great and ever so bitter, are an indication of God's displeasure. They are not!

My soul through many changes goes.

His love no variation knows!

**JUSTICE SATISFIED**

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8<sup>th</sup> — In verses 16-20 we see that **there is only one sin offering by which the law and justice of God are satisfied**, and that one offering is our crucified Christ.

(Leviticus 10:16-18) “And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron *which were left alive*, saying, (17) Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it *is* most holy, and *God* hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD? (18) Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy *place*: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy *place*, as I commanded.”

Moses here chides Aaron and his sons for burning and not eating the sin offering, according to the plain letter of the law. But Aaron’s reply displayed the

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deep reverence of his heart for his God and Savior, the true sin offering. Read it with me in verse 19.

(Leviticus 10:19) “And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and *if* I had eaten the sin offering today, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?”

**Aaron said to Moses**, — The sin offering was the offering made for and by Nadab and Abihu, who brought with it their strange fire. If we had eaten it, we would have suggested to all the people that their offering was acceptable to God, we would have been as guilty as they, and we would have been slain by the fire of God’s wrath, too.

(Leviticus 10:20) “And when Moses heard *that*, he was content.”

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Though the letter of the law (which kills) was broken, the spirit of the law (which is life) was fulfilled. Being circumcised in heart, Aaron worshipped God in Spirit and in truth, trusted Christ alone, and placed no confidence in the flesh. He looked beyond the typical sin offering to the true Sin Offering, and Moses (the law and all its demands) was content!

- **The Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin for us, is our only Sin Offering!**

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(1 Peter 2:24) “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

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(1 Peter 3:18) “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”

- **The Son of God, our all-glorious Christ is the effectual Sin Offering!**

(Isaiah 53:6-11) “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (8) He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. (9) And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither

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*was any* deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

(Daniel 9:24) “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, <sup>1</sup> to finish the transgression, and <sup>2</sup> to make an end of sins, and <sup>3</sup> to make reconciliation for iniquity, and <sup>4</sup> to bring in everlasting righteousness, and <sup>5</sup> to seal up the vision and prophecy, and <sup>6</sup> to anoint the most Holy.”

- Be wise, now. — **Like Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar, lay your hands upon the head of this Sin Offering, trust the Lord Jesus Christ**

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**alone, and like them you shall stand accepted  
in the courts of the Lord's house forever.**

Amen!