

## The Mistake of Nadab and Abihu

The people of Israel spent about six months making the tabernacle and all its furniture. After the tabernacle was finished, God gave them instructions for offering sacrifices to Him. Leviticus 8 explains that Moses then spent seven days preparing Aaron and his sons to act as priests for the Israelites. Aaron only had four sons at this time: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. So there were only five men who could serve as priests in the tabernacle.

Moses offered special sacrifices for Aaron and his sons, and then sprinkled them with anointing oil and blood so they could officially become the priests of God. For seven days Aaron and his sons had to stay in the tabernacle, night and day, until the week of special preparation was over. The people of Israel were anxious to begin using the tabernacle and bring their offerings to Aaron and his sons. Now at last, the day had come when the people could finally use the tabernacle for worship!



### The Priests' First Day

Leviticus 9 describes the first day Aaron and his sons began operating as priests working in the tabernacle. Aaron offered a sin offering for himself first. He then offered sin, burnt, peace and meal offerings for the people. It was an exciting time as the people saw the altar of burnt offering being used and their sacrifices placed upon it. Moses and Aaron went into the sanctuary (the meeting tent) and then came back out to bless the

people. To everyone's amazement, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and then fire came from the tent and consumed the offering on the altar. When the people saw this, they shouted and fell on their faces before the Lord.

### Nadab and Abihu Offer Strange Fire

Unfortunately, not everyone took this first day seriously. Aaron's two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, took their special bowls for offering incense and put some hot coals in the bowls. God had made it very clear in the instructions to Aaron and his sons that they must take hot coals from the altar of the burnt offering for their bowls. Nadab and Abihu did not bother to follow the directions and took their hot coals from somewhere else. They then put incense in their bowls and attempted to burn their incense in the tabernacle. God was very displeased with Nadab and Abihu because they did not follow His directions, so fire came from the tabernacle and burned up Nadab and Abihu, and they died before the Lord.

### We Must Carefully Follow God's Word

Moses said to Aaron, *"This is what the LORD has said, 'I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified.'"* (Lev. 10:3) Aaron was very upset at the death of his two sons, but he did not argue or complain. He understood that his sons had made a big mistake on the first day they were supposed to be priests for the

people of Israel. Aaron realised that when we worship God and are involved in His service, we must carefully follow the directions He has given us in His word. What a lesson for us teaching us how important it is to read the Bible carefully and learn to follow the instructions God has given us on how we should worship Him today!



When one of our family members or close friends dies, we usually cry and are upset for some time. Back in Moses' time, it was normal to tear your clothes and let your hair hang loose to show everyone you were mourning for someone. But in this case, Moses commanded Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar that they must not show the normal signs of mourning. Moses wanted it to be clear to the people of Israel that Aaron and his two remaining sons understood why God had killed Nadab and Abihu, and they agreed

with the principle that we must carefully follow God's instructions for worship. Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar did as Moses commanded them.

## Priests Must Not Drink Wine When They Serve

A few minutes after the bodies of Nadab and Abihu were carried out of the camp, God commanded Aaron, *"Drink no wine or strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting, lest you die."* (Lev. 10:9) This gives the impression that Nadab and Abihu had probably been drinking too much wine or beer and were drunk when they failed to follow God's instructions and were killed. What an important lesson for us to remember. When people get drunk and make mistakes because they are not in their right mind, God still holds them responsible for the things they do and say when drunk! Let's make sure we never make that mistake even though so many people in the world around us get drunk all the time. Remember the warning of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:9-10: *"Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God."*

The death of Nadab and Abihu must have shocked the people of Israel in the midst of their rejoicing on the first day the tabernacle began operating. God knew it was really important for everyone to learn that they must treat His laws seriously. It is very difficult for God to change us into people who show kindness, mercy, faithfulness and patience. If we carefully follow His laws and do as He says, He will slowly change us into people who learn to live like Him so He can one day give us eternal life. Let's learn from Nadab and Abihu to carefully read our Bibles and try our best to follow the laws of God so He can make us ready for His kingdom.

