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## **NADAB AND ABIHU CUT OFF.**

– LEV. 10:1-11. – AUGUST 10. –

**Golden Text.** – "Let us watch and be sober." – I Thess. 5:6.

ALTHOUGH not directly so stated, there is sufficient ground for the inference that the sin for which Nadab and Abihu were smitten by the Lord, was committed while they were under the influence of intoxicating liquor. The basis for this inference is that immediately following the description of their wrong doing and its punishment comes the Lord's injunction, – "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; ...that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." – Vs. 9,10.

The two young men smitten in the prime of life, were Aaron's oldest sons; there were two younger brothers. All had just been consecrated to the priesthood, under their father Aaron as the chief priest, by the direction of their uncle Moses, carrying out the divine arrangement. With many advantages every way, they had corresponding responsibilities, as well as grand prospects for the future, all of which [R3055 : page 237] were destroyed because of their lack of reverence for the Lord – their carelessness respecting his regulations, and the vows which they had just taken upon themselves as his special servants. Their experience furnishes an excellent temperance lesson. How many others in highly favored situations in life have come to disrespect the Almighty's arrangements through the use of intoxicating liquors! – how many have similarly blighted their prospects in life, hastened their death, and brought sorrow upon their kindred!

The *Chicago Tribune* has collected statistics respecting the murders in the United States, between the years 1891 and 1901, and declares that 53,000 of these murders resulted more or less directly

from the use of intoxicating liquors. The statistics of the State of Massachusetts for the year 1895 show that over ninety-six percent of those convicted for crime in that State, were users of strong drinks. In 1899 the *New Voice* obtained the testimony of one thousand jailors (whose terms of office would aggregate more than six thousand years of experience), and their returns showed that seventy-two percent of the criminals then in jails under their charge, were brought there by drink. The *American Grocer* using government statistics (April 1901) figures the total bill of this country for liquid refreshments during the year at \$1,228,674,925. And of this amount it figures that alcoholic liquors cost \$1,059,563,787, – the remainder representing the sum spent for tea, cocoa, coffee, soda water and the like. Some one has calculated that the money spent for alcoholic liquor would equal a pile of silver dollars 1754 miles high; and the *Christian Observer* remarks, "It would take ten men with scoop shovels to throw away money as fast as we are wasting it for grog."

In the presence of such a stupendous evil, blighting earthly prospects for so many, depriving so many of the reasonable comforts and necessities of life, disqualifying so many for thoughts and deeds of purity and goodness, and accomplishing instead so much misery and sorrow, what Christian could feel interested in the traffic? What Christian would not be willing to forego personal rights and liberties in connection with this terrible adversary of the race and rejoice in any self-denials it might cause him, even though he might feel himself stronger than the majority of men, and thoroughly capable of withstanding its insidious attacks and undermining tendencies as respects character, etc? It is not for us at the present time to make "sumptuary laws" for the world, nor in any manner to attempt to rule the world; but as surely as we believe that when the Lord's Kingdom shall have fully come it will thoroughly chain up this monster evil, as one of the most powerful of Satan's agencies, just so surely should all who so believe show to others by precept and example their opposition to this curse.

There is, however, a deeper lesson for us in the experiences of the two priests under consideration. As they were members of the tribe of Levi, so those whom they typified would be members of the "household of faith." As they went further than this and consecrated to the priesthood and were truly and properly accepted of the Lord as priests, their antitypes [R3055 : page 238] must be persons, classes, who have come under the terms of the "royal priesthood" in the full, proper sense of the word. They do not represent merely nominal Christians – merely such as imagine themselves consecrated to the Lord through a misunderstanding, as is the case with many in the nominal church of today: they represent persons, classes, in the true, consecrated Church of the Lord.

The Scriptural account does not specify respecting the wrong doing of Nadab and Abihu. The expression "strange fire" does not clearly indicate to us whether their wrong doing consisted in using an incense other than the kind that the Lord had prescribed, or whether they used it at the wrong time, or in a wrong place, or whether the fire which enkindled the incense was taken from some other place than the altar, as the Lord had prescribed, or whether their incense was repulsive to the Lord because the offerers were in a state of intoxication – possessed of a wrong spirit. The latter, as we have suggested, seems to be implied in the declaration of the 10th verse respecting holy and unholy, clean and unclean conditions of approaching the Lord.

The great lesson here for the royal priesthood is not so much in respect to intoxicating liquors, as in respect to a wrong spirit and unclean condition of mind and heart in approaching the Lord. We are bound to suppose that those who have made a consecration to the Lord and are seeking to "cleans[e] themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1), will not be guilty of literal intoxication. Those who have received to any degree the spirit of the truth and have come to appreciate in any measure the spirit of a sound mind, surely realize that in our soberest

and most favorable condition, our minds are none too sound; – they realize that continually the Lord's people have need of his assisting grace supporting their imperfect judgments, and they could not ask for such grace to help were they not also using their best endeavors to preserve and exercise what sense they have naturally.

The lesson for the consecrated, therefore, is in accord with what the Apostle has written, "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. 4:1.) Our consecration through faith in the Lord has brought us under the anointing of the holy spirit, has permitted us to enter into the holy and to enjoy the privileges and favors of those "deep things of God" which none can see or appreciate without the anointing of the spirit. Outsiders – not of the consecrated and accepted class, not of the royal priesthood, the peculiar people, and who therefore have no privilege in the way of offering incense to the Lord, have no such opportunities as we of offending the Lord by offering him unacceptable sacrifices, – unacceptable prayers, unacceptable services. As we do not know in which way these two sons of Aaron offended against the divine arrangement or whether they both offended alike, we may lay to ourselves, as the antitypical priesthood, lessons all along the line.

(1) When we approach the Lord we are not to come to him under the influence of an evil spirit, intoxicated with the spirit of the world or of Babylon, by whose wine it is declared all the nations have been made drunken. – Rev. 14:8; 18:3.

(2) When we would approach the Lord even in a right spirit, we must make sure that we have the proper incense which he has stipulated will be acceptable to him, whose ingredients represent the perfections of our Lord Jesus reckonedly appropriated to us.

(3) Additionally we must be sure that we do not get fire for our incense from any other quarter than from the altar – consecrated fire or zeal, sanctified by the merit of our Lord's sacrifice.

In "*Tabernacle Shadows of the Better Sacrifices*" we have offered the suggestion that these two priests possibly represent two different classes in the church – two classes amongst those who have made consecration to the royal priesthood and have been accepted, both of which classes will fall from the priesthood. We have suggested that one may represent the class who will die the Second Death (Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26,27) and that the other may represent the class who lose their membership in the royal priesthood because of an insufficiency of zeal to make their calling and election sure; but who, nevertheless, are at heart loyal to God and will be "saved so as by fire," through great tribulation. (Rev. 7:14.) True there is nothing in the type to indicate any difference between these two, nothing to indicate any hope in the future for either of them. We think it not unreasonable, however, to surmise that the type merely shows that both men lost their standing in the priestly company by reason of failure to rightly appreciate their privileges. We are assured that all these matters are typical, yet we find it difficult to suppose this type to mean that one-half of all who consecrate to the Lord as members of the royal priesthood, will suffer the Second Death. Yet this would seem to be the only alternative interpretation, if we reject the thought that the two men merely represented the two classes who lose the priesthood without indicating their proportion as respects the whole. The two should have a meaning; – either as one half of the whole or as two classes. We accept the latter view; because the Scriptures clearly show two classes who will lose the royal priesthood, and because the other proposition, that they represented one-half of the consecrated lost in Second Death, seems to us wholly untenable.

In any event the lesson to those who desire to be faithful to their privileges, is a strong one, having made our consecration to the Lord, having received of his anointing, let us seek carefully to "make our calling and our election sure" to the blessings and privileges of the future – as the dispensers of divine bounties to mankind in general, in the Millennial Kingdom, associated with our Lord. Let us take all the lessons out of this that we can, as respects due reverence to him with

whom we have to do, and due appreciation of the proper spirit, the proper incense [R3055 : page 239] and the proper zeal to be used in coming before the Lord, that we may abide in his love and favor.

### **MISCONCEPTIONS CAUSE DIFFICULTIES TO MANY.**

Those who do not see with us the great divine plan of the ages, with its wonderful opportunities of the future for the blessing of all the families of the earth; – who do not see with us that the present age is merely for the selection of the royal priesthood for the future work of glory and blessing of mankind; – who do not see with us that the Jewish system with its priesthood, sacrifices, incense, etc., etc., were merely types or shadows of the higher things in God's plan now being developed; – such are apt to look at the statements of this lesson with astonishment; and are apt to feel that God acted in a very arbitrary manner toward these two priests in striking them down in death, because of some failure to approach him in the prescribed manner. They fail to see that the Lord [R3056 : page 239] was instituting types which must be carried out to the very letter, and which must illustrate the exactness of his dealings with the "royal priesthood."

Looking at the matter in a wrong light, they not only see the two men suddenly deprived of life, but they reason that if God's anger thus destroyed them – then, the very next moment, according to their theory, they would appear at God's bar for their eternal sentence; and since they could not believe that the two men who were unfit to live amongst men were any more fit to live in heaven, they feel obliged to conclude, according to their theory, that the Lord not only suddenly smote them down as respects their earthly life, but additionally turned them over for an eternity of torture at the hands of devils. Those who really believe this misrepresentation of the divine plan must necessarily be unfavorably influenced by it in their own dealings with their children, their neighbors, etc., – their ideas of justice and of love, etc., must necessarily be blunted by such misconceptions of the divine character and procedure.

To our understanding of the teachings of the Lord's Word, on the contrary, there would be no such difficulty as this. Nadab and Abihu were men, members of the fallen race, all of whom are under sentence of death. They had been merely reckonedly, not actually, justified, because "the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin." They were, therefore, although typically occupying the place of priests, not really different from the remainder of the world – for they had received no release from the Adamic condemnation. Hence, since their position and all were typical, so also their death under the circumstances could mean no greater loss to them than death under other circumstances would mean to their fellows – they merely went into the tomb a little sooner than they otherwise would have done. But long centuries after their death and the death of their fellows, – better and worse, – in God's appointed time, the great antitypical sin-offering appeared; – and the great antitypical Priest, offered the great sacrifice for sins accomplished at Calvary, and the whole world was brought back from the sentence of sin and death – including Nadab and Abihu, Aaron and Moses, and all the remainder of our race, – including also us who were not yet born.

The Atonement day sacrifices begun by our Lord and Redeemer, continue; and we, his called ones of this Gospel age, are privileged to participate in the sacrificing work with our great High Priest, as the sons of Aaron participated with their father. Soon the entire work of sacrificing will be at an end; soon the great High Priest will finish the work of making an atonement, and will then, as did the priest in the type, come out to the altar and lift up his hands and bless all the people – the dead and dying world. The day of blessing will be a long one, because "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." It will be quite sufficient to accomplish the purposes intended, of lifting up, helping, strengthening, blessing, bringing to full restitution, all who will come into harmony with the Father. In that day Nadab and Abihu with others of mankind, who have done better and who have done worse, will be on trial before the judgment seat of Christ, – the Church, the royal priesthood, being associated with Him in the judgment. (I Cor. 6:2.)

In proportion as any have had favorable opportunities and used them unfavorably, in similar proportion have they degraded themselves so that they will proportionately experience stripes and difficulties in getting started upon the great "highway of holiness," which will then be opened up for the whole world of mankind, – that they may return thereon to the Lord and to eternal life; and only those who fail to come back under such gracious opportunities, into full harmony with the gracious divine plan, will be destroyed irrevocably in the Second Death.

### **"LET US WATCH AND BE SOBER."**

The Apostle's exhortation in our Golden Text is well worthy of being continually borne in mind by all who would make their calling and election sure to a place in the glorious priesthood of the future – "Let us watch and be sober." Let us watch in the sense of taking careful notice of all the directions which the Lord our God has given us, respecting what would not be acceptable service to him. Let us watch ourselves, striving to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of the great High Priest, who was, we are sure, right and acceptable to the Father in every particular. Let us be sober – not only not literally intoxicated with ardent spirits, but let us not be intoxicated with "the spirit of the world," or the spirit of Babylon, churchianity. Let us have the spirit of Christ, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of meekness, the spirit of gentleness, the spirit of love for God, for our fellows, and for all men, seeking as we have opportunity, to do them good. Let us be sober in the sense that we will not be frivolous; that while happy, joyous in the Lord, free from the anxious cares that are upon many others through misapprehension of our Father's character and plan, we may, nevertheless, be sober in the sense of earnest, appreciative of present opportunities and privileges in connection with the Lord's service; – not thoughtlessly negligent, letting opportunities and privileges slip through our hands to be afterwards regretted.

