

# Sermon #30 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title:                    **STRANGE FIRE**  
                                 **COUNTERFEIT RELIGION**

Text:                    Leviticus 10:1-3

Subject:                *Counterfeit Christianity*

Date:                    Sunday Morning — January 13, 2019

Reading:                *2 Thessalonians 2:1-13*  
                                 *Revelation 20:1-15*

Introduction:

**The history of mankind is a history that should be written in and read with tears.** The slime of the serpent runs through every page. **Ours is a history of rebellion, sin, and apostasy.** Sin ruined man; and ruined man spoils everything.

- Put him in a position of highest dignity, and he will degrade himself.
- Endow him with the greatest possible privileges, and he will abuse them.
- Shower blessings upon him without limit, and he will show himself ungrateful.
- Put him in the most impressive environment, and he will corrupt it.

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Honesty compels anyone who reads the history of our race to acknowledge that what I have said, painful and shameful as it is, is nonetheless so. **Everything touched by our foul, leprous hands is quickly defiled.** The nature of man, in its fairest forms, and under the most favorable circumstances, is corruption and sin, nothing more. So it has been ever since the sin and fall of our father Adam.

Ours is a history of failure, constantly repeated failure, — rebellion, constantly repeated rebellion, — apostasy, constantly, repeated apostasy. It has been so from the beginning.

**ADAM** — When God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden everything was perfect, until Adam ruined it by revolting from his almighty, wise, and good Creator (Genesis 3)

**NOAH** — When God, in electing love and sovereign mercy, had preserved Noah and his family from the flood of his wrath and placed them in a new world,

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Noah was soon found in a drunken stupor (Genesis 9).

**ISRAEL** — When Israel was, by God’s outstretched arm, brought out of Egypt and fed by manna from heaven, the ransomed nation lusted for the leeks of darkness. When the Lord God brought them into the land of Canaan, they “*forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth*” (Judges 2: 13).

**SOLOMON** — When Solomon, the wisest of our fallen race, was placed at the very summit of earthly power and glory, with untold wealth at his feet and all the resources of the world at his command, “*his wives turned away his heart after other gods*” (1 Kings 11).

**EARLY CHURCH** — No sooner had the blessings of the gospel begun to be preached in all the earth than it became necessary for the Holy Spirit to warn the church to be on guard against the “*grievous wolves*” of freewill, works religion, the “*apostasy*” of

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the professed church from the gospel of God's grace and glory in Christ, and the corrupting of the Word and worship of God in the name of righteousness and true godliness (Acts 20:29; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Peter 3; Jude 4).

**THE END** — According to the Revelation given to John, the history of our race will be concluded with greater shame than we have yet seen or imagined, once Satan has been loosed for a little season to wreak havoc in the world (Revelation 20:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

**Proposition:** Man is a fallen creature who continues to fall until he falls into hell, unless God steps in to stop him, a rebel who continues to rebel until he is cast into hell, unless God converts him by his grace.

These facts, to some degree, prepare us for the things recorded in the opening words of Leviticus 10.

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(Leviticus 10:1-3) “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 fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. 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.”

**What a contrast this is to the scene that closed the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter!** — There everything was done “*as the Lord commanded*” and the result was, a manifestation of God’s glory. Here something is done which “*the Lord commanded them not*” and the result is judgment. — The echo of the shout of victory had hardly died away before the elements of apostasy and spurious worship were prepared! — No sooner were the sons of Aaron consecrated as priests of God than they deliberately abandoned the worship and service

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of the Almighty! — No sooner were those priests inaugurated than they grievously failed in the discharge of their priestly duties! — Nadab and Abihu “*offered strange fire before the LORD*” and perished under the manifest wrath of God!

**What great wonders and miraculous things these two men had seen and experienced!**

- God’s Wonders in the Land of Ham
- Crossing the Red Sea
- The Giving of the Law at Sinai

**What great privileges they had enjoyed!** These sons of Aaron were present when the glory of the Lord was revealed, when the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice upon the altar! They had worshipped God on that momentous day with Moses and Aaron! — Yet they perished under the wrath of God!

**Now, learn from them this lesson, this lesson that needs to be sounded around the world in this day**

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**of charismatic tomfoolery.** — Miracles will never produce grace, not even true miracles, let alone the pretense miracles of Satan's ambassadors who flood our land! Miracles do not produce faith! Miracles cannot convince men of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. Only the Spirit of God can do that; and he does it by the preaching of the gospel.

The title of my message is — **STRANGE FIRE** — **COUNTERFEIT RELIGION.**

**Divisions:** I want to call your attention to three things in these three verses. Let me show you three things about Nadab and Abihu.

1. Their Sin
2. Their Judgment
3. Their Lesson

**THEIR SIN**

1<sup>st</sup> — **Our text shows us their sin.** — What was it? What was the failure of these two men? What was

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their crime? What was their sin? Were they spurious priests? Were they mere pretenders? By no means! Nadab and Abihu were genuine sons of Aaron — true members of the priestly family — duly appointed priests. Their vessels of ministry and their priestly garments were exactly such as God required.

What, then, was their sin? Did they stain the curtains of the tabernacle with human blood or pollute the sacred precincts with some crime that shocks moral decency? No.

**Their sin was just this:** *“They offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not”* (v. 1).

**Nadab and Abihu offered fire of their own making before the Lord.** They offered that which the Lord *“commanded them not,”* that which the Lord God had expressly forbidden. Like the sacrifice of Cain, like the prayer of the Pharisee (Luke 18:11), their worship was nothing but will worship, an act of contempt for



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God, a trampling underfoot of the blood of Christ. Their strange fire was a manifestation of self-righteousness, conceit, and rebellion.

**In offering the fire of their own making, Nadab and Abihu displayed an abhorrence of the gift of God. The fire that burned on the altar was God's gift, God's provision, God's work** (Leviticus 16:12). **As such, it was a picture and type of Christ** (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 9:15; John 3:16).

(John 3:16) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

(Romans 6:23) “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

(2 Corinthians 9:15) “Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

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God required the fire he provided (Leviticus 16:12). Nadab and Abihu thought their own fire was good enough. God requires Christ, only Christ; but they despised Christ and said, “Who needs a Substitute? Who needs blood atonement? Who needs an Intercessor? Who needs forgiveness, justification, pardon, reconciliation, and imputed righteousness?” **Like the Jews of Paul’s day and the vast majority of men and women in every age, like some of you, Nadab and Abihu followed after righteousness, but did not obtain righteousness, because they went about to establish their own righteousness, and refused to submit themselves to the righteousness of God in Christ** (Romans 9:31-10:4).

(Romans 9:31-33) “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. 32 Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; 33 As it is written, Behold, I

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lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

(Romans 10:1-4) “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”

**Nadab and Abihu went into the great harlot, Babylon,<sup>1</sup> presuming that they could come to God and worship him as they pleased.**

(Proverbs 9:17-18) “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant. 18 But he

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<sup>1</sup> Babylon is all free will, works religion, all false religion.

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knoweth not that the dead *are* there; *and that* her guests *are* in the depths of hell.”

(Proverbs 7:24-27) “Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. 25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. 26 For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her. 27 Her house *is* the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.”

**THEIR JUDGMENT**

2<sup>nd</sup> — **The Spirit of God tells us of their judgment, the judgment of God upon them.** — “*And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD*” (v. 2).

How deeply solemn! The Lord God dwelt in the midst of his people, to govern, to judge, and to act,

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according to the claims of his nature, in mercy and truth, in grace and righteousness, in love and justice.

**At the end of Leviticus 9 we read, “And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat.” That was God’s acceptance of the true sacrifice. But, here, that same fire is the fire of his wrath and judgment upon two self-righteous priests who despised his sacrifice.**

- The burnt offering went up as a sweet odor. Their “*strange fire*” was rejected as an abomination.
- God was glorified in the burnt offering, but was despised in their “*strange fire.*”

Holiness and justice, righteousness and truth accepted and delighted in that which was a type of Christ and his sacrifice. But that which was the fruit of man’s corrupt will — a will never more hideous and abominable than when engaged in the pretense of worshiping and serving God — was rejected.

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**Nadab and Abihu perished at the hand of him whom they professed to serve.** Like Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), they perished, not because they were consumed by zeal without knowledge, but because they came before God in presumption without fear.

**Nadab and Abihu were killed and sent to hell by the very thing they despised!**

(Luke 20:17-18) “And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18 Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

**That very same Christ who was offered upon God’s altar as the Sacrifice for sin shall sit in judgment upon God’s throne.** He who was the Sacrifice consumed by the fire of God’s wrath will be

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a consuming fire to destroy all who despise him in that great day.

**Nadab and Abihu** “**died before the LORD**”. We read in Revelation 14, “*Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.*”

- In Christ.
- In Grace!
- In Faith!

But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, without Christ, without grace, without faith, without a sacrifice, without hope!

**They were carried out from the presence of God, carried out from the camp of Israel** (v. 4), **and cast away in the place of darkness!** — They were made to eat the fruit of their own way. They were filled with their own devices!

(Proverbs 29:1) “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

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**God will deal with you on the ground you choose.**

(Proverbs 1:23-33) “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32 For the turning away of the simple



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shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

Now, be sure you don't miss this. — **Nadab and Abihu were carried out from the presence of the holy Lord God in their priestly coats** (v. 5). Their priestly garments could not protect them any more than your religious profession and refuge of lies will protect you from the wrath of God (Ecclesiastes 8:10; Isaiah 28:14-20).

(Ecclesiastes 8:10) “And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this *is* also vanity.”

(Isaiah 28:14-28) “Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem. (15) Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and

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with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: (16) Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. (17) Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. (18) And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. (19) From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report. (20) For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it*:

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and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself *in it*.”

**THEIR LESSON**

3<sup>rd</sup> — **In verse 3 we see their lesson.** — The lesson God the Holy Spirit here teaches us by these two men is written in bold, blazing letters in this third verse. — **If we would come to God and be accepted of him, if we would live and not die, we must come to God through the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness alone, we must come to him in a way that sanctifies and glorifies him in all his holy attributes.**

(Leviticus 10:3) “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.”

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**If any man were permitted to defile the sanctuary of the divine presence by “strange fire,” of his own works the very throne of God would be toppled, his honor destroyed, and his righteousness defiled.**  
**— Freewill, works religion is nothing less than the attempt of fallen man to creep into God’s presence in impressive clothes, rape his righteousness, topple his throne, and stab him to death!**

**We are never allowed to introduce our own devices into the worship of God.**

- Infant Baptism
- Ceremonialism/Ritualism
- Contemporary Worship
- Sacramentalism

All such efforts are nothing but “*strange fire*” — the incense of abomination — false worship.

**The same is true regarding every effort of man to produce righteousness for himself.** Man’s very best attempts at righteousness and atonement by the works

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of his own hands and the exercise of his own will are an absolute abomination in the sight of God.

- Decisionism
- Works Righteousness — Works Justification
- Works Holiness — Works Sanctification

**Every sinner saved by the grace of God, knowing the free and full forgiveness of his sins, through the precious, sin-atoning blood of Christ, worships God in spirit and in truth. He rejoices in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh!**

(Philippians 3:1-3) “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

**APPLICATION**

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Come, O weary, helpless, needy sinner, come now to God by Christ! Come, seeking mercy, grace, and eternal life by the merits of Christ alone. — “*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together!*”

(Psalms 34:1-8) “I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad. 3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.”

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**Blessed be God, the time is rapidly approaching when the “strange fire” of freewill works religion will be quenched forever!** The throne of God shall soon cease to be insulted by the incense self-righteousness ascending from the altar of freewill! Soon, all that is spurious shall be abolished, and the whole universe shall be as one great, magnificent temple, in which the only true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, shall be worshipped throughout the endless ages of eternity.

(Philippians 2:9-11) “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: *10* That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; *11* And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Grateful incense thus, ascending

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Ever to the Father's throne;  
Every knee to Jesus bending,  
And Christ confessed with every tongue!

All the glory God receiving!  
Equal honors to the Son!  
In the Son all glory beaming,  
Makes the Godhead's glory known.

By the Spirit's gracious calling,  
Sinners ransomed by the Lamb,  
Crowned with light and joy unfading  
Hail Him as the great "I AM."

How our hearts long for that day! How we pant for the day when God our Savior is honored and worshipped everywhere! Blessed be his name, soon our longing hearts shall have their desire! In that day, we shall confess with Sheba's queen, "*the half was not told me.*"



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**Come now. Join me at the throne of grace, as a sinner seeking mercy by the blood and righteousness of Christ, and join me tomorrow at the throne of glory, singing his everlasting praise.**

(Psalms 115:1) “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth’s sake.”

(Revelation 4:11) “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

(Revelation 5:9-14) “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; *10* And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. *11* And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many

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angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; *12* Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. *13* And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. *14* And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Amen!