

Numbers 3:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

Analysis

Nadab and Abihu's death 'before the LORD' (Leviticus 10:1-2) for offering 'strange fire' demonstrates that God's holiness allows no presumption or innovation in worship. Their sin of adding human creativity to divinely prescribed worship resulted in immediate judgment, establishing the principle that God determines acceptable worship according to His revealed will, not human preference. This has direct application to the regulative principle of worship: God's people should worship Him according to His commands in Scripture, not according to human traditions or innovations.

Historical Context

Nadab and Abihu's sin occurred during the tabernacle's dedication (Leviticus 10:1-2), possibly while intoxicated (Leviticus 10:9 immediately follows with a prohibition against alcohol for serving priests). Their presumptuous addition to prescribed worship rituals brought swift divine judgment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does Nadab and Abihu's judgment inform debates about proper worship practices and the authority of Scripture over tradition?
2. What does their sin teach us about the danger of creativity and innovation in worship that goes beyond biblical prescription?

Interlinear Text

אֵשׁ בְּפְנֵי קָרְבָּן מֵת
fire before the offering
died And Nadab and Abihu before the LORD when they offered fire
H4191 H5070 H30 H6440 H3068 H7126 H784

וְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יְמִדְבָּר סִינַי בְּמִדְבָּר יְהוָה בְּמִדְבָּר
and they had no children in the wilderness of Sinai in the wilderness before the LORD strange
H1121 H5514 H4057 H3068 H6440 H2114

וְאַלְעַזָּר וְאַתָּה יְתַמֵּם
and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office
H385 H499 H3547 H0

עַל פְּנֵי אֲבִיכֶם אֲבָרְן
before their father of Aaron before
H175 H1 H6440 H5921

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 26:61 (References Lord): And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD.

