

Today, we are in Part 3 of a four part series called; "Ignite Your Faith." What better way to ignite our faith but when it is 115 degrees out!

When I was in college, many of my co-graduates went into the nuclear power business, building plants around the world. It was potentially dangerous. In 1986, after ignoring the seriousness of trying to harness nuclear fission and ignoring a manual that was there to protect them, 4500 workers were killed from radiation. 1000's have died since. Today we are going to look at a story of two men who were exposed to a threat that was far more dangerous than a nuclear melt-down.

1. God's holiness is dangerous if approached in a wrong way.

It is important to review God's story in order to understand this.

Background

3500 years ago Israel in Egypt

- Abraham called by God from modern day Iraq.
- Nation to reveal God
- Abraham goes to modern day Israel
- Isaac – Jacob – 12 sons
- Joseph hacks off brothers – sold to slave traders
- Sold in Egypt
- Put in Jail 12 years
- Interprets Pharaoh's dream and 2nd command
- Reunited to brothers because of famine
- 400 years in Egypt
- 1 ½ million people
- Pharaoh overwhelmed and releases after 10 plagues with Moses
- Red Sea crossing to the dessert of Sinai

The people rejoice...they sing...and then they realize Moses is taking them deeper into the desert.

Leviticus 17:3 ... they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" 4 Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people?"

God gave Moses an answer. The people would learn to Worship the Lord.

Romans 6:13 .. offer yourselves to God, as those who have been

brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

God took the Israelite out of Egypt so He could get Egypt out of his people. There was nothing in the dessert except what God provide; water & manna...a few quails. God is the provider, not Pharaoh.

He instructed them to build a "portable cathedral", calling it a tabernacle. It would be a meeting place with God. The tabernacle area was the size of a football field outlined with curtains. At the end was an area called the Tent of Meeting. It had two rooms outlined in Acacia wood and 4000 pounds of gold and silver to brighten it up. The first room was the place for all the gold worship utensils. The room was separated by a beautiful woven curtain colored in shades of blue, white, black and red. It had a outline of a lion on it. Behind this curtain was called the Holy of Holies, the exact place of God's presence. This room contained the Ark of the Covenant, which held the tablets of the 10 commandments. **Remember, God brought them into the desert so he could get closer to them.** Before he could teach the world he had to teach them His plan.

God selected Aaron, Moses brother, and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu to be the first priests. They would be the first to get up close and personal with God. Not since Adam and Eve had anyone got this close to God. So, for seven days they were set apart to be prepared for God's service. He even gave them beautiful clothes to wear, adorned with gold, silver, and jewels.

Lev 9:1-4 On the eighth day Moses summoned Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. 2 He said to Aaron, "Take a bull calf for your sin offering and a ram for your burnt offering, both without defect, and present them before the LORD. 3 Then say to the Israelites: 'Take a male goat for a sin offering, a calf and a lamb — both a year old and without defect — for a burnt offering, 4 and an ox and a ram for a fellowship offering to sacrifice before the LORD, together with a grain offering mixed with oil. For today the LORD will appear to you.'"

Aaron, cut up the livestock by pieces. Nadab and Abihu had to clean the parts and drain the blood on the altar and hold them up before the congregation as they were laid on the altar. This is gross to us, but God needed the people to understand that you cannot approach God with this

contamination called **SIN**. Since God loved his people so much and sin brings death, animals were substituted for them. **But what exactly is sin? Did the people really know what it was when they saw it?**

The first worship service was about to begin and God would be closer to his people than ever before.

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The sacrifices were made and everything was done exactly as God had directed by Moses. It was time to go into the holiest place on earth to worship God.

Lev 9:23-24 Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came out, they blessed the people; and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. 24 Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar. And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown. NIV

God's fire blasts out, the sacrifices are burned up, and the people go crazy with excitement. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, grab their worship equipment and head into the Holy of Holies, just like dad and Uncle Moses.

Leviticus 10:1-2

10:1 Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

Unauthorized fire causes death? I confess, this is difficult at best to understand. How does this challenge your image of God. What about His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self-control, the fruit of His Spirit? Can you imagine the horror Aaron must have felt witnessing the death of his sons by God.

Before we go on, maybe we need for it to be more personal in order to understand what Aaron must have been going through. What if it was your kids? What would be your response? How do you reconcile this?

Remember, Aaron's sons grew up watching their dad and Uncle Moses serve the Lord. They were good kids who loved the Lord. Aaron was a part of a golden calf worship service when Moses was getting the 10 commandments and he wasn't killed. What did Nadab and Abihu do to deserve death?

Side Note: Whenever scripture challenges the way we perceive God, God is using it to teach us something about him or something about us. Let's trudge on with this story.

Leviticus 10:3 Moses then said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: "'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.'" Aaron remained silent. 4 Moses summoned Mishael and Elzaphan, sons of Aaron's uncle Uzziel, and said to them, "Come here; carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the front of the sanctuary." 5 So they came and carried them, still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered. 6 Then Moses said to Aaron and his (other) sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not let your hair become unkempt, and do not tear your clothes, or you will die and the LORD will be angry with the whole community. But your relatives, all the house of Israel, may mourn for those the LORD has destroyed by fire. 7 Do not leave the entrance to the Tent of Meeting or you will die, because the LORD's anointing oil is on you." So they did as Moses said. NIV

Moses tells Aaron he cannot mourn right now. Israel can but he can't.

1. God's holiness is dangerous if approached in a wrong way.

What did the sons do? They came to God with an "unauthorized fire." Scholars say that they got their fire from the wrong place before they entered the holy of holies. Some say they brought in the wrong incense. Either way they came to God their own way, not God's way. They came being their own Lord. They came not recognizing this as sin. The Pharisees were like this.

Luke 18:11-12

11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers , evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

Sin is when we direct our own life, not God and before we can get closer to God we must be able to recognize it.

1 Sam 15:22 "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. NIV

2. God must be taken serious when we decide to worship him.

Do we really take God serious in worship? Do we really believe God is with us and leads us when we offer our bodies to him or are we trying to direct our own life and come to God the way we want.

That is why Aaron could not mourn his sons at this time. He was being used by God. God's way had to be represented before Israel. The cousins were not sanctified for God's use this day, so that is why they were directed to move the bodies. That is why Jesus said later;

Matt 8:22 "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead ."

Nadab and Abihu still believed that they could come to God their own way. It was an assault on God's rightful authority over his creation.

John 16:8-10 "He will convict the world of sin , and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin , because they do not believe in Me."

Our role in worship is to marvel at God's presence in our life. Remember the people reaction when Moses and Aaron came out of the Holy of Holies?

Leviticus 9:24 And when all the people saw it, they shouted for joy and fell facedown. NIV

We rejoice in that God is interacting with us. But when the death of Nadab and Abihu occurred the crowd went from worship to mourning.

Not worshipping God is going through life in mourning.

3. We can only approach God through Jesus Christ.

Like the altar was before the Israelites in the desert, the Cross is before all people today. He was placed on the altar of the cross for all to see. But, why couldn't God just keep the animal sacrifice thing going?

Hebrews 10:4-5, 7 ... because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. 5 Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ...'Here I am — it is written about me in the scroll — I have come to do your will, O God.' NIV

Animals are not people. Their blood could only cover sins. Jesus was a person, who was perfect, and was able to take my sins on himself and destroy them forever. The animal sacrifice for Nadab and Abihu was not perfect and that is why they died. God could get closer to his people because of the animal sacrifice, but he couldn't indwell them until after the perfect sacrifice was made, and that was Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 10:12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. NIV

Christ is the perfect sacrifice for us. That is why we can come to God and He can live in us and we can continue walking with Him without fear.

Eph 3:12-17 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

I want to end with a 3 minute video that can summarize our worship experience. When this is completed we will be served Holy Communion.