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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2234 ~ Offering Strange Fire.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

In the last chapter in the Bible book of Exodus, it is recorded that Moses set up for God the Tabernacle of Meeting and made it ready for dedication. When all the work was finished, God came in a cloud and covered the Tabernacle, filling the Holy Place with His glory.

The next book of the Bible that follows Exodus, called Leviticus, God gave many rules to Moses to tell His Israelite people for practical and holy living. In the midst of all these rules, God was taking care of the Israelites by His great love. For example, the rules God gave to the people about what animals they could eat were there to help everyone stay healthy. God called these animals 'clean' for human consumption, while the others not to be eaten, He called 'unclean'.

Among the land animals, only those animals that had the split hoof and chewed their cud or food thoroughly were considered 'clean' and edible. But animals like pigs and rabbits were considered 'unclean', as there was the possibility of people catching a disease they might be carrying. Camels were to be reserved for transport.

Christians tend not to read Leviticus much these days because the rules God gave to prevent sickness were greatly needed in those times. The people then didn't have knowledge of parasites, viruses or harm that could come from bad bacteria. Yet in emergencies, these rules are still followed in our present-day time. Early on in the Christmas morning in 1974, the northern Australian city of Darwin was severely damaged by a cyclone called Cyclone Tracy. Basics like the local electricity supply were destroyed. After 5 days of hot wet weather, teams of people fully clad in bacteria proof suits went from house to house, taking out all the food that had gone bad so it could be safely disposed of. This was done carefully to prevent disease spreading among the survivors.

In Leviticus, Chapter 8, Moses' brother, Aaron and his sons, were consecrated as priests for the Israelite people. They were to stay in the Tabernacle of Meeting for 7 days and nights during their consecration. Moses told Aaron and his sons that they were to follow the commands of the Lord and stay clear of sin or they would die.

Following that time, Aaron with the help of his sons, prepared offerings to the Lord on behalf of himself and all the people. It's recorded in Leviticus, Chapters 1 to 4, that the 4 offerings the priests were to offer were: a sin offering, a burnt offering, a grain offering and a fellowship or peace offering. The offerings were to be offered in that order, which points to the correct priorities in worship: cleansing, atonement, which means reconciliation between God and people, thanksgiving and then fellowship.

After Aaron had arranged the offerings in place high up on the altar, he blessed the people and then he came down. With Moses, he went into the Holy Place and came out again to bless the people once more. Then the glory or dazzling light of the Lord's presence appeared to all the people and God sent fire to burn the offering on the altar. When the people saw the fire come from the cloud hiding the Lord and consume the offering, they shouted out and they bowed down to the ground in worship.

Just as God had given much careful detail to Moses for making the Tabernacle and its furniture, there were also very clear instructions in Chapter 9 of Leviticus about what God required the priests to do. Aaron followed God's instructions and God's promises came true. God Himself sent fire to consume the sacrifice because God was pleased with it and Aaron's obedience.

Aaron and his sons had received great responsibility for the services in the Tabernacle and worshippers of God. Aaron's two older sons were called Nadab and Abihu. But these 2 young men weren't careful like their father was in carrying out God's commands and as a result they paid with their lives.

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What went wrong that Aaron's sons' lives were cut so short after their dedication before the people as their priests? They were servants of the one and only true God. The older son, Nadab, was also next in line for the High Priest's role, as Moses was his uncle. Both Nadab's and Abihu's names headed the list of nobles for Israel in Exodus 24. They were not wicked but honourable men. In fact, they were closer to God than anyone else except their father Aaron and Uncle Moses. The future of their service to the Lord seemed to be clearly laid out before them.

But the 2 men were not careful in fully obeying everything the Lord required of them. They thought that the very small details of God's commands were unimportant – all was good as long as they had the general idea correct. But in this belief, they were wrong. God expects full obedience from His children. We can be thankful that we live in this age of grace, granting us freedom from living by rules to living by the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within us. God still expects obedience from us, but Christ's amazing forgiveness of our sins enables us to serve God out of love with all of our heart in response to His great love for us.

Many today don't take the work of God seriously. This was exactly the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They wanted to serve God according to their own methods and standards. If we're going to serve God in an acceptable way, we have to serve God on His terms, not our own.

Knowing what God requires of us means Christians need to exercise discernment at the very heart of their Christian living, because Christian living is a reflection of how a Christian thinks. Christian thinking must be attached to sound doctrine and faith in God learnt from the Bible. The book of Proverbs says that's where discernment begins.

In Chapter 10 of Leviticus, Aaron's 2 young sons took fire from another source than the altar, they put it into their censers and then they put incense on top. After this, they then offered the incense right next to the curtain of the Holy of Holies, where God said He would meet the High Priest only once a year. Suddenly, the Lord sent down fire and it burned them to death right there in the presence of the Lord.

Moses told Aaron that the Lord had said: "All who serve me must respect my holiness; I will reveal my glory to my people." But Aaron made no reply. At Moses' command, the bodies of Nadab and Abihu, still in their priestly robes, were carried outside the camp by cousins, as priests weren't to touch dead bodies. In Exodus, Chapter 30, the Lord had already given a warning about offering forbidden things on His altar, and that fire on the altar wasn't to go out either day or night.

The Lord then spoke to Aaron, instructing him: "You and your sons are not to enter the Tent of my presence after drinking wine or beer; if you do, you will die. This is a law to be kept by all your descendants. You must distinguish between what belongs to God and what is for general use, between what is ritually clean and what is unclean."

This rule that priests weren't to come into the Lord's presence intoxicated by strong drink has made many scholars think that Nadab and Abihu were under the influence of alcohol while doing their duties and therefore, they couldn't think straight to do their job correctly and honourably. Refraining from drinking alcohol before or at work is required by many workplaces these days as well. Airline pilots, bus drivers, medical staff and people operating expensive equipment are all required to abstain from drinking alcohol for a number of hours before they start work.

The supreme responsibility for humanity is to worship God, simply because God created people to be His true worshippers. In the Bible book of Revelation, any glimpse of heaven reveals that all who are there, both saints and angels, are glorifying God, giving Him honour and worship from thankful hearts.

In Psalm 99, it says: "Praise the Lord our God; worship before His throne! Holy is He!" And in Psalm 95, it also says: "Come, let us bow down and worship Him; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker! He is our God; we are the people He cares for, the flock for which He provides."

To worship God is the most serious, holy activity anyone can ever do, either here on earth or later in heaven. But in our generation today, worship of God is often more concerned about the music than about any confession of sin, seeking God's presence through His Spirit or learning more of what God wishes to reveal to His worshippers. Christians are to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. When we come before the Lord to worship Him, we need to honour and respect Him in a way that is consistent with His will. And this was what those 2 dead priests failed to do while in God's presence and holy meeting place.

During our life here on earth, we are responsible to choose to do what is right in God's sight. In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4, it says: "Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable." This involves putting to death the 'misdeeds of the body', to strive for personal holiness and flee immorality.

We also need to refuse self-praise and being self-righteous by doing good works. Instead, we are to make every effort to supplement our faith through the reading of God's Word and communing with Him in His Spirit through spiritual songs and prayer. We pursue God's holiness as God empowers us by His grace to do so through His Holy Spirit.

God's work of sanctification involves all 3 members of the Trinity. God the Father is constantly at work in His children to make us willing and able to obey His own commands. He changes our desires, making us want to please Him, and He also empowers us to do so. Jesus earned our sanctification on the cross and so He is the author and 'perfecter of our faith'. The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of our sanctification and He is the one who produces in us the fruit of God's righteousness and character.

There has been some confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew, Chapter 12, the Lord Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "You have attributed the works of the Holy Spirit that I have done, to Satan." In these times as well, in some churches this has been reversed and leaders are attributing the works of Satan to being those of the Holy Spirit.

God is not to be played with. It's dangerous for anyone to offer strange fire or corrupt worship to Him. It's also dangerous to declare things that the Holy Spirit has not done, has not said, would never take part in, as works of the Holy Spirit. It is a very serious thing to dishonour the Holy Spirit. When we see Christlikeness in someone, which is the humility and meekness of Christ, the gentleness and kindness of Christ, the truthfulness of Christ and the Word of God being exalted, we know then the Holy Spirit is at work in that person's life.

In Galatians, Chapter 2, Verse 20, the Apostle Paul said: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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