

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday School & Sunday Bible Study will resume in September

Sunday Service: 11:00 a.m.

**Wednesday Bible Study:
7:00 p.m.**

SPEAKERS

August 3: Ivan Niemela, *Holy Communion*

August 10: Charles Korhonen

August 17: Ivan Niemela

August 24: Ivan Niemela

August 31: Paul Coponen

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TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH

Strange Fire

“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. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” - Leviticus 10:1-2

This incident involving Nadab and Abihu underscores the serious consequences of improper worship of God. After Moses instructed them and their father Aaron about the five sacrifices to be offered to God at the Bronze Altar in the Tabernacle’s outer court—a sacred place where offerings were made to God— they also learned the proper method to burn incense on the altar of incense located within the Holy Place—a sacred area within the Tabernacle to be held with utmost reverence. With the culmination of their ordination, the two newly appointed priests felt ready to take on their responsibilities. Eager and perhaps overconfident, they began by burning incense unto the Lord. However, in a serious misjudgment, they offered "strange fire" before the Lord—something He had not asked them to do. This act of running ahead of God cost them their lives, as God consumed them with fire during their worship service in the Holy Place.

The referenced text does not clearly explain what Nadab and Abihu did wrong. However, sometime later, Moses reminded Aaron about the death of his two sons when they offered before the Lord. He warned Aaron not to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins in the Holy of Holies—the innermost and most sacred area of the Tabernacle, where the Ark of the Covenant was kept— unless he was directed to do so by God. As stated in Leviticus 16:2: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat”*. This warning strongly indicates that the issue was not with offering a sacrifice itself, but rather with the fact that Nadab and Abihu acted without God’s permission. They followed their own impulse, turning a sanctioned worship practice into their own work, which was considered “strange fire” in the eyes of God. This incident highlights the importance of waiting on the Lord for His guidance in anything we do rather than trying to fulfill His will based on our feelings and understandings. How often do we find ourselves rushing ahead without seeking divine guidance?

Throughout history, people have worshipped God in ways that reflect their personal preferences, offering what can be described as “strange fire”. A notable example is Simon the Sorcerer, who is mentioned in the Book of Acts. In this account, Philip, one of seven men chosen to assist the Apostles and known for being filled with the Holy Ghost, fled to Samaria to escape the persecution instigated by Saul. In Samaria, empowered by the Holy Ghost, Philip preached Jesus to the people, healing the sick and driving out unclean spirits, which led to many conversions. Simon was also a preacher in Samaria, and the people believed that he spoke from the power of God. Despite being well-received by the people and having a desire to preach about God, no one came into faith through his preaching, as *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). When Simon witnessed both the miracles performed by Philip and the true power of God’s Spirit through the laying on of hands by Peter

and John, he believed and offered money to receive that same power. This behavior revealed both his misguided attempt to become a child of God through his own efforts and showed his superficial understanding of faith. As a result, the Apostles told him to “*Repent therefore of this thy wickedness*” (Acts 8:22) and to pray to God to forgive his unbelief.

In the cases of Nadab, Abihu, and Simon, their followers could not detect anything wrong with their teachings. Nadab and Abihu were officially ordained to perform worship services, while Simon outwardly professed his faith after hearing Philip’s preaching. Therefore, they appeared to be true prophets. Additionally, they likely preached from scripture, which contributed to gaining the people’s attention. They confidently presented themselves as prophets, even though God had not sent them. This lack of God’s guidance was critical, as they relied on their own understanding rather than the will of God, leading to false worship. As stated in Jeremiah 23:21, “*I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied*” (Jer 23:21). Consequently, the people, lacking discernment, were easily swayed by the impressive acts and persuasive words of these false prophets. Although they spoke convincingly about scripture, they lacked the power of the Holy Ghost to preach the message of reconciliation expressed in John 20:23: “*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them*”.

Today, we face similar challenges, and God calls us to study His word with a prayerful attitude to develop a discerning heart. The Apostle John advises us, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). Therefore, when we approach the word of God, we should pray for enlightenment so that we too do not suffer the same fate as Nadab and Abihu, death in the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15). Improper worship can stem not only from the preacher but also through our listening ears (2 Tim 4:3-4). Are we equipped to discern the true from the false in our spiritual journey?

God’s Peace,
Charles Korhonen