

## The Holy and the Common



After the dedication of the tabernacle, the priests were consecrated to their sacred office. These services occupied seven days, each marked by special ceremonies. On the eight day they entered upon their ministration. Assisted by his sons, Aaron offered the sacrifices that God required, and he lifted up his hands and blessed the people. All had been done as God commanded, and He accepted the sacrifice, and revealed His glory in a remarkable manner; fire came from the Lord and consumed the offering upon the altar. The people looked upon this wonderful manifestation of divine power with awe and intense interest. They saw in it a token of God's glory and favor, and they raised a universal shout of praise and adoration and fell on their faces as if in the immediate presence of Jehovah.

But soon afterward a sudden and terrible calamity fell upon the family of the high priest. At the hour of worship, as the prayers and praise of the people were ascending to God, two of the sons of Aaron took each his censer and burned fragrant incense thereon, to rise as a sweet odor before the Lord. But they transgressed His command by the use of "strange fire." For burning the incense they took common instead of the sacred fire which God Himself had kindled, and which He had commanded to be used for this purpose. For this sin a fire went out from the Lord and devoured them in the sight of the people.

God designed to teach the people that they must approach Him with reverence and awe, and in His own appointed manner. He cannot accept partial obedience. It was not enough that in this solemn season of worship nearly everything was done as He had directed. God has pronounced a curse upon those who depart from His commandments, and put no difference between common and holy things. He declares by the prophet: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness! . . . Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! . . . which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! . . . They have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel." Isaiah 5:20-24. Let no one deceive himself with the belief that a part of God's commandments are nonessential, or that He will accept a substitute for that which He has required. Said the prophet Jeremiah, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" Lamentations 3:37. God has placed in His word no command which men may obey or disobey at will and not suffer the consequences. If men choose any other path than that of strict obedience, they will find that "the end thereof are the ways of death." Proverbs 14:12.

Nadab and Abihu would never have committed that fatal sin had they not first become partially intoxicated by the free use of wine. They understood that the most careful and solemn preparation was necessary before presenting themselves in the sanctuary, where the divine Presence was manifested; but by intemperance they were disqualified for their holy office. Their minds became confused and their moral perceptions dulled so that they could not discern the difference between the sacred and the common. To Aaron and his surviving sons was given the warning: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations: and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken." The use of spirituous liquors has the effect to weaken the body, confuse the mind, and debase the morals. It prevents men from realizing the sacredness of holy things or the binding force of God's requirements. All who occupied positions of sacred responsibility were to be men of strict temperance, that their minds might be clear to discriminate between right and wrong, that they might possess firmness of principle, and wisdom to administer justice and to show mercy.

The same obligation rests upon every follower of Christ. The apostle Peter declares, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." 1 Peter 2:9. We are required by God to preserve every power in the best possible condition, that we may render acceptable service to our Creator. When intoxicants are used, the same effects will follow as in the case of those priests of Israel. The conscience will lose its sensibility to sin, and a process of hardening to iniquity will most certainly take place, till the common and the sacred will lose all difference of significance. How can we then meet the standard of the divine requirements?" "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods." 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. To the church of Christ in all ages is addressed the solemn and fearful warning, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:17.<sup>29</sup>

When the people danced around the golden calf, who did they claim to be worshipping?

Exodus 32:3-6 . . . *Tomorrow is a feast to* \_\_\_\_\_.

God did not approve of what they did even though they claimed they were worshipping Him. He did not accept the common fire of the priests. (Leviticus 10:1, 2) Everything was to be done as God specified. Those who only partly obeyed were not really obeying at all.

The two sons of Aaron died because they used common fire. What was the difference between holy and common fire as is related in the reading above?

God has also given us things that are sacred, holy, dedicated to Him. We are not to desecrate these as common or unimportant. According to the third paragraph in the reading above, there are a number of ways that people might exchange the common for the sacred. List some of them here.

#### **A sacred place:**

How do you suppose God thinks of irreverent behavior in His churches?

Why did Jesus chase the "business people" out of the Temple?  
Matthew 21:12, 13

#### **Holy time:**

Make a list of God's Holy Times.  
Leviticus 23:3, 6-8, 10, 15-21, 24, 27, 34-36

What does God say about changes?  
Malachi 3:6

Revelation 22:18, 19

Will there be holy times in God's new earth and which are mentioned?  
Isaiah 66:22, 23

In order for us to know anything about changes, we must look to God's Word. We are not to go and change things ourselves. That is forbidden by God. He does not tell us that these days were changed anywhere in Scripture.

**Sacred money:**

What does God require from our financial increase?  
Leviticus 27:30, 32; Deuteronomy 14:22

What does He call it if we choose to withhold this?  
Malachi 3:8

**God's holy dwelling place:**

Where does God want to dwell if we are His children?  
1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

What is a good rule for the choices we make about God's dwelling place, our bodies?  
1 Corinthians 10:31

What drink made the sons of Aaron do such a foolish thing that they were destroyed for?  
Leviticus 10:9, 10

In 1 Peter 2:9, God's people are referred to as “a royal priesthood.” The priests were not to drink any alcoholic drink.

Should we drink alcoholic drinks, why?  
Proverbs 20:1; 23:29, 30; Isaiah 28:7

The literal interpretation of Proverbs 20:1 goes something like this: “Wine makes you say foolish things; strong drink makes you violent.” Though alcohol is not absolutely forbidden in the Bible, we are told that it is very foolish to use it. It kills brain cells and causes all kinds of trouble. Using it cannot possibly be to the glory of God.

Don't you want to make a covenant with God now that you will honor what He has declared holy and will not desecrate it with anything He does not approve?