

“IN VAIN THEY WORSHIP ME”

INTRODUCTION

A. Matthew 15:1-14

Worship can be vain, that is fruitless, accomplishing nothing.

B. Colossians 2:23

Worship of one's own devising may look good on the outside, but does not protect the soul.

I. CAIN'S OFFERING WAS REJECTED

A. Genesis 4:1-5

In the very first instance of worship recorded in Scripture, half the worshipers were rejected by God. Cain worshiped the right God in the wrong way. It could not be more clear that the Lord is not beholden to us to accept what we offer, but that we are beholden to Him to offer that which He accepts.

B. Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17

A cursory reading of the primary text may lead to the shallow conclusion that the Almighty is capricious, whimsically accepting some while rejecting others as if pleasing Him can only be done by chance. However, we are informed that what Abel offered, he offered *“by faith”* and *“faith comes by hearing... the word of God.”* Thus, we know God had revealed what He expected them to sacrifice.

C. Hebrews 9:22

It is not surprising that Abel's offering of an animal was preferred over Cain's offering of fruit because blood has always been needed for remission.

II. NADAB AND ABIHU'S OFFERING WAS REJECTED

A. Leviticus 10:1-3

What was offered was offered to the right God: Jehovah. Those offering it were the right people: Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron of the tribe of Levi, priests. What was offered was the right offering: incense. How it was offered was **wrong**: with unauthorized fire! All we know is that it was not what God commanded, so they were punished.

B. Hebrews 10:26-31; 1st Corinthians 10:1-12

The devil may tempt us to disregard such an example because it stems from the Old Covenant, and we may be inclined to think God is more gracious now. However, we are obligated to conclude otherwise! It is because we have a better covenant now that we must not insult God! The New Testament points to Old Covenant examples of disobedience so we may learn about God's wrath and be spared from it.

III. SAUL'S OFFERING WAS REJECTED

A. 1st Samuel 15:1-23

It may have been a lie to cover up his own greed, but that is not certain. What we know is that Saul claimed the sheep were withheld from destruction because they were going to be sacrificed to Jehovah. Yet that was not a valid excuse to disobey God's direct command.

B. Psalm 51:16-17

Sacrifices are worthless to God compared to broken hearts. We must worship Him in humility, which means we go to Him on His terms, not our own.

CONCLUSION

A. John 4:24

Worship must meet the standard of truth!

B. Romans 10:1-3

Unsaved people show forth much zeal for God, yet they do so in ignorance of true righteousness.