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Stop Bringing Meaningless Offerings

1: 10-15

Stop bringing meaningless offerings DIG: If the LORD had initiated these offerings, why were they meaningless? How had they become meaningless? What was God looking for that He was not finding? What did it say about the nation that they had the words of the Torah and King David, but paid no attention to them? What were they missing?

REFLECT: Karl Marx said that religion is “the opiate of the masses” to numb them to the evils going on around them. How is Isaiah saying something similar? What should be the end result of worshiping God?

How easy it is to think that when we go to worship regularly, read the Bible, pray, tithe, and don't engage in substance abuse, **God** somehow owes us something. Moreover, how easy it is to think that when we have done all these things, **the LORD** could hardly expect any more from us. Look at all the heathens around us who do not do any of these things. Some people think that **God** should be grateful to have such faithful servants as us. Then when difficulties come to us, we are angry with **God**, accusing **Him** of being unfair after all we have done for **Him**.⁶ The nation of **Isra'el** had this attitude, and **Isaiah** likens them to **Sodom** and **Gomorrah** because **their** hearts were so far away from **God**. **He** said to **them**, “**Hear what ADONAI says, you rulers of Sodom; listen to God's Torah, you people of Gomorrah**” (1:10 CJB).

The Jewish people had a tendency to maximize the physical and minimize the spiritual. The physical aspects are observable and, to some extent, measurable. However, the spiritual aspects are very difficult to measure. How can you be sure you love your neighbor? Yet you can count the number of times you have gone to worship, and you can record the amount of money you have given. Similarly, for them the problem became one of familiarity with the outward observable facets of their faith. **ADONAI** said: **The multitude of your sacrifices - what are they to Me? I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and**

goats (1:11). However, **merely offering sacrifices at the bronze altar in the courtyard, or at the golden altar in the Sanctuary, would not cleanse them of their sins.** This was the kind of religion that **Isaiah** and the other prophets objected to. **When you come to appear before Me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of My courts (1:12)?**

Elaborate rituals and ceremonies, which theoretically are designed to aid the worshiper, usually have the opposite effect. They tend to take the mind away from things that are spiritual and eternal, and center it on that, which is material and temporal. They tend to obscure rather than reveal the simple faith that **God** desires. **Joel** captured the essence of this when he wrote: tear **your heart, not your garments (Joel 2:13a).**

*Faith was still needed to draw close to **God**. Outward sacrifices alone always have been and always will be insufficient. King David said it this way: **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore me to the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me (Psalm 51:10-12).***



The act - the ritual, divorced from its source of faith, and the resulting obedient life - was **meaningless** and abhorrent to **the LORD**. **He** demanded: **Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to Me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations - I cannot bear your evil assemblies (1:13).** This is the first thing that **He** could endure no longer. Here **God** calls the leaders and the people to see the real state of their worship. He says that **He** is disgusted with their plentiful and cheap **sacrifices** (see the commentary on **Jeremiah, to see link click Cc - False Religion is Worthless**). The people had the mistaken idea that they could live any way they wanted to as long as they made restitution in

the sacrificial system. No repentance, no change of heart was necessary. They fooled themselves into believing the only thing necessary was that the procedure of offering be followed out exactly. However, these sacrifices were not pleasing to **God**. In fact, they were a disgrace.

Secondly, **He** also detested their attendance in the annual **festivals** because all they were doing was violating **His** courts. **Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts My soul hates. They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them (1:14)**. He does not care for their meal **offerings**, their holy days, or their frantic and **many prayers**. There is repetition in these verses and we get the impression of an endless round of ritualistic activities, all repeated continually with no effect because their hearts were far from **ADONAI**. The weariness of **God** becomes very clear. **Hate** is a strong word. But here **God** says He **hates** this false ineffectual worship.

Thirdly, **ADONAI** said: **When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood (1:15)**. At this time **God** is not doing away with the sacrificial system, but the point is that a sacrificial system, in and of itself, is useless without faith and obedience. **Isaiah** points out that the Jews were very good at keeping the sacrificial commandments, but they ignored many other demands of the Torah; doing justice, loving righteousness and so on. In these verses **Isaiah** emphasizes the negative aspect that **God** cannot endure false formal worship. What did He really want? Instead of trusting in religious ritual, the people were to obey **God** and have *the right attitudes* toward **Him** and others.

Arthur Pink, the English evangelical wrote about how some people do not worship, "They bring their bodies to the house of prayer but not their souls. They worship with their mouths, but not in spirit and in truth. They are sticklers for early morning communion with **God**, but they take no thought about keeping their hearts with all diligence. They boast of their orthodoxy, but disregard the precepts of **Christ**. Multitudes of professing believers abstain from external acts of violence, yet hesitate not to rob their neighbors of a good name by spreading evil reports against them. They contribute regularly to the church, but shrink not from misrepresenting their goods and cheating their customers persuading themselves that business is business. They have more regard for the laws of man than those of **God** for **the fear of the LORD** is not before their eyes."