

Vain Worship

Our Lord says in Mark 7:7, "And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

When we follow the commandments of men instead of God's instructions, our worship becomes vain. If our worship is vain, it is empty, hollow, and useless. It will do us no good.

If it is vain, it would be as though we had not worshipped God at all and we will be lost. When we worship in the way "we want" then God is dishonored and insulted. When we worship the way God has told us in His word, God is honored and glorified.

As we read in John 4:24, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

To worship in truth is to worship as the word of God directs. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Since the word of God is truth, when we worship God in truth, we worship Him according to His word. The only way God will accept our worship is to follow His directions in the Bible. Any worship, that is not authorized by God's word in the Bible, is not in truth and is vain.

God says in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

If we don't know what God says, we are going to be destroyed or lost for our lack of knowledge. It is sad to say but the vast majority of people are illiterate of God's word. They don't really know what the Bible says. When we don't know God's will then false doctrines will arise which will cause us to be eternally lost.

When people are ignorant of God's directions on how He is to be worshipped, they wander in spiritual darkness.

Our Lord says in Matthew 15:14, "And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch."

We must first have a desire to know the truth of God's will and then be willing to change when we find we are wrong and are not worshipping according to His truth.

Jesus says in John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Only the truth can make us free, otherwise we are still under the bondage of sin. We may be sincere in our worship, and we must be, but if we do not worship God "in truth", that is as God directs, then our worship will be vain and unacceptable to God.

Also if we try to worship God "in truth" but not "in spirit", that is not with the proper motive of honoring God and with reverence, then we are just practicing ritualism and our heart is far from it. This type of worship is also vain and unacceptable to God, for Jesus says in

Matthew 15:8, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." We must worship God both in spirit and in truth.

We Must Give Our Best To God

As we worship God, we give Him ourselves. Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service." Under the Old Testament some of the Jews were not offering their best and were condemned for it. In Malachi 1:8 we read, "And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and

sick, is it not evil?" Is it not just as evil today when we do not give God our best?

Under the New Testament we do not offer animal sacrifices as the Jews did under the Old Testament; but we give Him our lives in service to Him as a living sacrifice. In doing this we must give Him our all. Anything we do for God must be our very best.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind."

All our heart, soul, and mind, or in other words, our total being must be in our worship.

How do we show our love to God?

Our Lord says in John 14:21, "He who has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me."

We show our love to God when we keep His commandments. We do not show our love to God if we only keep the commandments we want to keep or if we add some of our own commandments.

In Matthew 28:18, before Christ ascended into heaven, He was giving His apostles some last minute instructions concerning those they would baptize. Jesus said,

"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."

Everything the Lord has commanded us is to be observed. We are to do all that God says and in the way He says to do it.

Jesus says in Luke 6:46, "But why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

In worship we must do all God has commanded and we must not do anything He has not authorized. Our worship must be from the heart with all reverence and sincerity. We must give Him our very best. Then and only then will we be worshipping God "in spirit and in truth".

The purpose and holiness of true worship to God is a precious privilege available only to those who are obedient to the will of God.

We Must Only Worship God

Jesus said in Matthew 4:10, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve."

If we worship God in spirit and in truth, we cannot worship anyone or anything else. Anything we worship, other than God, is an idol. According to Webster, an idol is "an image used as an object or instrument of worship."

God forbids us to make and worship idols. God says in Exodus 20:4-5, "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."

We see we are **not** to make any image whether it is a statue or any likeness of anything in heaven or earth to worship them. But this is done today when people worship icons. People bow down and pray to these statues and painted pictures whether they be the supposed likeness of Mary the mother of Jesus or one of the many other dead people who are called saints. This is in direct disobedience to the command of God.

In 1 John 5:21 we read, "My little children, guard yourselves from idols."

When I see people bowing down, burning candles, praying, and worshipping an icon image of a saint, my heart bleeds for them because they are putting their souls in jeopardy of being lost.

(Col 2:18 KJV) Let no man beguile you (cheat you) of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

We can lose our reward in heaven if we worship someone other than God. He is the only one we are to worship because He is a jealous God. God will not allow us to worship anyone else other than Himself.

Revelations 21:8 tells us that "idolaters shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

We must only worship God and our worship must be in spirit and in truth if we expect to be with Him in heaven when this life is over.

Attendance Of Worship

Worship is a privilege only children of God have. There are many blessings we receive from faithful attendance in worship. God has commanded us to assemble regularly to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Hebrews 10:25-27 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received

the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation."

When we forsake the assembly of the church, except for sickness or circumstances beyond our control, we are not only disobeying God, but we are robbing ourselves of all the benefits of worship which would have helped us to grow and become spiritually strong.

By forsaking the assembly, we also endanger our souls because as the above verse says "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for our sins."

It is bad enough for anyone to be lost, but to see one of God's children fall away is a disaster. It is heartbreaking because Christ is our only sacrifice for sin. When people reject their only sacrifice for sin there remains nothing but "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation."

It will be a sad day for those who fall away because as we continue reading in, (Heb 10:29 KJV) Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Then verse 31 concludes by saying, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

It will not only be fearful but horrible beyond description when those who were once followers of God who have turned their back on the Lord when they find themselves in eternal punishment. The sad part will be they didn't have to be there, but they became careless and indifferent with their souls.

When people fall away from the Lord, it is usually not a sudden thing.

They usually start by forsaking the assembly of Wednesday night Bible study.

Then they start missing Sunday evening worship.

Next they stop coming to Sunday morning Bible study; and then finally they stop coming to Sunday morning worship.

This is the usual path of apostasy for most people who fall away. Oh, some may come back and "visit" several times a year and a few may even attend only the Sunday morning worship with little regularity. These are described in (2 Pet 2:22 KJV) But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Some members have turned to their own vomit and are in the pigpen and can no longer smell the stench.

We are encouraged not to let this happen in (Gal 6:9 KJV) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

But for us to obtain our eternal reward we must be consistent. Our Lord says in (Rev 2:10 KJV) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Only if we remain faithful are we promised rewards in our eternal life.

Some people may ask, do I have to attend Sunday night and Wednesday night services? If we really love God and Christ we will never ask such questions. Jesus says in (Luke 17:10

KJV) So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

We can never on our own earn our way into heaven. It is going to take the grace of God for us to get to heaven.

(Isa 64:6 KJV) But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

We can never slip into heaven with a "get by" attitude. If we are trying to do as little as we can, I am sorely afraid we will be in for a great surprise on Judgment Day. It will be too late to make things right then. Our eternal fate is sealed forever when we draw our last breath. Why do people endanger and gamble with their souls?

Our soul is worth more than the whole world. Our Lord says in (Mark 8:36 KJV) For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:37 KJV) Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

The answers to both questions are he gains nothing but loses his soul into eternal punishment, which will be permanent because nothing will be able to get him out.

The Lord is trying to give us the greatest warning of our life. We need to listen to what we are being told by our Creator before it is too late.

We should look forward with joy for the opportunity to worship God. When we worship God in spirit and in truth we can know the Lord will be there with us.

(Mat 18:20 KJV) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Do we want to miss being with the greatest guest of all, our Lord? We should look forward to attending and worshipping God, otherwise, how will we be able to enjoy worshipping God in heaven?

Going to heaven must be the number one priority in our life.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

I want to "seek first the kingdom of God" by not allowing anything to hinder me from meeting with the saints and the Lord, don't you?

We don't want to miss the greatest gift God will ever give which is our home in heaven.

We are told in (2 Pet 1:10 KJV) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

We need to ask ourselves, is my calling and election sure?

We are told how to make it sure in (1 Cor 15:58 KJV) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Jesus gives a parable in Luke 14:16-20, 24 which applies quite well to our attending worship services of God. (Luke 14:16 KJV) Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

(Luke 14:17 KJV) And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

(Luke 14:18 KJV) And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. (Luke 14:19 KJV) And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

But notice the conclusion in verse 24, (Luke 14:20 KJV) And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. (Luke 14:24 KJV) For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Are we rejecting the Lord's invitation of our regular attendance at His worship service in His church?
Are we rejecting His invitation of partaking of His supper, "the Lord's Supper", and of feasting on His word which provides us with the spiritual food we desperately need?

If we reject our Lord's invitation, He says that none of us "who were invited shall taste My supper."

Please don't put your soul in jeopardy of being rejected. It just isn't worth it. This life is so short in comparison to eternity.

We are told in (James 4:14 KJV) Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

We have got to get it right the first time. There will not be a second chance! We must look forward to every opportunity we have of worshipping God "in spirit and in truth."

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