

True Worship or Vain Worship

By Ron Boatwright

The majority of the religious world's worship of God is in vain because it comes from the doctrines and commandments of men and not from God. Jesus says, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7). When people follow the doctrines of men, their worship is vain, useless, and will cause them to be eternally lost.

An example of vain worship is that of Cain. "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but he did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door'" (Genesis 4:3-7). Why did the Lord have respect for Abel's offering and why was He displeased with Cain's? Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous. God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."

Abel offered his worship by the faith of God's word, but Cain did not. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). The faith by which Abel made his offering was not subjective faith but was obedient faith. Abel's worship was accepted by God because he did as God had directed, but Cain did not. Cain's offering was not of faith, which comes by hearing the word of God. We are warned, "for whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Cain believed in God, but he chose to do his own thing in religion instead of obeying what God had commanded. Because of this God rejected Cain and his offering.

Another example of vain worship is that of Nadab and Abihu. Nadab and Abihu were priests in the tabernacle. They were to burn incense to God every day in the tabernacle at 9:00 A. M. and 3:00 P. M. They had been instructed by God to take "a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord...put the incense on the fire before the Lord" (Leviticus 16:12-13). The coals of fire were to be taken from the altar of burnt offerings in front of the tabernacle. But Nadab and Abihu did differently. "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord" (Leviticus 10:1-2).

Nadab and Abihu ignored what God had said and they did that which God "had not commanded them". They offered profane fire. They got the coals of fire from somewhere else than from under the altar. They didn't do as God had commanded them and they were struck dead with fire for their vain worship. They did their own thing in religion just as the multitudes of religious people do today who will suffer the same eternal fate as Nadab and Abihu. God doesn't strike people dead today for their vain

worship, but they will be eternally punished with eternal fire because of it. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). This is an example to us. God has always given commandments to be obeyed the way He says and for the reason He says.

We must have authority from God for all things we do in religion. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17). To do a something “in the name of the Lord Jesus” is to do it by His authority.

Jesus says, “Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matthew 7:21-23). Calling Jesus, Lord, Lord, will not get us into heaven; but we must do the will of the Father in heaven. We cannot do the will of any man and go to heaven, but only the will of God as found in the Bible. In today’s denominational world there are more than 600 different kinds of denominational churches. Each denomination has their own man made name which gives glory to different men such as: Martin Luther, John the Baptist, the apostles, and to countries such as: Greece , Rome , Russia , and days such as Pentecost, the seventh day, and to the methodical way of doing things. And the list goes on and on. Even by their names they do not even claim to belong to Christ. Do you think the Lord is at all pleased with this mess?

Each of these man made doctrines makes them different from one another. If each of these different denominations would burn their creed books and follow only the will of the Father in heaven as found in the Bible, then there would only be one church, the church of Christ . But notice what Jesus on Judgment Day is going to tell the many who call Him, Lord, Lord, but have chosen to follow the will of men, even though they claim to have prophesied, cast out demons, and done many wonders in the Lord’s name. To these Jesus is going to say, “I never knew you, depart from Me you who practice lawlessness”. Why? Why? Because they chose to do the will of men with their many differing doctrines and not the will of the “Father in heaven”. There will be many horribly surprised and lost people on the Day of Judgment.

God’s word says, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11). Let’s speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent. Let’s call things by Bible names and do things in Bible ways. Only then can we be pleasing to God and go to heaven.