

Does God Care How We Worship Him?

Presented as a Sermon by Rick Harrington 04/03/2011 (no audio available)

Introductory Comments:

How we answer this question ultimately depends upon our view of God. Many believe God will be pleased with anything we offer to Him in worship, just as long as it's sincere and from the heart. Is this what the Bible teaches?

Throughout our lifetimes, we each develop notions and ideas of who God is and what He requires of us. I would suggest that in many cases those notions have nothing to do with the God we read about in the Bible. In Gen 1:27 we are told, "God created man in His own image." I would challenge each of us to evaluate our view of God and make sure we haven't turned this passage around and created God in our own image, and serve a God of our own making and likeness.

Qualifying Scripture

2 Tim. 3:16-17

The question is, "Does God care how we worship Him?" This scripture tells us that we have a means of determining the answer to this question.

The Bible strongly cautions us about making assumptions regarding worship offered to God.

Ecclesiastes 5:1

There is an attitude toward worship that is foolish.

To indiscriminately offer a sacrifice (worship) to God without first listening to (and determining) what God has to say may result in unknowingly doing evil.

Eph. 5:15-17

If we approach God, without first understanding what His will is, we are being foolish. We need to be wise and listen to what He has to tell us before we simply assume what we're offering to Him in worship is what He desires.

The Bible gives us numerous Old Testament examples regarding worship to God.

Qualifying Passages: **Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11**

That which was written in earlier times (Clearly speaking of God's dealings with man throughout the Old Testament) was written for our learning and instruction. In other words, by reading about God's interaction with man in the Old Testament, we can be instructed how to more perfectly serve God today.

Three Biblical Principles Regarding Worship:

I. What we offer to God in worship must be by faith

A. Cain & Abel (**Gen. 4:3-5**)

1. We're not told here specifically why God rejected Cain's sacrifice, but one thing we can clearly determine from this passage is that *God does not indiscriminately accept all worship.*
2. **Heb. 11:4** tells us why God accepted Abel's sacrifice but rejected Cain's.
 - a. Abel's sacrifice was by faith, and was therefore considered righteous.

- b. The clear implication is that Cain's sacrifice was not offered by faith.
- 3. **Rom. 10:17** teaches us that faith comes through hearing the word of God.
 - a. It seems reasonable to infer that God gave both Cain and Abel some kind of verbal instruction regarding what He wanted them to offer Him.
 - 1) Apparently, Abel (by faith) followed that instruction while Cain did not. For that reason, Cain's sacrifice was not acceptable to God.
- 4. Note what the passage in Hebrews goes on to say: (**Heb. 11:6**)
 - a. The only way we can truly come to God and worship Him by faith is if we do it according to what His word reveals.
- B. **Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2)**
 - 1. Assuming that something is acceptable to God simply because He hasn't specifically said not to do it, cannot be by faith
 - a. God did not have to tell these two priests what not to offer Him. He had already instructed them which fire to use (apparently from a specific source). That, by its nature, excluded any other fire.
 - b. It's ludicrous to suggest that God would have to list everything He does not want us to do in worship for it to be specifically forbidden.
 - c. It should be more than sufficient for God to tell us what to do.
 - 1) No reasonable person would suggest we substitute pizza and root beer for the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Why not? God clearly tells us what to use.
 - d. Note what Moses also says to Aaron here (**Lev. 10:3**).
 - 1) When we're presumptuous in offering worship to God, we are not honoring Him or treating Him as holy.
 - e. Obeying the Lord in our worship is far more important to Him than our sincere intent (**1 Sam. 15:21-23**).

II. What we offer to God in worship must be of the right quality.

- A. In the book of Malachi we find God rebuking the priests of that day (**Mal. 1:6-8**).
 - 1. What we find here is that these individuals seem to be doing the right thing. They're no longer involved in idolatry. They're worshiping Jehovah God, in the right place. They're offering sacrifices as they were commanded to do, but they're simply going through the motions. It seems to me that what they're trying to do is get by with offering God the bare minimum.
 - 2. I need to look into my heart and ask some serious questions. What am I offering to God? Am I giving Him my best or am I simply giving Him my leftovers, the things that don't really matter to me?
 - a. Does He get the bare minimum of my time and energy? Is my service to Him confined to what takes place within the walls of a church building, or do I even have trouble with that? Do I daily devote myself to serving Him?
 - b. Is my contribution simply what I have left after I've spent the rest on myself?
 - c. Is His word of little significance in my life, or does it sustain me and direct me daily.
 - d. Do I love the Lord God with all my heart and with all my mind and with all my strength and all my soul, or am I simply going through the motions.

- e. Note what God goes on to say in Malachi (**Mal. 1:10**).
- 3. What we offer to God in worship must be by faith, according to His word, and it must be the best we have to offer Him.
 - a. Perhaps I recognize times in my life where God is not getting the best I have to offer. The question I have to ask is, am I satisfied with that? It should be my heart's desire to improve myself on a daily basis? Jesus Christ tells us to be perfect, but thankfully, He doesn't demand it.

III. What we offer to God in worship must be sincere.

- A. **John 4:20-24**
- B. What does it mean to worship God "in spirit and in truth"?
 - 1. Certainly some of the things we've been discussing already this morning fall under this heading:
 - a. Worshiping God by faith is worshiping Him according to His word, according to truth.
 - b. Offering God our best is certainly part of worshiping Him in spirit.
 - 2. It also means it must be sincere.
 - a. We mentioned in the introduction the person who says, it doesn't matter to God what I offer to Him as long as it's sincere and from the heart.
 - b. I believe we've clearly established that it does matter to God what we offer Him. That seems to be unequivocal from a Biblical perspective.
 - c. It is possible to offer God specifically what He requires and to offer Him something of the right quality, but if it's not done in sincerity, we're no better off than the person who doesn't even question whether what they're offering to God is what He asks for, or the person who simply offers his leftovers.
 - d. My understanding is that the Latin word for sincere is actually made of two roots:
 - 1) *Sin* – which means "without"
 - 2) *Cere* – which means "wax"
 - a) It has been suggested that the word derived from the practice of repairing or hiding cracks and blemishes in pottery by filling them with wax.
 - b) If you had a "sincere" piece of pottery, you had a piece without flaws or blemishes – it was pure and could withstand the test of fire.
 - 3) For our worship to be sincere, it must be free from flaws or blemishes. It must be pure and from the heart.
 - a) That means there are no hidden agendas or motives behind what we're offering to God.
 - f. We need to be examining the purity of our hearts and our motives in everything we offer to God. (**Ps. 139:23-24**)
 - 1) Why am I a member of the church where I attend? Is it simply because that's where my family has always attended, and it would create too many waves for me to change now? Is it

because they have a wonderful music program, the best in WNC? Is it simply because I like the preacher or pastor? Is it because that's where everyone is going these days ("Wide is the way and broad is the gate...")? Is it because they have more college students or more attractive members of the opposite sex than anywhere else? People have all kinds of different reasons for doing what they do. What I need to do, and what I would encourage each of us to do, is make sure that what I'm offering to God worship that is according to spirit and truth.

3. In the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5:8**), Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."
 - a. I believe this passage goes hand in hand with what we're talking about this morning.
 - 1) It's not talking about those who are free from sin, or none of us would be seeing God.
 - 2) I believe what Jesus is saying is that it is only when your heart is pure (sincere, pure in motive and free from agenda), it is only then that you can see God for who He is and what He requires.
 - a) We must get all those other impurities out of the way before we can do that. "Those who worship God MUST worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Concluding Comments:

Does God care how we worship Him? From a Biblical point of view, I don't see how we can come to any other conclusion that this is the case. It is of extreme importance to Him. For that reason, it should be of extreme importance to each of us.

This is not the type of lesson I prefer to teach from the Bible. I would much rather spend our time speaking of the grace and mercy and forgiveness we have in Jesus Christ. And it's there and available to each of us if we simply come to Him in humble obedience. But that grace and mercy never gives us license to treat our God with anything less than respect and reverence, and approach Him as anything less than Holy!