

True Worship

Key Verse: “*Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.*”
—Isaiah 1:17

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 1:10-20;
II Kings 15:32-35

THE TWELVE TRIBES OF

Israel were chosen and commissioned to serve as a living example of God’s principles midst a heathen world of idolatrous pageantry and hollow ritual. Israel’s ceremonial practices were to be symbolic expressions of genuine, heartfelt worship of God. However, ten tribes separated from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and were thereafter

known as the kingdom of Israel. It rapidly succumbed to moral decline. The priests, losing sight of the real meaning of worship, allowed hypocrisy to supplant true worship; even allowing the worship of idols to be mixed with worship of the one true God. His awareness of Israel’s national hypocrisy was expressed through the prophet, Isaiah. “This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.”—Isa. 29:13

Likening Israel’s hypocrisy to the basest practices of Sodom and Gomorrah, God says, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me,

who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” (Isa. 1:10-15) Thus God defines false worship as everything which is offered to him from other than the heart.

With the single exception of Jesus, all the hearts of the human family are flawed, imperfect, sinful. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) It remains, then, for God to explain how it is that sinful hearts might be rendered acceptable to offer true worship. “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (Isa. 1:16,17) Pomp, ceremonial prayers, and sacrifices can never atone for the fraudulent treatment or oppression of one’s fellowman, or the hypocritical worship of God. Righteousness toward men is as much a part of pure religion as righteousness toward God. Rituals, ceremonies, and offerings from an unrepentant heart avail nothing for they are an affront to the dignity of God. The sinner who seeks the forgiveness of God from a truly humbled and contrite heart, though completely lacking ritual and ceremony, receives it through Christ in God’s due time and in his way. That God would first require of the sinner a genuine willingness to conform to his Divine precepts is most reasonable. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”—Isa. 1:18 ■