The Terrible Tragedy of Misguided Worship
Amos 5:18-27

18 Woe to you who desire the day of the L ORD! Why would you have the day of the L ORD? It is darkness, and not light,
19 as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him.
20 Is not the day of the L ORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?
21 “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.
23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

25 “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 26 You shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyyun your star-god—your images that you made for yourselves, 27 and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the L ORD, whose name is the God of hosts.
Out of all the tragedies in life, there is no greater tragedy than a misunderstanding of who God is.

How would you define worship? Music? Worship is not one aspect of the Christian life, but is, in fact, the entirety of the Christian life. Worship is a life humbly and totally devoted to the sovereign God. True worship is that life lived out of the conviction that God is truly great and truly good. The inward motivation of a transformed life that is motivated by a love for God.

Three devastating effects of misguided worship

Hope that will only disappoint

verses 18-20

“Woe to you”

“desire” – have a strong craving for, eager anticipation.

The very thing that you crave will bring your devastation, not your salvation.

In their rebellion against God, they have turned themselves into God’s enemies.

Word picture in verse 19: running from a lion, only to encounter a bear. Escaping from the bear into the security of the house, only to be bit by a serpent.

Ritual that produces no change

verses 21-24

It may have been their songs, harps, offerings, and so on, but all those were not God’s.

How bad must the sin be when the Lord says, “this is how you will worship Me”, but then they corrupt that so badly that God says, “never mind, I don’t want that anymore”?

“I take no delight” – It stinks.

The very thing that they thought kept them close to God, God rejected entirely.

Perhaps we know what that looks like today. “But Lord, I read my Bible” – “But Lord, I tell people about Jesus” – “But Lord I don’t cuss” ...

The mistake the people made was thinking that worship was relegated to their ceremonies

But the Lord is concerned with what is on the inside of the person, which affects not just one day in their life, but the entirety of their life.

True worship comes from a heart that is not flippant, but that trembles before God.

Micah 6:6-8

What God wanted was not their assemblies, or their songs, but their hearts.

The reality is that the pursuit of justice and righteousness is vital for one who wants to follow the Lord.

You want to know if your walk is right? Examine how you treat other people, how you speak about other people – that will tell you how your walk with the Lord is.
Matthew 25:31-46

Idolatry that leads to rejection
verses 25-27

The point here is that our covenant does not depend on sacrifices, as evidenced by the fact that you did not bring me them in the wilderness, but our covenant depends on your all-out, heartfelt obedience, as evidenced by Jeremiah 7:21-23.

Obedience to God’s word is the only truly safe place, anywhere, any time.

Idolatry will always manifest itself in injustice and unrighteousness.

You will always become like what you worship.

Just look at what the worship of drugs does, or the worship of alcohol, or power. Or fame, or even the worship of a church.

Conclusion

As we scan our Bibles, we can easily understand that this is not only an ancient problem. Jesus himself tells us that this is a present problem and will be a future problem.

Matthew 7:21-23 lays out all three of these effects.

Questions for reflection

Is my hope sure? What is it that I am banking on to get me into heaven? Is it the things I do for Jesus? Or is it Jesus Himself?

Is my worship pure? Do I just go through the motions; try to clean it up for Sunday morning?

What do I really treasure? Do I truly treasure Jesus Christ? Or do I just treasure the things He does for me?