

True Worship.
Or
The worship of mere externals condemned.
Isaiah 66:1-4.
Sunday evening, May 31, 2009.

I. The Immensity of God. Vs. 1.

- A. In this passage the Lord addresses those who seek to please the Lord, and draw near to Him with mere externals.
- B. Their delight would be in the temple building as was that of the Jews in the days of our Lord during His earthly ministry.
- C. Those who seek to serve the Lord with mere externals are guilty of:
 - 1. Rendering the infinite finite.
 - 2. Rendering the eternal temporal.
 - 3. And rendering the Creator a mere creature.
- D. Worship like that, and people thinking like that, rests on the idea that we can contribute something of value to the Lord; that the Lord can somehow derive some benefit from us.
- E. To people like these the Lord comes with a revelation of His own immensity.
“Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you

will

build Me? And where is the place of My rest?”

- 1. It seems all rather overwhelming and impossible doesn't it?
- 2. How can we possibly serve the Lord?
How can we possibly contribute something of value to Him?
We can not provide Him with shelter and with a place for Him to rest.
- 3. We should be careful not to condemn all externals of religion, and reduce all religion to a matter of the heart alone, as some have done. This would fly in the face of the whole of Scripture which endorses many externals.
- 4. Rather it is the serving of God with mere externals which stands condemned here. Also the glorying in mere externals stands condemned here. The insufficiency of mere externals is set before us here.

II. The condescending of God. Vs. 2.

- A. A contrast is drawn between “All those things” and “on this one, or to this one, I will look.”
 - 1. “All those things My hand has made, and all those things exist.”
The construction of these words points us to Genesis 1, where it is said over and again that the Lord spoke certain things into existence, “and it was so,” on each of the creation days.
 - 2. Here we might translate: “All those things My hand has made, and they are.”
- B. All those things however do not provide a dwelling place nor a resting place for the Lord. Then He reveals by way of contrast where His dwelling place and resting place is:
- C. It is with him who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembles at God's

word.

1. Poor. He realizes he has nothing by which to benefit the Lord.
 2. Contrite. He realizes he has much that is offensive to the Lord, and is grieved by the same.
 3. Trembles. He is overwhelmed by the immensity and holiness and perfection of God, and by the thought that such a God should come and make His dwelling place by such a one as he.
- D. This concept is repeated by the Lord Jesus when He said in John 14:23: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.
The sheer size of this promise and the smallness of our souls, not to mention its pollutions, renders us poor and contrite, overwhelmed and trembling. It is more than a mortal soul can contain.
This is why the Father and the Lord Jesus come in the Person of the Holy spirit, in a measure that corresponds to the capacity of our souls.

III. Holy things can be unholy. Vs. 3.

- A. He who slays a bull can be as if he had slain a man.
The bringing of bulls in sacrifice was commanded and commended.
Yet without a right heart that very gesture becomes an insult to the Lord.
It brings great guilt on the worshipper as if he had committed murder.
- B. The same with the lamb.
Without a right heart it is as if he had brought a dog in sacrifice; an unclean and despised animal.
- C. The same with the grain offering. It is as if one offered swine’s blood.
- D. And the burning of incense to the Lord as if it had been burned to an idol.
- E. Characteristic of people who’s worship is in externals is that they choose their own worship, and they take great pride and delight in it. Yet the Lord looks on it as “their abominations.”

IV. They lead to a terrible end. Vs. 4.

- A. “Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations”
Here a comparison is introduced. Man chose to go his own way with the Lord.
- B. “So will I choose their delusions...”
God will give them over to the delusion of trusting in externals; being satisfied with them, resting their eternal futures on them, and being proud of them.
- C. “And bring their fears on them.”
A religion of externals can never bring true peace and rest. Fears remain.
- D. The reasons:
 1. When I called (to address their hearts), no one answered.
 2. When I spoke (through My prophets), they did not hear.
 3. They did evil, and that in which I do not delight.
- E. How sobering is the thought that mere externals, no matter how good and right, are an abomination to the Lord.