



[Amos 5:21-24](#)

(21) "I hate, I despise your feast days,
And I do not savor your sacred assemblies.
(22) Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings,
I will not accept *them*,
Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.
(23) Take away from Me the noise of your songs,
For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.
(24) But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.

New King James Version

Israel's religion was going nowhere. The people were not righteous, moral, or just in their dealings with one another, so their playing at religion, though sincere, was despicable to God.

In the list of sacrifices in verse 22, the [sin offering](#) is not mentioned, suggesting that the Israelites felt they had done no sin that required [forgiveness](#). This shows that they were not in [contact with God](#); they had no relationship with Him. If they had, they would have been aware where they had fallen short, and they could have repented.

Amos includes three other offerings that the Israelites gave but [God](#) would not accept. Knowing what they represent gives us insight into how the people were falling short in their spiritual lives.

The **burnt offering** teaches total devotion to the Creator. It was completely burned up on the altar, typifying the offerer being completely devoted in service to God. This offering corresponds to the first four commandments, which show [love](#) and devotion toward God.

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Similarly, the **grain offering**, also called the cereal offering, [meal offering](#), or meat offering, teaches total dedication and service to man. It was offered in conjunction with the burnt offering. The grain offering typifies the last six commandments, which regulate our relationships and love toward our fellow man.

The **peace offering** represents one's [fellowship](#) upward to God and outward to man. It was primarily given in thanks for God's blessing. When this offering was made, God, the priest, the offerer, and his family and friends shared in a common meal and fellowship, as all these parties ate part of the sacrificed animal.

But from God's reaction to their offerings, it is clear that the people of ancient Israel were not devoted to God or to their fellow man. Nor were they in true fellowship with either God or man, and therefore they could not see their sins. They did not see the [holiness](#) of God and compare themselves to it. If they had, they would have seen that they needed to make changes in their lives, but in judging themselves solely against other men—an unwise thing to do ([I Corinthians 10:12](#))—they felt no need for [repentance](#).

They did not understand what God really wanted of them. They may have appeased their own consciences with their church attendance, hymn singing, and sacrifices, but they went home and continued to oppress and cheat and lie. True religion is

1) *A relationship with God* ([Matthew 22:37](#)). Without a relationship with Him, we cannot know Him or understand His purpose for us.

2) *Submission and obedience to God* as our part of the relationship ([James 4:7-8](#)). In offering to make the covenant with the children of Israel (Exodus 20-24), He proposed to them. They accepted their obligation—to obey Him—but they were unfaithful in fulfilling it. As the [Israel of God](#) ([Galatians 6:16](#)) and the future Bride of [Christ](#) ([Revelation 19:7-9](#)), the church must not fail as ancient Israel did.

3) *Real love for God's truth* ([II Thessalonians 2:10](#)). Israel neither loved nor sought God's truth.

4) *Moral integrity* ([I Peter 3:8-12](#)). Living in righteousness and holiness shows love toward God and man.

5) *Social responsibility* ([James 1:27](#)). Israel, as a nation of [this world](#), had a responsibility to ensure that their care of their fellow Israelites was acceptable in God's eyes. The church, a spiritual organism, is not of this

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world, and as a body, has no responsibility *at this time* to change society—only ourselves. We must take care of our brethren within the church now, and we will have our chance to help this world in God's Kingdom.

These five points will not "buy" us into the presence of God, but rather *they are five proofs that we follow true religion*. Remember Jacob's dream. God chooses us and meets us at the foot of the ladder, making a difference in our lives. He gives us a way of life to follow, and we pledge to follow it. Thus, true religion is not a way **to** God but a way of living **from** God.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Prepare to Meet Your God! \(The Book of Amos\) \(Part Two\)](#)

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[Burnt Offering](#)

[Conscience](#)

[Forgiveness](#)

[Grain Offering](#)

[Israel's Religion](#)

[Love of the Truth](#)

[Moral Integrity](#)

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