

Does God Always Accept Our Worship Of Him?

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Webster's definition of worship is, “to adore; to pay divine honors to; to reverence with supreme respect and veneration.” It also means, “respect, admiration, or devotion for an object of esteem.” A simpler understanding of worship is in the very root of the English word, which is “worth-ship” (W O R T H S H I P), which means, “quality, or state of deserving.”

Now Jesus said,

Matthew 4:10 “For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'”

So we see that the only true object of worship is God. But does God always accept those who come to worship Him?

Turn with me please to Matthew 7, verse 21. A very familiar scripture.

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Now the people Jesus were referring to, here, thought they were worshipping God, and that they were acceptable to Him.

Tomorrow, millions of people will come together to worship God. But will He accept them? God will not accept their worship, because of one thing—they are practicing lawlessness by not remembering the true Sabbath, and not keeping it holy.

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Let us rephrase the question: Does God always accept our worship of Him, those of us who have been called by Him and who know Him (and He knows us)? Well, let us go back to the beginning to the first recorded worship service in the Bible in Genesis 4 and we will begin to answer this question with an Old Testament example.

Genesis 4:1-2 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the LORD." Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel.

The phrase here, and this is just a point of interest I want to bring out, "she bore again" in the Hebrew literally means, "She added to bear." According to *Clark's Commentary*, "In most cases where a subject of this kind is introduced in the holy scriptures, and the successive births of children of the same parents are noted, the acts of conceiving and bringing forth are mentioned in reference to each child. Here it is not said that she conceived and brought forth Abel, but simply she added to bring forth Abel, his brother."

So then it is very possible that Cain and Abel were twins. Now twins usually grow up liking the same things, acting and behaving in the same manner, and many times going into the same occupation. So in the last sentence in verse 2, where it says that, "Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground," really gives us an indication that they were actually nothing alike, that they had actually gone into the opposite directions.

Now verse 3, where it says,

Genesis 4:3 And in the process of time, it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

Again here, the phrase "in the process of time" in the Hebrew refers to a specific time. We know from the book of Exodus that three times in a year, all males are to appear before the Eternal with an offering. So this was most likely a holy day.

After Adam and Eve had sinned, God set in motion His plan for salvation, which the holy days actually picture. Cain and Abel must have been instructed, then, to bring an offering on the special days.

Genesis 4:4-5 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

We see that Cain and Abel both came to worship God. They knew who God was, and God knew who they were. But why did he accept Abel and his offering, but not Cain in his offering?

This is usually where the commentators will begin to focus on the offering as part of the reason for God not accepting Cain. Some think that he brought the wrong offering, not being an animal sacrifice for a burnt offering. But the word used here for offering is *minchah*, which means, “gift; offering; tribute; usually bloodless and voluntary.”

So was it the offering that God rejected? As far as value goes, Cain's offering may have been more valuable than Abel's.

Now, let us look at the real reason that God rejected Cain. Turn to Hebrews 11. Verse 4 is usually a verse that they use to prove that it was the offering. Let us see:

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

On the surface, this verse seems to be referring to the offerings. But I believe the more excellent sacrifice was the sacrifice of Abel's life.

King David said in Psalm 51, “For you do not desire sacrifice,” speaking of animal sacrifice, “or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:16-17)

Our contrite heart is a crushed heart, a repentant heart. Abel, like David, had a repentant heart. And the gifts, speaking of here that God was testifying of, were the deeds, the fruits, and the works that were evident in Abel's life. And, God imputed these as righteousness and not the offering.

Turn further to I John 3:10 This will actually give us the real reason that God rejected Cain here.

I John 3:10-11 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

The beginning is not the beginning of the church age, but from the beginning when man was created.

I John 3:12 Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Now Cain came to worship the true God, but God did not accept his worship, because Cain was yielding to and being influenced by the spirit of Satan. And his heart was filled with hidden agenda.

His hidden agenda was bitterness and jealous envy for his brother Abel.

Let us go back to Genesis again to chapter 4, and we will finish up here in this Old Testament example.

Genesis 4:6-7 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

Now this term, "sin lies at the door," pictures a four-legged beast crouched, ready to pounce on its victim. And as soon as you walk through that door, sin is pouncing all over you, and it will consume you. This is what God was telling him.

God was actually giving Cain the opportunity here to repent. But he did not, and his bitterness and jealous envy turned into hatred, and his hatred eventually led to the killing of his brother Abel.

This example of Cain and Abel's worship of God teaches us that God does not always accept our worship of Him.

Let us look into the New Testament and see what is required of us today. Turn with me to John 4. Jesus again is speaking, and He said,

John 4:23-24 "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Today we are commanded by Jesus Christ to worship God in spirit and truth.

Now what does it mean to worship God in spirit and truth? First of all, God is composed of spirit, and we are not. Now we have a spirit in us. Mr. Armstrong called it a spirit essence. Now this spirit essence is what gives us the ability to think, reason, and create. He also said this spirit was created incomplete, that it needed another spirit to be connected with, preferably God. So if we are not connected to God's Spirit, then we are going to be connected to another spirit. And what other spirit is there, but the Spirit of Satan, or the spirit of the god of this world.

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So worshipping God in spirit is yielding to and being influenced by His Spirit.

If we are not yielding to and being influenced by His Spirit, then we are going to be yielding to and influenced by the spirit of Satan. And the works that we produce will be the evidence of which spirit that we will be yielding to.

Now, just like the example we have with Cain and Abel, Abel was yielding to and being influenced by the Spirit of God. And in doing so, he was producing works that God imputed as righteousness.

Cain, on the other hand, was yielding to and being influenced by the spirit of Satan and was producing works that were evil. Therefore, when he came to worship the true God, God did not accept him.

Now, we also must worship him in truth. Having knowledge of the truth is part of this, but we also have to have a heart that is true, a heart that has no guile, no deceit, and no hidden agenda.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Now when we come to worship before God, we come to see Him spiritually. If we are not pure in our hearts, we will not see Him. The pure in heart are void of hypocrisy. They have room for only One Master—Christ. They never try to hide sin from God. They confess and forsake all known sin. In other words, they have a heart that has no hidden agenda.

So does God always accept our worship of Him? I believe the answer is no, because we do not always yield to His Spirit.

When we were in the Worldwide Church of God, we were on the surface obeying God. And we were doing His will. We were keeping His commandments, so it seemed. But our hearts (for many of us) were filled with hidden agenda. God showed us that He did not accept our worship of Him by spewing us out of His mouth.

He also has shown us that through repentance and returning to Him that we can be acceptable to Him. Jesus said to the Laodiceans, “Behold, I stand at

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the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him, and he with Me.” Jesus is basically saying, “If you do well, if you do My will, will you not be accepted?” Yes, we will.

So in order for God to accept our worship of Him, we must always be yielding to and being influenced by His Spirit; doing His will and have a heart that is true, and pure, and having no hidden agenda.