

Amos 5:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Analysis

God's shocking rejection of worship: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." The Hebrew *sane'* (hate) and *ma'as* (despise/reject) are strong terms—not mild disapproval but visceral repudiation. "Your feast days"—the festivals God Himself commanded (Leviticus 23)—are now rejected. "I will not smell" refers to sacrifices—God won't accept the aroma. Verse 22 continues: "Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts." No sacrifice—burnt offering (total consecration), grain offering (thanksgiving), peace offering (fellowship)—pleases God when divorced from justice. Verse 23-24's climax: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." God prefers justice over liturgy, righteousness over ritual. This doesn't negate worship's importance but establishes that worship without ethics is abomination (Isaiah 1:11-17, Matthew 23:23).

Historical Context

Israel maintained elaborate worship at Bethel and Dan—sacrifices, festivals, music, priestly ritual. But this worship coexisted with oppression, bribery, and immorality. God rejected the entire system, demanding instead social justice. This prophetic critique runs through Scripture (1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 50:7-15, Isaiah 1:11-17, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 9:13, 23:23). Jesus emphasized mercy over sacrifice, love over ritual. The Reformed tradition affirms that genuine faith

necessarily produces good works (James 2:14-26)—not as means of salvation but as evidence and fruit.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does church attendance and worship participation coexist with indifference to injustice today?
2. What does it mean that God hates worship that isn't accompanied by righteous living?
3. How do we balance proper worship with active pursuit of justice and mercy?

Interlinear Text

אֶרְתָּמָה שָׁגַנְתִּי מִתְּמִימָה מִתְּמִימָה אֶרְתָּמָה
I hate I despise your feast days and I will not smell
H8130 H3988 H2282 H3808 H7306

בְּעֹצְרָתֵיכֶם:

in your solemn assemblies

H6116

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 26:31 (Parallel theme): And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours.

Isaiah 66:3 (Parallel theme): He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

Proverbs 28:9 (Parallel theme): He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Jeremiah 6:20 (Parallel theme): To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

Proverbs 15:8 (Parallel theme): The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Hosea 8:13 (Parallel theme): They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

Proverbs 21:27 (Parallel theme): The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Matthew 23:13 (Parallel theme): But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Genesis 8:21 (Parallel theme): And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.