

Isaiah 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Analysis

God declares offerings, incense, and assemblies 'an abomination' (Hebrew 'toebah'—detestable) when accompanied by moral iniquity. The coupling of 'iniquity and the solemn meeting' reveals the impossibility of compartmentalizing worship and ethics. True worship demands holiness; ceremonial compliance without moral integrity is spiritual hypocrisy. This anticipates the prophetic critique of religious externalism that Jesus would radicalize in the Sermon on the Mount.

Historical Context

New moons and sabbaths were divinely instituted festivals (Leviticus 23), yet God abhors their observance when covenant loyalty is absent. This isn't rejection of ceremonial law but its misuse as a substitute for covenant obedience.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do we guard against separating religious observance from ethical living?
2. What modern 'solemn meetings' might God find burdensome if divorced from justice and mercy?

Interlinear Text

תֹועֵבָה הוּא שֶׁ וְאַמְנַחַת קָבֵיא תֹסֵף לֹא
H3808 no more Bring oblations H4503 vain incense is an abomination
H3254 H935 H7723 H7004 H8441

מִלְכָנָה אֲשֶׁר אָשָׁבָת וְשַׁבָּת חַדְשָׁה לְיִהְיוֹת
H1931 H0 unto me the new moons and sabbaths the calling of assemblies
H2320 H7676 H7121 H4744

לֹא אָמַת לְאַיִל אֲשֶׁר יְעַצְּרָה:
H3808 I cannot away with it is iniquity even the solemn meeting
H3201 H205 H6116

Additional Cross-References

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.

Malachi 1:10 (Parallel theme): Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

Matthew 15:9 (Parallel theme): But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Ezekiel 20:39 (Parallel theme): As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

Luke 11:42 (Parallel theme): But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Joel 2:15 (Parallel theme): Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

Lamentations 2:6 (Parallel theme): And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

Psalms 78:40 (Parallel theme): How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!

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

Ephesians 4:30 (Parallel theme): And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.