

Jeremiah 19:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind:

Analysis

The specific horror: "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal." Building high places (bamot, בָּמוֹת) for Baal worship directly violated the first commandment. Burning children alive as burnt offerings represents the most extreme perversion—using worship language and forms to commit abomination. They called murder "offerings," demonstrating total moral inversion (Isa 5:20).

God's emphatic denial: "which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind." The triple negation underscores God's total repudiation—He never commanded this, never mentioned it, never even conceived of demanding such horror. This counters any claim that child sacrifice honors God. The phrase reveals God's character—He doesn't desire human suffering but delights in mercy, obedience, and covenant love (Hos 6:6, Mic 6:6-8).

This passage refutes the notion that sincere religious devotion justifies any practice. Not all worship pleases God—only worship according to His revealed will. The Reformed regulative principle of worship states that we must worship God only as He commands in Scripture, not according to human invention or supposed sincerity. Christ confronted false worship that honored God with lips while hearts remained far from Him (Matt 15:8-9).

Historical Context

Baal worship involved fertility rites, temple prostitution, and child sacrifice. Devotees believed sacrificing children (especially firstborns) secured divine favor, prosperity, or deliverance from enemies. Such practices pervaded Canaanite religion and infected Israel repeatedly despite clear prohibitions. The prophets consistently condemned these abominations as the epitome of covenant violation, warranting the severest judgment (Deut 12:31, 2 Kgs 17:17, Ezek 16:20-21, 20:31, 23:37-39).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse warn against assuming religious sincerity justifies practices God hasn't commanded?
2. What modern practices might claim religious devotion while actually committing abomination?
3. How does the regulative principle of worship protect against human-invented religious practices?

Interlinear Text

וּבְנוּ ו	אֶת	בָּמֹת	לְבַעַל	לְשַׂרְף	אֶת	בְּנֵיהֶם
They have built	H853	also the high places	of Baal	to burn	H853	their sons
H1129		H1116	H1168	H8313		H1121
בְּאֵשׁ	עַל מֹת	לְבַעַל	אֲשֶׁר	לֹא	צִוִּיתִי	וְלֹא
with fire	for burnt offerings	of Baal	H834	H3808	which I commanded	H3808
H784	H5930	H1168			H6680	
דִּבַּרְתִּי	וְלֹא	עָלְתָה	עַל	לִבִּי:		
not nor spake	H3808	it neither came	H5921	it into my mind		
H1696		H5927		H3820		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 32:35 (Parallel theme): And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

Deuteronomy 12:31 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

Leviticus 18:21 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

2 Kings 17:17 (Parallel theme): And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.