

A Taste of Heaven – by R.C. Sproul
A review by Tom Wood

“We will worship the way *we* want to worship!” Such are the likely words of the two Old Testament priests Nadab and Abihu, right before God consumed them in a flaming ball of fire for unacceptable worship. (Lev 10:1-3)

And so, as *we* approach the throne of God, as a priesthood of New Testament believers to offer worship before the Lord, we do well to consider whether our worship is pleasing to God, or is more worthy of being burned up into a pile of idolatrous ashes.

With this reflective attitude in heart, R.C. Sproul in *A Taste of Heaven* challenges his readers to ask the question: “If God Himself were to design worship, what would it look like?” The answer is deceptively simple: “We’re not left to speculate on the answer to that question, because vast portions of the Old Testament text are specifically devoted to a style and practice of worship that God Himself ordained and established among His people.”

Sproul thus walks his readers through a survey of Old Testament worship (have you noticed, God was very particular!) and then draws connections to our modern day worship. This is a delicate task, as you might imagine, simply because the tendency of New Testament believers will be to throw out vast portions of the Old Testament law in their zeal to declare all things as being fulfilled in Christ and therefore no longer pertinent on this side of the cross.

But such instruction in the Old Testament is not to be disregarded, for these point us toward the Holy attributes of God, which although fulfilled in Christ, are still accurate reflections of his character – God is the same yesterday, today, and forever – and it is this same God we worship today.

On a search for the principles of Old Testament worship, Sproul discusses sacrifices of faith, which clearly carry over to our modern worship (such as tithes, time, and even our whole bodies) and how our attitude is of critical consideration: “[If we give our tithes begrudgingly] we might as well keep our tithe money in our pockets, because according to the Scriptures, those kinds of sacrifices are loathsome to God.”

About mid way through the book, there is a very helpful overview of the worship activity of baptism (and specifically a defense of infant baptism is given). Whether you hold to believer’s baptism or paedobaptism, this section is a helpful articulation of the points of disagreement between the two sides. Similarly, there is a section on the Lord’s Supper and the various traditions associated with understanding its significance (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Zwinglian/memorial).

Finally, the book is rounded out with a consideration of how Old Testament worship engaged all five of the human senses, and how we should consider ways in which these principles shape our modern worship: sights (e.g. the role of beauty), sounds (musical instruments, etc), touch (e.g. laying on of hands), taste (e.g. the Lord’s supper), and smell (consider the alter of incense in the Tabernacle).

With this book, you will come away with the perspective that “Our modern worship needs the philosophy of the second glance, an ongoing attempt to make sure that all that we do in worship gatherings is to God’s glory, to His honor, and according to His will.” (p. 12)