

# Is Worship Regulated?

(Isaiah 6:1-8)

- Introduction:
1. Battle lines have been drawn; shots have been fired; casualties have been sustained.
  2. Reports of worship wars are everywhere.
  3. Irony - worship, an act in which Christians should be united in their common devotion to God, has become a battlefield, in which paying homage to God has all but been forgotten.
  4. Listen, nothing so central to Christianity can lose its meaning while the cause of Christ thrives.
  5. If we want the cause of Christ to thrive, we must take up the fight and defend this "holy ground."
  6. I believe I may know one of the causes for these worship wars.
    - a. For many, worship has become a mundane, routine, weekly ritual.
    - b. However, there are others who desire for more than a stale ritual, and they long for an encounter with God that will affect the way they think and live throughout the week.
    - c. In search of that, they have forgotten some important principles.

## I. The Principle of Authority

- A. Some are telling us today that we need not have authority for all we do in religion.
  1. Worship from a sincere heart is acceptable to God.
  2. "Only from the sheep's point of view!! Seriously...if you were honestly, from your hearts, engaging in this act of worship to express genuine thanksgiving to your God, and you both believed this to be acceptable to Him, and it was done in such a way that none of your brethren were caused to stumble and none who were lost were hindered from being drawn to the Lord, and if you did not seek to bind this practice upon others, then I would find no reason to condemn your worshipful expression. It certainly is not something I personally would choose to do, but my preferences are not the standard by which you are to be measured in the expression of your love to the Father. I find nothing in New Covenant Scripture that would forbid the above expression of thankfulness. It might not be profitable or edifying in some circumstances, and this is where one must practice loving discernment so as not to cause harm to others or to the cause of Christ, but if done to His glory, and to no one else's harm, then more power to you." (Al Maxey, *Reflections*, Issue 33a, April 26, 2003).
- B. (Colossians 3:17).
- C. Consider this point: if worship is unregulated, then how can it be done incorrectly?
  1. But the Bible teaches it can be done incorrectly.
  2. Vain worship (Matthew 15:8-9).
  3. Ignorant worship (Acts 17:23).
  4. Will worship (Colossians 2:23).
  5. True worship (John 4:24).

## II. The Challenge of Selfishness

- A. Some are more interested in fulfilling their own desires than pleasing God.
- B. "I didn't get anything out of it" has driven the vehicle of innovations.
- C. However, worship should be about giving, not getting; offering, not receiving.
- D. What one "gets" out of worship has more to do with what he puts in it than all the shallow changes being proposed.
  - 1. Dimming the lights.
- E. Traditional or Contemporary - such arrangements are a testimony, not to our tolerance, but our intolerance, inflexibility, and selfishness!

## III. The Challenge of Entertainment

- A. Ills. Circus has come to town.
- B. There is a sacredness and solemnity to worship that should never be sacrificed upon the altar of entertainment.
- C. (Psalm 29:2 ) The Beauty of Holiness has been flip-flopped.
  - 1. Value is given to beauty and therefore the weak, crackling voice of an elderly lady would be discounted.

## IV. How To Address The Tension Between Empty Ritual And Spiritual Worship

- A. (Malachi 1:13) Worship had become a weariness.
- B. (Psalm 122:1) David was glad to worship God.
- C. (John 4:24) Must worship in spirit and in truth.
- D. Ills. Of the man who stood in the presence of the pilot.
- E. (Isaiah 6:1-8).
  - 1. We should experience a sense of God's presence (vs. 1-4).
    - a. Worship ought to convey a deep respect for the holiness of God.
    - b. A worship experience in which I am not reminded of how great and powerful God is, has failed in the most fundamental way.
    - c. Worship should neither be sheer boredom nor shallow entertainment, but should communicate a deep respect for God.
  - 2. We should be humbled by our own sinfulness (v. 5).
    - a. The closer we get to God, the more aware we should be of our own sinfulness.
    - b. When a person boasts of his own goodness, he reveals he hasn't been close to God lately.
  - 3. We should be reminded of God's grace (vs. 6-7).
    - a. Worship should motivate us to repent and rejoice because God's grace is sufficient to forgive us.
  - 4. We should leave inspired to serve God (v. 8).
    - a. "Enter to worship, depart to serve."
    - b. Leave with a renewed spirit to serve.
    - c. Instead of criticizing, grumbling, and gossiping, leave thanking, praying, and planning.

- Conclusion:
- 1. Worship is first and foremost about God.
  - 2. Come into his presence, humbled, seeking to praise, and you will leave willing to serve.
  - 4. May God help us to worship him in spirit and truth.