

An Acceptable Offering

Some time ago an acquaintance expressed her excitement over the upcoming changes in the worship assembly at her church. Among other changes, women were being given a more active role and instrumental music was being introduced. She was delighted because some of the people, especially women “had so much to offer.”

Bothered by her rationalization, I asked her what her husband did for a living. She said he was a carpenter. I asked if he was highly skilled and she acknowledged that he was. I asked her if he should be allowed to build something during the worship assembly; *it sounded like he had so much to offer.*
Unanswered.

God spoke to Israel through Moses regarding some of his desires relating to the worship in ancient Israel. We find in God’s response a principle regarding worship that applies still today.

Exodus 20:22-26

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. ²³You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.

God did not accept any kind of man-made representation of him. He is not from this world, so there is nothing around ‘here’ that properly represents him . . . not even a silver cross hung around the neck. Today, the only acceptable physical symbol to be found in the worship assembly is the bread and cup of the Lord’s Supper.

²⁴You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵And if you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it.

The term ‘profane’ means, to make common or vulgar. (From that idea comes our term for ‘vulgar’ language: *profanity*.) God is holy and insists that His created beings (people) treat Him as holy. So, an altar made of rocks that God had created was acceptable. However, an altar made of ‘cut’ stones was unacceptable. Cut stones were stones that bore the markings of man. God did not accept an altar that bore the imprint of man.

²⁶And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'

This instruction is related to the previous. Not only did God restrict the people from putting their own handiwork on the altar, He insured that the worshipper would not be distracted through indecency. In short, God does not want man to crowd in as a distraction to the devotion and worship that belongs to Him.

The Israelites received very specific instructions on the construction of the original tabernacle. Special craftsmen then were set apart by God to perform actual work on the furnishings in the tabernacle. They were filled with the Holy Spirit in order to do the work exactly as God desired. Their work was not their own. It was acceptable to God because He performed it through His Spirit. Any man who laid his eyes on the craftsmanship must have observed an ‘other-world’ kind of craftsmanship. It must have inspired a sense of awe toward God.

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There is a simple principle at work: As it pertains to the worship of God, He does not want the commonness of man in to distract.

Not everything that we humans might like to offer to God as worship is acceptable to him in the worship assembly. A skilled laborer might offer his life in devotion to God, but he leaves his hammer and saw in his truck when he assembles with other Christians to worship God. Have some Christians profaned their worship to God by introducing religious symbols, musical instruments, stained glass imagery and other distractions bearing the imprint of man’s hands?

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