

Dangers in Worship

**By Mark Mayberry
1/11/2009**

Introduction

The Lord Jesus Christ said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). This means that we must worship God with the right attitude and according to the proper form. However, there are many pitfalls along the way. In Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, the wise man Solomon offers his advice regarding dangers in worship. Although he lived during the Mosaic dispensation, Solomon's words continue to hold meaning for the Messianic age. Let us hear and heed his words of wisdom.

Warning Against Formalism

Ecclesiastes 5:1 ... 1 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. (NKJ)

The first problem Solomon addresses is that of empty ritualism. He says we must not offer the sacrifice of fools. Many view worship as an empty formality. They are content with the ceremony of religion but do not regard the sense and meaning of it. Others would employ worship as a soothing balm: They attend Sunday services in a vain attempt to compensate for their sinful rebellion during the week. However, the Lord will not tolerate such hypocrisy (Isa. 1:10-17; Amos 5:21-24).

What is the solution? We must walk prudently before God and draw near his throne to listen. Our hearts must be properly attuned to the word of God. It is imperative that we learn the true meaning of worship. Ritual is not enough. Practice and profession must match. An obedient spirit is the basis of true discipleship (Psa. 51:16-17; James 1:22-25).

Warning Against Irreverence

Ecclesiastes 5:2-3 ... Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few. 3 For a dream comes through much activity, and a fool's voice is known by his many words. (NKJ)

The second problem that Solomon deals with is that of irreverence. He says that we must avoid being hasty in word and impulsive in thought. Many are arrogant, reckless, and headstrong. They think they have all the answers. They lay aside the law of God and follow their own traditions. Such people often have an exalted sense of their own importance (Prov. 16:18; 29:20; 29:23).

What is the solution? Our words must be few. In contrast with God's exalted majesty, our condition is indeed lowly. A realization of this fact should fill us with due caution. Reverence and respect are demanded. Humility and reserve are essential. We must approach God in the right way. Those who respect his greatness will remain in silent awe before him (Job 38-41; 42:5-6; Isa. 40:12-18; Hab. 2:20). We should carefully avoid irreverently setting aside God's in favor of our own. His thoughts and ways are infinitely greater than our own. Since God is the potter and we are the clay (Isa. 64:8), he has the right to mold and make us after his will. Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear (Heb. 12:28; 1 Pet. 4:11).

Warning Against Insincerity

Ecclesiastes 5:4-7 ... 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. 5 it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. 6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? 7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God. (NKJ)

The third problem that Solomon speaks of is that of insincerity. He warns those who try to avoid fulfilling their vows. They promise to serve God, and then want to back out on that promise. Keeping their commitment is harder than they first thought. Various excuses are set forth in a vain attempt to satisfy their conscience. However, God is not satisfied (Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21; Matt. 23:16-22).

What is the solution? We must pay what we vow. Promises should not be uttered lightly. Vows are not made to be broken. Keep your word. Do what you say. Fulfill your promises. This applies to the commitments we make to both God and man (Psalms 24:3-5; Matthew 5:33-36). When you became a Christian you made a lifelong commitment. Don't look back. Don't waver.

Conclusion

True worship demands a serious, humble and reverent disposition. Let us worship but in spirit and truth. Let us serve God in reverence and awe. Let our religion flow from a good and honest heart. Only then can we worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Psa. 29:1-2; 96:7-9).