



The Tri-Cities Edifier

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Two Rich Churches

--Mike Noble

Things were not going well for the church in Smyrna -- from a worldly perspective, that is. In the letter addressed to them in Revelation 2, mention is made of their tribulation and how they had suffered at the hands of some Jews. Things weren't to get any better soon, either. Some of them were about to be thrown into prison because of their faith -- perhaps, even executed. They were an impoverished people, financially speaking. (It doesn't appear that they had heard of the 'health and wealth gospel' we hear preached so often today, does it?)

Yet the Lord looked at His people in Smyrna and said, *"But you are rich"* (2:8ff). Hmm....

About 100 miles away the church at Laodicea was doing great -- or so they thought. They were rich and had everything they needed -- so they said. Yet the Lord looked at them and told them they were *"wretched, miserable, poor..."* (3:14ff).

"How can this be?" someone asks.

Obviously the Lord doesn't look at riches the way we do. We can have all this world's goods we desire, live in luxury -- even meet with 'saints' in a beautiful building -- yet if we are *"lukewarm"* in the Lord's service (as was Laodicea), we are spiritually poor and without Jesus' approval.

On the other hand, we can be *"rich,"* even while living in squalor or rotting in a dungeon. If we have the Lord's approval and, consequently, look forward to a *"crown of life,"* we are rich indeed!

In our materialistic culture, we need to continually reevaluate our thinking about riches. Material wealth is fine, though it comes with many weighty responsibilities (1 Timothy 6:17-19). What truly matters is whether or not we are spiritually rich.

Worship Is Not About A Physical Place

Jerry Fite

The woman of Samaria, perceiving Jesus to be a prophet after revealing the truth of her private life, promptly changed the revealing subject. She turned the spotlight away from her personal life to the problem of determining where one should worship God. Being a Samaritan, her people worshipped in mount Gerizim. Yet she knew that the Jews say Jerusalem is the place where God is worshipped (John 4:20).

Jesus responds with two interesting facts regarding worship. **First, worship is not to be offered through ignorance.**

"Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that when we know; for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22).

Giving proper homage to God is not manifesting reverence through emotions void of understanding. Salvation was being offered and was coming through the lineage of the Jews in Jesus. Revealed salvation continues to be one reason why one is to worship God.

Second, **worship should focus upon our spirit guided by truth instead of stressing a place.**

“Jesus saith unto her, ‘Woman believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, or in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father...But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers’” (John 4:21, 23).

Since God is “spirit,” our connection to Him in worship must be with our spirit molded by God’s revealed truth.

“God is spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24)

One avenue of worship engaging our spirits is “singing.” Under the influence of the Holy Spirit’s teachings, we are to engage in *“speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:19)*. Since we reverence God, we carry out His specific command, without unauthorized additions. From our spirits, we offer spiritual thoughts through singing in accordance to truth without mechanical instruments of music.

Convicted by the truth of not adding to nor taking away from what God has commanded (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18-19), and understanding Jesus’ words in John 4:21-24, one would assume, regardless of where we find ourselves, we would sing hymns and spiritual songs without any mechanical instrument. But such is not always the case: While some will not sing “I’ll Fly Away” with an instrument in the building on Sunday, they have no problem with strumming a guitar and singing the same words in their home on Saturday. Is the Saturday musical exercise not considering God and His promises? Hopefully not! Is it not worship?

Others will not sing “Rock of Ages” with a guitar in our assemblies but will sing the same song with a piano at a funeral. Are we saying this is not worship, but just uttered words void of praise to You oh God? Have we not ignored the fact that Jesus does not restrict worship to a physical place?

May the light of truth vanquish the darkness of ignorance. The praise of God offered from our spirits is worship, regardless of where we are. Offer it in a way God wants to be worshipped. Offer it according to Truth!

Disconnect

Today our lesson will be addressing a disconnect between hearing and doing. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22) Being a disciple of Christ is more than attending the worship services every week. It is practicing the Scriptures as a follower of Christ. This means we use kind and wholesome words. We dress to be modest in a world filled with immodesty. We drive, work, play and communicate as an ambassador of Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:20) We are not of the world, we purposely separate ourselves from the world. (2 Corinthians 6:17) Our walk as a disciple of Christ is purposeful and not accidental.

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