

From the **TeachingtheWord** Bible Knowledgebase

12. The Epidemic of Counterfeit Worship

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Part 12 of a 20-part series. Read [part 11](#).

Counterfeit worship has become so widespread that it now supports a multi-billion-dollar "worship industry."

¹⁸ Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

²⁰ Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations - ²¹ "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"²² which all concern things which perish with the using - according to the commandments and doctrines of men?

²³ These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

In this passage, Paul says that false teachers will attempt to introduce doctrinal inventions that are contrary to the Word of God in at least four ways. They will try to establish counterfeit authority in place of Christ's authority; counterfeit worship in place of the genuine worship of God; counterfeit mediators in place of Christ; and, counterfeit revelations in place of the genuine revelation that we find only in the Word of God.

"Why Do You Subject Yourselves?"

In view of all this, Paul asks a rhetorical question in Colossians 2:20. A rhetorical question is a question to which the answer is obvious. Paul asks, "If you died with Christ

from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves" to these people and the counterfeits they seek to bring into the church?

The obvious answer is that there can be no valid reason, no Godly reason, for permitting such people to influence the church or for the church to embrace their falsehoods.

Dear friends, the Word of God is always up to date. Nothing could be more relevant to the critical need of the church in all times than Colossians chapter two. It was the answer to the syncretism of the Gnostics in the early church and of Roman Catholicism in the centuries that have followed. It is equally relevant for the crisis in worship that grips much of the nominally Evangelical church today. The postmodern Evangelical church is saturated with the evil of so-called worship that is an offense and an abomination to God.

The 21st-Century Church: History Sadly Repeated

Today's Evangelical church is doing exactly what men attempted to do in Colosse, and exactly what men have succeeded in doing over the long and tragic history of the Roman Catholic church. Today, men and women are bringing the thinking, practices, and trappings of the unbelieving world - the pagan world - into the church. They are putting a so-called Christian label on them, and they think that this makes such things acceptable.

It may make such things acceptable to some people in the unbelieving world, to those who are not born from above, regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It may make such things acceptable to pastors who have permitted themselves to be deceived, or permit pragmatism to suppress their guilty consciences. But nothing will make such things acceptable to God, or to the true Church of which Christ is the Head. God's standards have not changed because His Word has not changed, and He himself has not changed.

Syncretism

The theological term for this tragic development in the Evangelical church is syncretism. Syncretism is religious compromise. Syncretism is the un-critical, un-discerning, un-questioning acceptance of beliefs and practices that are contrary to the Word of God. Syncretism is the mingling of worldly and even pagan beliefs and practices with Biblical Christianity within the church. It is a poison that robs the church of its life and testimony.

Syncretism is one of the devices Satan most often uses to lead a Biblically sound church into eventual apostasy. What begins as a subtle mingling of truth and error in worship often ends with the total abandonment of the Gospel, and a wholesale desertion of Christ and His Word.

An Epidemic of Counterfeit Worship

In our time, the problem has reached epidemic proportions. An entire "worship industry" has sprung up, receiving hundreds of millions of dollars of income each year from churches committed to these falsehoods.

There is now, and has been for several years, a very popular magazine called *Church Production*. Thousands of pastors and church leaders around the world receive this monthly magazine free of charge, since it is financed by the prosperous companies of the new "worship industry." The idea behind this magazine, and other publications like it, is that the so-called church service should be a stage production in which people are entertained and emotionally manipulated in the same way they would be if they went to a rock concert or a Broadway show. The magazine not only sells this abominable philosophy, but also all of the things that are needed to implement it.

Contemporary Evangelicals' False View of Worship

All of this treads Colossians chapter two underfoot. You cannot bring anything you

want out of the unbelieving world and into the church, incorporate it into the church service, and call it Christian doctrine or Christian worship.

However, we live in a time when much of the nominally Evangelical church rejects this. "Evil men and imposters," as Scripture calls them, have convinced large segments of the church that what counts in worship is not the pursuit of holiness but the pursuit of pragmatism. They have convinced large segments of the church that what is vital in worship is not what God says in the Bible, but what man says in the latest how-to book, seminar, conference, or trade show (yes, trade show) about what allegedly "works" in growing a church numerically and achieving other desired results.

The tragedy is that the numerical growth thus produced brings hundreds and thousands of unregenerated people into the church who are never truly confronted with the claims of the Gospel, remain in their sins, do not come to saving faith in Christ, and can soon dominate the church numerically and spiritually.

The counterfeit Christians who are promoting all of this have convinced large segments of the church that man has changed, and so worship must change. Dear friends, man has not changed. He is still the same sinner he has been ever since Eden.

What is more, God has not changed. But we live in a time when counterfeit Christians have convinced large segments of the church that the God of the Bible is not specific and unchanging in His requirements for worship. They willfully ignore Scripture when it declares that God's number one requirement for worship is holiness, being set apart from the world.

And so, they have succeeded in deceiving large segments of the Evangelical church into calling things "worship" that are not worship at all, and in placing people in positions of prominence in that "worship" who are not Christians but possess the talents and skills that facilitate the "worship production." As Peter warned in 2 Peter 3:16, "untaught and unstable people" are twisting the Scriptures on the issue of

worship and other vital matters of doctrine, to their own destruction and to the destruction of many churches and many souls.

Just how bad is it? What are they bringing into the church? We shall see in our next article.

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