

Human Tailoring of Worshipping and Serving the Lord

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Revelation 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Matthew 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We have a multitude of professing Christians today who have carved out their own plan and procedure for how they will worship the Lord. The most popular custom made plan that I have heard about is where people reject going to church altogether and pompously announce that they have their own church and in it they read their bible, pray, etc. Now, I can say categorically, that people who have tailored their version of church like that ARE NOT going to church when they sit down at home and read their bible and have their prayers. Whatever else they may be doing, it is not “going to church.” I want to explain briefly why I can say that.

The word church in English comes from the Greek word ekklesia which is literally an assembly or congregation. The bible teaches that Jesus organized His first ekklesia and from the very beginning it was an assembly or congregation of believers who gathered together in a common meeting place to worship the Lord, to be taught by the Lord, or to conduct gospel business. So, in order for people to say they have their own little church, they would necessarily have to be meeting with other fellow-believers in that practice. There is nowhere in the bible that we find a church identified as someone privately sitting down to study the bible, to maybe sing some songs, to pray, or do other things considered worship. That is private worship. And one glaring feature of that kind of religious behavior is that both it and the person doing it are hidden from the public. Keep that in mind as we go on.

We could focus this entire sermon on customized worship and service, and find thousands of examples in the culture here in the U.S. We could talk about the many so-called “Christian” denominations across our land; we could talk about the many and varied cults that spring forth when somebody imagines that they have discovered a better way to worship and serve the Lord. We could talk about New Age Christianity and how it has opened a door for millions of different interpretations on how one may worship and serve. But what we would end up with at the end is just a laundry list of different ways that people through the centuries have customized the Christian religion to fit their perceptions of what it should be. But we are not going to do that. Instead, I want us to look behind the scenes of all those multitudes of self-appointed religious innovators and see what may be much more important about this all too popular practice among people.

To do that, I think at this point we need to ask the question, “Why do people custom-make or tailor their concept, and even practice, of service and worship? If we examine the possible answers to those questions, we should be able to see how far from the Lord’s design for worship and service those people are.

I. Probably the most common reason for people to tailor-make a religious service of worship is because they don't like the format God has ordained.

- ❖ That format is summarized by Jesus Christ: 1) **John 4:24** **God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.** 2) **John 12:26** **If any man serve me, let him follow me;**
 - I hope all of us realize that not all Christian religion (so-called) is of spirit and truth; and I hope all of us realize that not all Christian religions that claim to follow Christ are actually following Him.
 - But, this plethora of different custom-tailored Christian religions has given people an opportunity to pick one that better suits their own view of what worship and service should be... which multiplies the opportunities and the audacity of people to go off the reservation concerning the pattern that the Lord has laid down.
 - Use that info about the author (Christopher Rollston) who has essentially remodeled his view of the Christian religion because he has come to the conclusion that the word of God is full of ingrained prejudice against women, and by inference he is the same as accusing God of misogyny. The author who published the piece about his view and his book (Hershel Shanks) is a contributor to BiblicalArcheology.org, and he not only approved of Rollston's conclusion, but when Rollston was fired from his position with the Emmanuel Christian Seminary he told him that was probably the best thing that could have happened to him because Rollston ended up with a cushy job at George Washington University and the editor of a prestigious research bulletin. (remind the congregation about **Genesis 3:16** "...thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Point out that this is a fixed law of God...it is God's pattern for relationships – which is one of the main laws of God that modern humans have utterly rejected).
 - Let's realize that today, when people reject the format of worship and service that God has ordained, they rarely come right out and say that they are against it. They simply re-tailor their framework of religion to fit with what they want it to be.

II. Another reason people customize their worship and service is that humans are arrogant and presumptuous about their knowledge and wisdom

- ❖ Really, the first reason I gave for why some people customize their worship and service is born of presumption and arrogance; but I want to get a little deeper into this thing so that we can see that apart from just not liking God's format for worship and service, some people actually get to the place that they are better at defining how to do it than the Lord is.
- ❖ It is difficult, if not impossible, for natural man to give up dependency on his own store of knowledge and his own perception of what is wisdom. Because of that, natural men will always swing toward their own thinking about what is the right way to worship and serve.
 - Jesus rebuked the religionists of His day for rejecting the word of God and teaching a religion corrupted by tradition. In that rebuke, He quoted God's word in Isaiah when he said this: **Mat. 15:8-9** **This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**
 - Let's note a couple of things from His words: 1) their mouths, their lips sounded like they drew near to the Lord, but 2) their hearts were far from the Lord, 3) their worship was in vain, and 4) because they had tailor-made their religion out of human tradition and philosophy.

III. We talked about the fact that people who customize their religious worship and service do so because they don't like God's format. Now, we need to think about why those people don't like God's format.

- ❖ It requires following a pattern that is not manmade
 - When the Lord was guiding Moses in the building of the tabernacle and all the instruments for the worship and service that Israel was to offer, He told Moses this: **Exodus 25:40** And look that thou make *them* after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.

- In **Mat. 16:18** Jesus made this statement about how He intended to institute His worship and service: “...**I will build my church...**”
- Paul built upon that in his Holy Scripture statement in **Eph. 3:21** “Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”
- This is the format...the pattern of the Lord. It is one of a kind...not hundreds of disparate denominations.
- Some people just have no intention of simply looking to the Lord to lead them to the right place and pattern for serving and worship, because they just don’t like the format.
- ❖ It requires sacrifice of a spiritual kind
 - **Mat. 16:24** Then said Jesus unto his disciples, **If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**
 - Explain denying self: choosing the spiritual path pointed to by the word of God and faith instead of the selfish path pointed to by how we feel about something
 - Doing that is worship and service that serves the Lord instead of serving our own selves
- ❖ It requires interaction with others in a way that demands putting self at the back of the line – in other words, the Lord’s worship and service many times demands a willingness to be subservient toward others:
 - **Gal. 5:13** For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but **by love serve one another**.
 - **Mat. 23:11** **But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.**
 - **Eph. 4:2** With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
 - **Eph. 4:3** Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- ❖ The subservience to others makes many people have to eat their carnal pride and arrogance
 - **Mar. 9:35** And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, **If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.**
 - **Rom. 12:16** *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.
- ❖ It requires being under the molding and guiding influence of the word of God
 - One of those influences is articulated by Peter: **1Peter 2:2** As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:
 - Then there are other molding and guiding principles in the word of God that grate against people who don’t like the pattern of God for worship and service:
 - **Rom 14:19** Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.
 - **1Tim. 6:11** “...follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”
- ❖ It requires discipline: **Heb. 12:1-2** “...let us **lay aside every weight, and the sin** which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us **run with patience** the race that is set before us, **2 Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of *our* faith;