



**A
LETTER
FROM YOUR
PASTOR:
MAY 2023**
by Lee Shipp

ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Bowing is the revelation of glory. Worship is the revelation of love. How magnificent that our God is so glorious, we bow, and is so lovely, we worship! I want to be in a church, among people, where God is big. He is so big that small men kneel in love and reverence of this great transcendent God. When you bow before God where are you? At His Feet! Where there is no altar there is no throne, no correct view of God. When God is known and revealed, men bow and worship. A man with no altar is a man with no worship, there is no God in his life who "wows" him.

Let me remind you of how I use the word altar. When we speak of the altar, it is evident that our altar is always and forever the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Our reference to the word altar represents a place and time where believers do business with God: cry, pray, celebrate, and praise.

I believe God is here, and my heart desires Him. I believe that He is, and I must seek Him. The altar can be anywhere in the room; however, Hebrews 13 tells us that we should "go out to Him "... *by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name"* (Hebrews 13:13, 14).

Peter called us priests of the Lord. We are privileged to lead the worship of God. Leadership is never done in private or from the back; it is always upfront and visible. *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.... Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

You are supposed to show the praises of God. People are supposed to see you praising God, honoring God, and celebrating God. Gathering together with the particular focus of honoring and calling upon the name of the Lord is what we mean by the altar. You can call it what you will. Call it the gathering, the choir of praise, but for God's sake, let the priests of the Lord show forth His praise!

The altar is where the heart can express its pursuit of God. The place where we take our shoes off; we are on holy ground. The question is not, "Why do I have to go?" but "Why would you not want to go?"

The Psalmist cried for us to come before the Lord. The Holy Spirit is compelling us to come. Coming denotes movement, movement in a particular direction and towards a desired end. Don't just come to church; come before His presence. Come before the Lord. Why would any worshipper not do this? Dead churches and dead believers do not come to altars to lead, sing, shout, dance, and praise the Lord - and the services speak for themselves, they are dead or sleeping! The priestly ministry of the saints is

not functioning. There is no awareness of God's presence. The services are filled with dead faith and stale boring confessions about a God they are not impressed with.

"O COME, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us COME BEFORE HIS PRESENCE with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms ... O COME, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel BEFORE THE LORD our maker." (Psalms 95:1-2, 6). Again, David commands, *"Serve the LORD with gladness: COME BEFORE HIS PRESENCE with singing. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."* (Psalms 100:2, 4).

This is how we attend church: Come and sing, come and make a joyful noise to God. Come before Him with thanksgiving. Come and worship and bow down. Come and kneel before the Lord. Serve with gladness. Praise Him and bless His name. One thing that strikes me in these Psalms is that God is actually there. There is a conscious effort to come or bow before the actual presence of God.

YOU BOW TO SOMETHING

Everyone has a god. There is something that captivates the heart of people. Something wows the small man. Men are created to worship. Be sure, there is an altar where men and women give their god worship. Multitudes of people who go to church are not moved by Jesus because Jesus is not their God, but they do have a god. Consider the altars of LSU football, or whatever the popular team is in a particular culture. Look how they dress. There is no law, no dress code but everyone is dressed in clothing that clearly testifies their loyalty to their god. They wear their team colors. They proclaim the god's name proudly.

There is no law on how to come, they just come with absolute sacrifice and energy. They do not arrive late; they actually get there very early. Hours before the event they will arrive and tailgate, fellowship with others who love their god. Parking? No problem. They will park miles away from the stadium (church) and happily walk in rain, freezing cold, or heat to get to the stadium (church). Nothing prevents them; there are no excuses like people give for church such as, "we had family in town", or "it was too cold outside", or "the weather was bad." They will sit on those metal bleachers in freezing weather or suffer in blistering heat. Rain will not deter them. For hours they will endure unpleasant climates for the celebration of their god. But for Jesus, never will they consider this type of commitment. They are upset when church lasts longer than an hour. They will not come if it is raining or cold. If family is in town, Jesus will have to understand why we cannot attend. If they don't have a parking spot close to the door, then they are going home. Oh, and the tithes they pay at the ball games. They pay their tithes up front. They buy tickets for their seats, so they are guaranteed access every week. They will then pay enormous fees to buy food and drinks. There is no law. Nobody is passing around an offering plate. This they do willingly. And the praise is amazing. In church, for Jesus, they will sit in absolute silence. They will look with skepticism and disdain at the worship team and others who are expressing joy and love for Jesus publicly. But at the ball game, they will shout, they will scream. They will employ cheerleaders to make sure the crowd stays interested in the game. But in church they are so quiet, lifeless, practically dead; Jesus is not their God.

Consider the altar in a rock concert. Certainly, Satan has learned the art of worship since he was the chief worship leader in heaven before he fell. In heaven, everyone was upfront and around the altar of God. Everyone was engaged.

What is it that Satan wants? He wants to be enthroned as a god; therefore, he has implemented rock concerts (worship services) all the people desire to be up in front of the stage. The whole congregation is shouting, singing, and dancing with all the energy they can muster. Satan will settle for nothing less; furthermore, there is no law for

people to do this – they just naturally gather at the altar of their rock star and worship with all their might. They pay extravagant tithes to buy their music, attend their worship services, wear their clothes, and evangelize others to become followers as well. But in church, they will be cold, inactive, and bored. Why? Because Jesus is not their God.

GOD IS REVERED IN HEAVEN

In heaven the scene is much different than you will find in most churches. In heaven, every living thing gathers around the throne of God. The living creatures are not just sitting, standing, and watching – they are engaged in the adoration of God. In heaven, they are bowing, praising, and drawing near (surrounding) the altar of God. Should we love God with that same intensity here on earth? Should our worship services in church demonstrate the worth and beauty of Jesus? Should our posture and devotion to God on earth reflect the same worship of God in heaven? Yes! Here are the scenes in heaven as recorded by John.

“The twenty-four elders FALL DOWN BEFORE HIM that sat on the throne, AND WORSHIP HIM that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Revelation 4:10-11).

“The twenty-four elders FELL DOWN BEFORE THE LAMB ... [and prayed]. And THEY SUNG a new song, saying, Thou art worthy ... SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:14). *“And the twenty-four elders FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPPED HIM that liveth for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 5:8-9).

“The elders ... FELL BEFORE THE THRONE ON THEIR FACES, AND WORSHIPPED GOD, SAYING, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 11:16).

“And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, FELL UPON THEIR FACES, AND WORSHIPPED God, SAYING, ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.’” (Revelation 7:11-12, 16).

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, SAYING, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: And again THEY SAID, Alleluia. And the twenty-four elders and the four beasts FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPPED GOD that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” (Revelation 19:1, 3-4).

According to the whole of scripture and the demonstrative worship in heaven, our refusal to fall down on our faces before God, to kneel and worship the Lord, to loudly say things to Him in praise, and to cry with loud voices His worth is simple blatant rebellion to God; it is an insult to His throne. There is no other way to reconcile the deadness of our churches other than to admit that so many who attend church do not know Jesus as God.

How can we recover our society from its rebellion and corruption if the church cannot restore worship? If the Church cannot demonstrate the heavenly worship in our churches, how will we demonstrate the kingdom of God in our earthly institutions? Our refusal to worship God, our refusal to praise God the way the Bible commands us, is nothing but rebellion.

If we want God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, we have to do the things they are doing in heaven. BOWING down before the Lord AND WORSHIP IS THE NORM IN HEAVEN. In heaven, there is no argument over whether bowing is part of the culture.

It is kingdom culture! If the saints on earth would join the saints in heaven in the worship of our great King, the earth would reel from the influence of that heavenly kingdom. Kingdoms of darkness would be exposed and humiliated. Bondage and addictions would be broken. The enemy's strongholds in our society would be dismantled. The absolute moral confusion, social division, and political corruption would be completely exposed and corrected.

If there is any hope for our civilization, we must submit our culture to His regardless of our traditions. This type of worship is not out of compulsion or law; it is the freewill offering of those who have a revelation of the glory and love of Jesus. You do not have to force people who love Jesus to do this anymore than you have to force a person at a rock concert to go up front and sing, dance, and shout. It is the nature of worship. If Jesus is the God one worships, then this is the way their life will demonstrate His worth.

DON'T TEXT ABOUT SERIOUS ISSUES

I do not like to counsel on the phone. I do not like to express my feelings to my loved ones over the phone or through texting. I like to look them in the face. When I counsel, I prefer to be face-to-face looking into the eyes of the people before me and looking into their souls. So much can be seen and known by a person's body language. For centuries God has communicated what He wanted with us. *“... this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me ...”* (Isaiah 29:13). God wants the love of our hearts more than the religious exercise of a worship service. God wants your heart to draw near to Him. It is not enough for God that you get your body to the church and sing a few songs yet all the while your heart is far from Him.

God wants your whole self in worship. David knew this, *“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and ALL that is within me ...”* (Psalms 103:1). Our actions speak louder than words. God is not going to believe you love Him because you say you do; He wants your heart. Praise is the body's expression of the heart's joy in the Lord. David commanded his whole self to bless the Lord. David's whole self was an instrument of worship to God. Our bodies are instruments of worship. Our bodies have percussions, string instruments, wind instruments, and volume; we can produce harmonies and keep beats. If we would offer our whole selves to God, and honor God on earth as they do in heaven, we would see heaven intrude on the helpless state of our present world.

Please don't let dry men, full of devotion, explain to you passionate affection for God! We have been trained to worship God by a fallen emotionally crippled culture. Stoic men and women, who cannot even express love to their spouses and children want to tell us how to love God? I don't think so! American men are uncomfortable with public displays of affection, and European men are the same – they are too proud to express their feelings.

I want to be affectionate with God. I want a big God who astounds me and causes my heart to rapture with delight. I want to fall before Him on my face and I want everyone to see! God has very openly and publicly displayed His affection for me; I shall do likewise. This strange rebellious excuse to not worship God as they do in heaven has been culturally created by a corrupt religion. What ministers have done to worship is inexcusable and indefensible.

Beloved, don't follow tradition; follow the Spirit. Don't be bound to a religious culture, but join yourself to that heavenly world. As it is in heaven so let it be on earth.