



June 6, 2010

## *Who Is Being Impressed*

The power and majesty of God is proclaimed from the beginning of the Biblical narrative to the end. From creation to the resurrection, no other power is greater than that displayed by the Lord in the things that he has done. The establishment of the church and salvation through obedience are the greatest ongoing examples of God's authority, love and power. As the church fell away, worldly thinking clouded the minds of those claiming to represent God, and great efforts have been displayed in an effort to demonstrate the glory and majesty of the creator. Massive cathedrals, monuments and shrines have been constructed to emphasize this. In all of these great efforts, who is being impressed and what is the intent? The gospel was taught simply and early Christians were known as simple people who had no need for outward displays of worldly wealth and power to show the magnitude of God's blessings and ability. Human thinking has led many to expect that success and vitality in religious organizations is reflected in extravagant auditoriums with lavish trappings. Is this really necessary? Do these things help one see the truth of God's message, or do they cloud the minds of those seeking God. Isaiah speaks of this issue in his writings. ***"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" (Isa 66.1)***. I have known of some who turned away from the church and the truth because their expectations of what a religious organization should be were not met. Some seek to be impressed with opulent surroundings and flashy programs that do more to entertain than teach the truth. Traditions, including ornate robes, massive churches and services conducted with an air of ritualistic mystery, are intriguing to those who don't understand that these things do nothing to further the gospel. There are some who take great pride in their churches with stained glass windows and other accoutrements that are impressive and costly. There is an expense for all these things. In the past funds were raised by selling indulgences to raise money for construction which led many to believe that salvation could be secured monetarily. These things are a testament to the ingenuity and industrious capability of mankind but they have caused confusion and clouded the ability to determine what is needful and right in the sight of the Lord. We may allow ourselves to think that these endeavors are a way of praising God, but if the truth is compromised in the process, what has been gained? Even the disciples were impressed with the greatness of the Temple in the first century. Christ commented on this which shows us the relative value of worldly structures. ***"And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*** (Matt 24.1-2). During his ministry on Earth, Jesus continually emphasized the need to love God and serve from the heart. The people of the first century, like many today, were placing more emphasis on material things and had lost sight of the real intentions behind God's message to man. God has no need for objects erected in his honor. Souls will not be saved through the splendor and impressive monuments we might create. No matter how sincere we might be in wanting to do things on a large scale, if we are not teaching and practicing the truth it is wasted effort. Isaiah tells us what means more to the Lord in comparison to these. ***"For all those things hath mine hand made, and those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."*** (Isa 66.2). God seeks to impress us with His truth and our need to love, fear and honor him by doing what he commands. Nothing else is more impressive than that.

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