

No More Baal Worship

What has happened to holiness in our churches?

In the days of ancient Israel's apostasy, children were sacrificed to appease the false god Baal in the hope that crops would be blessed. Others were sacrificed to the idol to purge the guilt of sexual sin.

I can't fathom how mothers and fathers could watch Baal's priests take their infants and burn them alive. How could these parents stand to listen to their babies' terrifying screams? The priests of Baal would beat worship drums in order to drown out the cries of the burning babies. Religious entertainment was used to muffle the sound of those dying in their midst.

No wonder God was so repulsed by their worship. He told Israel through the prophet Amos: "'Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments'" (Amos 5:23, NKJV). The Lord wanted this offensive entertainment to stop so that justice would be restored and the children protected.

I see some parallels today in the African-American church, which has allowed the enemy to exert a lethal immoral influence in our communities. The proof? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the leading cause of death among black women between the ages of 25 and 44 isn't heart disease, diabetes or cancer. It is AIDS, and it has been the leading cause of death of young black women for the last 11 years.

According to CDC findings, these women are getting HIV primarily as a result of "high-risk behavior" that includes having sex with black men who (often unbeknownst to the women) are engaging in sex with other men. According to J.L. King, the author who exposed this disturbing trend on Oprah

Winfrey's talk show, these bisexual men are finding their male partners not only in nightclubs but also in the church.

Why is this happening? Today religious entertainment is drowning out the cries of those who are dying in our midst. When a sexually immoral pastor, bishop or worship leader sleeps around with women (and sometimes men), our lack of accountability encourages them to perform a little louder to drown out the cries of those who have been victimized by them.

When we fail to confront this sin, we ignore the Holy Spirit—who is weeping over their closeted lifestyles. He wants to save, heal and restore; yet too many spiritual fathers and mothers are in denial, refusing to hold their spiritual sons and daughters accountable. So we continue to bang the drums of compromise to Baal.

We are not that naive. We have said to these immoral leaders: "Entertain us while you die, because we care more about your ability to entertain than about your walk with a holy God!"

Abortion has been used to cover up our sexual immorality. Often when I minister, young girls tell me they were forced to have abortions because their parents cared more about being respected at church than they did about being grandparents. I even know of pastors who have forced their mistresses to have abortions to cover up their sin.

Although African-Americans make up only about 12 percent of the population, we account for close to 35 percent of all abortions nationwide. As a result, more than 15 million black children have been aborted since 1973.

I believe God is still speaking to us as He did in the days of Amos. He is saying: "'Take away from Me the noise of your songs. ... But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream'" (Amos 5:23-24).

Martin Luther King Jr. often quoted this message from Amos

during the civil rights movement, and African-Americans have been champions of social justice. But what has happened to righteousness and holiness in our churches? The time has come for us to repent of our idolatry and drive Baal worship from our midst.

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