

## Clearing the Stage of Our Hearts



Gary Wilkerson August 24, 2020

The book of Revelation gives us powerful images of angels worshiping in God's presence. They cover their faces as they fall before him crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelation 4:8). These powerful beings clear the stage in heaven for the One who is high, lifted up, and rightly exalted as the name above all names.

This portrayal of worship reveals that God's presence is meant to bring light to our eyes. It shows us the difference between the wheat and the chaff in our lives. That's why God's Word is called a refiner's fire: it purifies (see Malachi 3:2). It is also called a sword, an instrument that pierces and cuts (see Hebrews 4:12). These tools are used to separate things, dividing the pure from the impure.

By definition, these aren't pleasant things; in fact, they're uncomfortable and we naturally resist them. We cry out for comfort and pleasure in our life, our job, our pursuits, our home. As the Bible states, our hearts are inclined to cry, "Speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions" (Isaiah 30:10). And the material world is always waiting to meet our desires.

The Bible warns about the danger of seeking only messages that comfort instead of those that challenge. The Israelites loved being able to tolerate their idols and not give them up. And the consequence? They lost their discernment.

God's first commandment is, "You will have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). The word "before" in this verse actually means "in my presence." God is saying, "Don't bring any gods into my presence — your idols of pleasure, your ambition, your human abilities. I won't abide any of it." God is telling us to clear the stage in order that Christ may be central once more.

Too many are being drawn away from true worship by a spirit that isn't God's. The focus has slowly and subtly shifted from Christ and his cross to things of flesh: "I lift my hands; I sing your praises; I glorify your name." Be sure that when you worship God, you actually glorify and exalt the name of Jesus. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord — Surely you are in this place."

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