

# What God Wants

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**T**he above title sounds rather presumptive, doesn't it? How can anyone claim to know what God wants? The ONLY way any man could say with confidence what God wants is if God has PLAINLY SAID what He wants.

Consider the following episode from the life of David (2 Sam 7:1-17). Not many men have enjoyed such an intimate walk with God as did David: anointed at a young age to succeed King Saul; blessed with the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit; a successful warrior; talented in poetry and musical worship; prophet and prototype of the future Messianic king. *"And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him"* (1 Sam 18:14).

After David secures his kingdom in Jerusalem, he begins to feel guilty about dwelling in his opulent palace while *"the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains"* (2 Sam 7:2). From a human point of view, this seems a purely noble sentiment: he desires to build God a glorious, permanent structure to house the ark and the other implements of worship. And he even gets the "green light" from a trusted prophet of God: *"Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you"* (Nathan, 2 Sam 7:3).

**Question:** Can we be presumptive in our attempts to glorify God?

**Answer:** (We'll let God answer for Himself) *"Would you build a house for Me to dwell in? ... have I ever spoken a word to anyone ... saying 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"* (2 Sam 7:7).

Was David's motive at fault? *"Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well in that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the house ..."* (2 Chronicles 6:8). God praised David's desire to honor Him, but He says that David is operating on presumption. David *assumes* what will please God, and God tells him he is wrong.

So, what does this have to do with anything? It has a lot to do with the celebrations and debates surrounding the current holiday season.

First, let us strongly affirm the significance of the birth of Jesus. The world had never witnessed a birth like this one: the Creator had stepped out of heaven itself into the realm of material reality. *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!'"* (Lk 2:13-14). Thus the shepherds in the fields were told that the greatest life that would ever be lived had begun in the town of Bethlehem. Only a simple, brief narrative of the event remains to inform us of the same truth.

But what shall we do with this admittedly momentous occasion – anticipated by prophets, announced by angels, sparked by the Holy Spirit? Little human attention was paid to it at the time – God was "dwelling inside tent curtains." Should we build a great monument to showcase the truth to the world? Should we adorn the "anniversary" with worship and praise, songs and plays? Or is this being presumptive? Consider:

- The day of Jesus' birth remains unknown.
- Jesus gave no instruction to commemorate the event.
- What Jesus *did* say concerning memorials had to do with His death, not His birth. In this He was very specific: *"do this in remembrance of Me"* (1 Cor 11:25-26).

A cultural skirmish is going on between those who want to "keep Christ in Christmas" (and God in the public arena) and secularists who are feverishly trying to marginalize religion into meaninglessness. Neither side seems interested in asking: "What does God want?" Though asking the question is deemed irreligious or irrelevant, it remains a valid question.