

# *What Does It Cost?*

by Micky Galloway

Many think of religion as a source of comfort, or as a power which enables us to face nobly and victoriously the responsibilities and ordeals of life. We usually think of it in terms of dividends, (i.e. what it does for me or what I get out of it). We are less likely to think of it in terms of what it costs us, but we should. Just what does your religion cost you?

We read in II Samuel 24 of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. David had grieved God by numbering the people of Israel and three things were proposed as punishment upon David: seven years of famine; three months invasion by David's enemies; or three days of pestilence. David was offered his choice of any one of these three, but he resolved to fall into the hands of God for mercy (II Samuel 24:14). So the Lord sent the pestilence (verse 15). In order to bring an end to this mighty and terrible curse, David was sent to raise up an altar upon which oxen were to be offered as burnt offerings unto God. When Araunah understood the mission of David, he generously offered him not only the ground upon which to build the altar, but also the oxen for the sacrifices and the other things that might be needed in the service. David however, was resolved to pay the full price. *"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will verily buy it of thee at a price. Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto Jehovah my God which cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver"* (II Samuel 24:24). Here two generous souls met; Araunah was very willing to give, but David was determined to buy. When David was offered a cheap way to serve God he repudiated it and refused it. He would not offer unto God something that required nothing of him.

What a change it would make in the Lord's church if all Christians would seriously say in their hearts with David, *"Neither will I offer ... offerings unto the Lord my God of that which costs me nothing."*

Service to God, if it is to count for anything, if it is to possess any value, is a very costly affair. The truth is that those things worth possessing are never won easily. Education is costly. However the financial cost is nothing when compared to the demands made of the student in hours of study, classroom work, and student activity. To be a mere dabbler in school or college is to throw away one's chance for preparation for life's greatest challenges. Marriage is costly. Marriage involves far more than the often expensive price of a wedding dress, tuxedo, reception, etc. Success here comes only when the husband and wife are willing to pay the cost of commitment. It is not a goal to be realized in a few weeks or months of adjustment, but *"until death we do part,"* it is a constant challenge to the unselfishness of the husband and the wife.

Likewise, the mere dabbler in religion is more of a disgrace to the Lord's church than anything else. Personal sacrifice has always been an expressed command of God. Self-denial is a demand which Christ makes of his disciples (Luke 9:23; Mark 10:21; Romans 12:1). To deny self is the challenge where many of us fail. Jesus is *"the way"* (John 14:6) and *"strait is the gate and narrow is the way"* (Matthew 7:14).

What does your religion cost you in actual money? If you have given of your means as the Bible teaches, your religion has not been without cost. The apostle Paul taught, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come" ... "But this (I say,) He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (Let) each man (do) according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver"* (I Corinthians 16:1-2; II Corinthians 9:6-7). The poor widow serves as an inspiring example in sacrificial giving. Though she had cast into the treasury only two mites (the smallest coin in Palestine, 1/2 cent), Jesus said, *"This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the*

*treasury: for they all did cast in of their superfluity; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, (even) all her living” (Mark 12:41-43).*

**What does your religion cost you in time? Perhaps this is the greatest cost. It takes time to serve the Lord! Time to visit the sick, fatherless, the untaught, the negligent. It cost the Samaritan time and money to help the wounded stranger (Luke 10:33-35). It takes time to teach our children, and it takes time to worship and pray. Why do you come to worship on Sunday morning? Why not come on Sunday night and Wednesday night for the same reason?**

**Let us not give the Lord the scraps of our time, talent, and means. Let us make our service to the Lord cost us something. God gave us His Son (John 3:16). Christ gave His life (II Corinthians 8:9). Therefore, we ought to be willing to “*present our bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service*” (Romans 12:1-2). Such service begins and is maintained at the cost of real conviction. God’s children are required to offer what is valuable, not that which is worthless; that which is their own, not that which is another’s.**