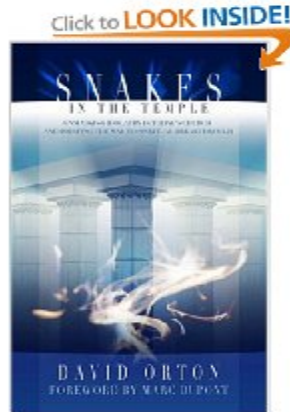


## A Review of David Orton's Snakes in the Temple

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Published in "Review & Preview" [www.GlobalMissiology.org](http://www.GlobalMissiology.org) January 2009



David Orton takes what is for many an obscure Old Testament scripture and uses it to diagnose a major problem with the Western church in the twenty-first century. Then he prescribes a treatment that many are currently unwilling to undergo. The good news, according to scripture, is that many eventually do respond to voices such as Orton's.

Ezekiel 8 describes the elders of Israel gathered in a secret room of the temple. The walls are covered with portrayals of "... all kinds of crawling things, and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel." Each elder stands by in approval with a cloud of incense rising from his censer. Orton legitimately sees Israel as a type and shadow of the church. The question is what kind of idolatry hides in the temple of the Body of Christ today?

The answer is not obvious to today's Western Christian who views idolatry as a relic of the past that only exists in third world and similar cultures. However, Orton reminds us of Ezekiel 14:3 which speaks of the elders setting up idols in their hearts. Idolatry then is a mental process including fantasies and false self-images. According to Orton's definition, "Idolatry is the feeling of well being gained from my relationship to a created thing, either material or non-material." For the Western church idolatry often involves productivity, power, buildings, budgets and titles.

Orton traces the present day spiritual malaise of the church to the second century when the office of bishop replaced apostolic leadership. He draws a parallel to the days of Samuel when the Old Testament church exchanged prophetic leadership for an earthly king. Orton presents a convincing argument from the Greek that the word "office" was inserted into the translation of a key scripture to legitimize current church government. His argument goes like this. The original apostles heard from God. People who trusted the gifting of a particular apostle listened. There was no hierarchy.

Interestingly enough, Orton says we are not to condemn the "monarch" nor stand in judgment against the religious system, but he anticipates a kairos moment when the new wineskin eclipses the old. Again he looks to the book of Ezekiel for an appropriate word picture. He sees the valley of dry bones in chapter 37 as signifying personal renewal culminating in corporate renewal. The restoration of God's manifest presence will defeat the idol of well-intentioned church programs. Orton reminds us that God uses

circumstances to conform us to the likeness of His Son. If we cooperate we will experience purity, brokenness and humility of heart.

“... it is time to return to the Lord to finish ‘playing church’ and living for self.” Amen. You’ve said it well, David Orton.

Snakes in The Temple

<http://www.amazon.com/Snakes-Temple-Unmasking-Spiritual-Breakthrough/dp/1852403764>

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