

Jesus & The Apostles

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In the Gospels and the Acts of Apostles, we see a firsthand account of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles. We see how growth of the kingdom was accomplished in the earliest years of the church. There, we observe powerful preaching to multitudes (Acts 2:14), one-on-one teaching of individuals (John 3:1-5), and the founding of congregations. In all of these, we see the wonderful success of gospel preaching in bringing lost souls to salvation in Christ and building up the Lord's kingdom. In Paul's estimation, the gospel was the power of God unto salvation for all men (Romans 1:16). Jesus and his associates could have borrowed the methods of comedians, magicians, ventriloquists, jugglers or acrobats. Those skills were common among the Jews and popular with the masses. Practitioners of these arts have always been able to attract a crowd. Then, as now, folks were willing to pay good money to see such performances. The Master and his helpers easily could have rationalized that the use of such entertainment skills would have been a useful way to attract folks and woo them into the kingdom of heaven.

As many may continue to search, they will never find a single verse indicating that Christ or his ambassadors ever resorted to gimmicks or trickery in their quest for lost souls. He came to do "the will of the Father" (John 5:30). He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came to establish the kingdom of heaven, that is, His church, on earth (Matthew 16:16-18). He came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He came to transform sinners into saints. He changed those marred by sin into a new creation (2 Corinthians 3:18). They became partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Those who were defiled by their transgression He redeemed, sanctified and made sacred temples for God's Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

God's truth makes us free from sin (John 8:32), but entertainment frees us only from boredom. It is God's will that sinners be brought to salvation by the foolishness of preaching (1 Corinthians 1:18-19), not by foolishness! Those whose jaded souls yearn for entertainment should go to the theater or the circus. They who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) will come to God's assemblies for the bread of life that came down from heaven (John 6:51).

This phenomenon is not unique to our generation. In Isaiah's day, some Hebrews were heard saying "to the prophets, do not prophesy to us right things; speak smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isaiah 30:9-10). Over the past century, we have seen our religious neighbors featuring various entertainment strategies in worship. Our brethren rejected this approach then, and we should reject it now, even when it is some of our misguided brethren who are pursuing this shameful course.

Our mission is singular in purpose and statement, for Paul stated, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2). Just as Paul did not resort to oratory and enticing words of man's wisdom as he stated himself in his letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:1), we should not resort to entertainment in our effort to win souls and build up the kingdom of Christ. Let those churches that are the creations of men have their clowns, magicians and musicians. We will continue to stick with the doctrine: "But when

they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12).