

But What If They Won't Be Drawn?

By John R. Gibson

“ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” John 12:31-33

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Rom. 1:16

What wonderful news—the crucified Lord is to draw all to Himself and His gospel is God’s power to save! Yet some are not interested in the gospel and feel no need for Jesus in their lives; the lifted up Christ and His teaching do not appeal to them. So what are we to do? This is an issue of real concern to all who care about the lost, which is to say the vast majority of people around us, often including friends and family. People are headed down the broad way toward destruction and seem to have no interest in the message we are proclaiming, so what are we to do?

Many, with all good intentions, have largely given up on reaching the souls of men and have come to emphasize providing for the physical needs of people. They stress ministering to the homeless, helping the poor, bringing about social justice, etc. Certainly every Christian should do good as he has opportunity (Gal. 6:10), but this is never pictured as the kind of work New Testament churches did. In fact, as collective bodies their benevolent activities were limited to relieving the needs of saints (Acts 11:27-30; Rom. 15:25-31; et al). Though Christians on an individual basis may give assistance to anyone, to lose our emphasis on the salvation of souls is to forget the very reason Jesus came to the earth (Luke 19:10) and to fail to supply that which people need most. *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Matt. 16:26

Others are still very interested in reaching the lost and saving their souls, but because those whom they seek to reach are not interested in the gospel, they begin by trying to soften the hearts of the lost and create an opening for the gospel through things they know to be appealing to people. Rather than simply holding forth the crucified Christ, they offer food, fun, and “fellowship” as a means of attracting one to the church assemblies or creating an opportunity to talk about Jesus. While we do not question the motives of many of those who have turned to such attractants, we do strongly question the biblical validity of offering food and fun as an evangelistic tool.

First, we have no record of any church or individual using food and games as “door openers.” Carefully study Acts, the book of conversions, and you will find people preaching the word, reasoning in the synagogues, teaching publicly and privately, talking of God in the market, etc., but you will not find any indication they appealed to the flesh in seeking to save souls.

Second, shouldn’t we learn something about the carnality and futility of this approach from Jesus’ refusal to provide more loaves and fishes in John 6? The day before the Lord had miraculously fed a great multitude, a multitude which was not attracted with the promise of being fed, but when they came the next day and made it clear they expected to be fed again (John 6:26, 30, 31), Jesus refused to feed them and told them they had missed the point of yesterday’s miracle.

“Jesus answered them and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw

the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. ’ ” John 6:26, 27

The feeding of the 5,000 on the previous day was intended as a sign; i.e. evidence that would point them to Jesus as the Son of God and the One who could give them the true bread of life, but they had missed it. All they seemed to see in Jesus was One who could fill their bellies and He refused to accommodate them. When that day ended, Jesus had not offered more or better food, but simply watched as the carnally minded “*went back and walked with Him no more*” (John 6:66).

Closely related to this is the approach that so fears people turning away that it ends up failing to challenge people with the true demands of the gospel. While it is imperative that we not bind what God has not bound (cf. Col. 2:20-23 with its manmade restrictions), are we not to do as Jesus who challenged the great multitudes following Him to bear the cross, count the cost, and forsake all (Luke 14:25-33)? Does our Lord really want us to so soften the gospel that it accommodates those He compared to thorny ground? It is sad when the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life have more appeal to people than the crucified Lord, but Jesus would have us to continue to simply preach His word and allow men’s hearts to determine their response. Luke 8:4-8, 11-15

If we are like our Lord we want all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9), but if we believe our Lord we know it won’t happen (Matt. 7:13, 14) and to change His gospel and its approach is to be accursed.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Gal. 1:8, 9

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